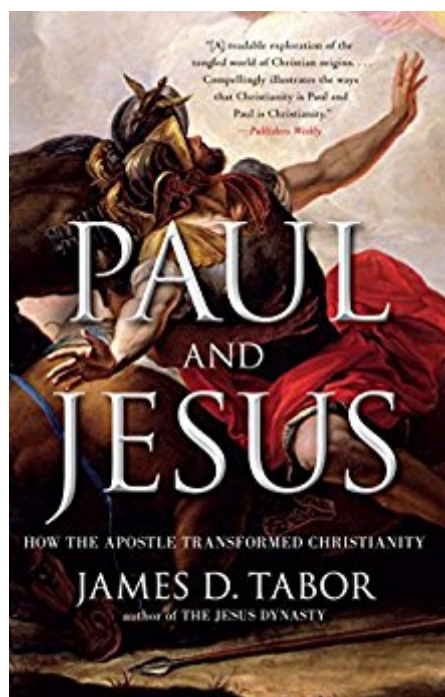


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Paul And Jesus: How The Apostle Transformed Christianity



Synopsis

This fascinating examination of the earliest years of Christianity reveals sharply competing ideas about the significance of Jesus and his teachings and shows how the man we call St. Paul shaped Christianity as we know it today. Historians know almost nothing about the two decades following the crucifixion of Jesus, when his followers regrouped and began to spread his message. During this time the apostle Paul joined the movement and began to preach to the gentiles. Using the oldest Christian documents that we have—the letters of Paul—as well as other early Christian sources, historian and scholar James Tabor reconstructs the origins of Christianity. Tabor reveals that the familiar figures of James, Peter, and Paul sometimes disagreed fiercely over everything from the meaning of Jesus's message to the question of whether converts must first become Jews. Tabor shows how Paul separated himself from Peter and James to introduce his own version of Christianity, which would continue to develop independently of the message that Jesus, James, and Peter preached. Paul and Jesus gives us a new and deeper understanding of Paul as it illuminates the fascinating period of history when Christianity was born out of Judaism and became the religion we recognize today.

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Customer Reviews

Paul and Jesus, How the Apostle Transformed Christianity by James D. Tabor
In November 2012, the author of *The Jesus Dynasty* once again releases a book that is sure to challenge our thinking when it comes to Christian Origins. In his latest work, published by Simon and Schuster, James D. Tabor turns his academic attention to a thorough investigation of a particular way of defining and understanding Christianity. Of all the works he has published in more than thirty years as a Biblical scholar and historian of Christian origins, this may prove to be Tabor's most important contribution yet to our understanding of how and why we have come to believe the way we do. Tabor asserts and then sets out to prove that Catholics, mainstream Protestants and evangelicals have all inherited much of their Christianity, not through the teachings of Jesus but through the teachings of the Apostle Paul. Even though this book may challenge readers, Tabor presents his convincing arguments in a way that is both respectful and sensitive. Tabor makes no excuses for Paul. For better or for worse, Tabor allows Paul to explain himself from his own words at every turn. He does this by carefully reporting facts taken from ancient sources and by examining and contrasting Christianity before and after Paul. Tabor's work claims that Paul effectively transformed Christianity from a thoroughly Jewish sect into something that would have been altogether foreign to Jesus and his first followers. He shows that for Paul, there was no interest in "Jesus according to the flesh." Paul admittedly never met Jesus according to the flesh, but rather relates that in a series of visionary experiences or revelations, a "heavenly Christ" came to him with a message that would become his gospel.

Dr. Tabor's new book, "Paul and Jesus", is the culmination of the author's thirty-year examination of the life of Paul, the meaning of his message, and nature of his relationship with the Jerusalem apostles and with James, the brother of Jesus. In this eminently readable and ultimately challenging investigation into these issues, Tabor refreshingly portrays Paul without the added reinterpretation provided by the later church. Basing his analysis almost exclusively on the authentic letters of Paul, Tabor re-introduces us to a man many of us might have thought we already knew. We quickly realize that the popular image of Paul has been heavily based on the Acts of the Apostles, which is little more than an "Acts of Paul", written as late as the early second century according to the author, and thus by someone who never knew Paul. In this fascinating and revealing portrait of the Apostle to the Gentiles, Tabor makes it clear that not only did Paul never meet Jesus, he paid scant heed to

the inheritors of Jesus' teaching: the apostles and brothers of Jesus. Instead, Paul based his entire "gospel" on his repeated, self-reported revelations that he claimed were of the risen Christ. As the author convincingly shows, Paul's unique message conflicted with that of Jesus' own disciples and led to open hostility and perhaps even to Paul's arrest and imprisonment in Rome. Throughout this reevaluation of Paul, Tabor challenges us to understand that the New Testament is, with few exceptions, comprised of books that represent the Pauline teachings, not those of early Palestinian Jewish Christianity. All of them were written after Paul's letters were composed. This leads to some startling discoveries.

Paul and Jesus: How the Apostle Transformed Christianity by James D. Tabor should be required reading for every Christian. I first met James in the late 1980s at a conference in Ft. Worth, Texas and I was impressed by the fact that he laid his cards on the table when it came to discussing the histories of Christianity and Judaism. James hasn't changed. On the second page (xvi) of the preface of Paul and Jesus you will find: ". . . the message of Paul, which created Christianity as we know it, and the message of the historical Jesus and his earliest followers, were not the same. In fact, they were sharply opposed . . ." Anyone reading the New Testament Gospels and Paul's Epistles critically knows that Tabor is correct. So, why will Paul and Jesus challenge the beliefs of millions of Christians? One reason can be traced back to the Niagara Bible Conference that published the "Five Points of Fundamentalism" in 1895. It stated the conference's conclusion that there are five essential beliefs required for one to be a Christian. One of those essential beliefs is "the inerrancy of Scripture" (meaning the Christian Bible). This belief became a cornerstone for fundamentalism and will be the obstacle standing between millions of Christians understanding the truth of Tabor's statement above - "the message of Paul created Christianity!" Our beliefs about the Bible affect how we understand its words. If we believe everything in our Bible is the "inerrant Scripture," then our minds are forced to try and make everything we read in it agree - even when it clear that they don't. But, if we follow Tabor's method of viewing the words of each book in their textual and historical context, we find something very different.

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