

Paul and Jesus

How the Apostle Transformed Christianity

by: James D. Tabor

Week One

September 17, 2023

Preface: Discovering Paul (pg. xv – xxi)

Paul and Jesus: A historical investigation of the origins of this way of defining and understanding Christianity. The message of Paul created Christianity as we know it.

Tabor (pg xvii): “Paul is the most influential person in (Western) human history, and realize it or not, he has shaped practically all we think about everything Western Civilization).”

Fundamental doctrinal tenets of Christianity – separate from Judaism – Paul – not Jesus:

- Christ is God, “born of the flesh.” (pg xviii)
- Christ’s sacrificial death atones for the sins of mankind. (pg xviii)
- Christ’s resurrection from the dead guarantees eternal life to believers. (pg xviii)
- Christ’s spiritual union with us through Baptism. (pg xviii)
- Christ’s body and blood through communion. (pg xviii)

Introduction: Paul and Jesus (pg. 1 – 21)

Paul never met Jesus. Paul’s claim to have “seen” Jesus, as well as the “teachings” received from Jesus came long after Jesus’ lifetime – revelations – Galatians, 2 Corinthians.

Gal 1: 18-23 First meets Peter a decade after Jesus’ death. Independent Gospel-Asia Minor.

Tabor: This book is about the historical Paul – can be seen best through – not Acts - but Paul’s authentic letters (earliest and most reliable account of relationship with Jerusalem):

1 Thessalonians	1 Corinthians	Romans	
Galatians	2 Corinthians	Philippians	Philemon

Most people assume the New Testament gospels have little to do with Paul, but Paul’s literary victory rested on: 1. The gospel of Mark-heavily Pauline. 2. Luke-Acts- “The Acts of Paul.” 3. Paul’s authentic letters.

Paul: Hebrew, Benjaminite, Pharisee, persecutor of Kingdom of God movement, unmarried, manual laborer, thirteenth and only true apostle(?).

Major Elements of Paul’s “Christianity”:

1. New Spiritual Body (pg 11): God had raised Jesus from the dead.
2. A Cosmic Family and a Heavenly Kingdom (pg 12): Jesus is “firstborn” of Spirit beings.
3. A Mystical Union with Christ (pg 14): Transformation of Jewish purification and blessing of bread and wine into Baptism and Eucharist.
4. Already But Not Yet (pg 15): Live as if the new spiritual transformation (Christ coming in the clouds) had already arrived, fully understanding that it had not yet arrived.
5. Under the Torah of Christ (pg 16): Paul turns his back on the Torah of Moses - replaces it with the Torah of Christ (Galatians 3:23-26). Christ is alongside of God in heaven.
6. The Battle of the Apostles (pg 17): Paul claims “last but not least” apostleship – set apart by God before birth. God chose to reveal God’s son to Paul – commissioned by God to take the message of Christ to the non-Jewish world.

Paul’s non-relationship with the “so-called pillars” of Jerusalem (pg 19) (hubris, insecurity?).

Paul’s radical message becomes too radical and apocalyptic for the emerging church. (pg 20).

Paul’s message is domesticated first by Acts (early second century) and by pseudo-Pauline and anti-Pauline epistles:

Colossians	2 Thessalonians	2 Timothy
Ephesians	1 Timothy	Titus