

The Carpenters 3
Joseph, Jesus, and Barlow

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This is a short work of speculative Historical Fiction that looks at how life might have been some 2000 years ago, for a young boy who truly believed that his birth was the result of the union of a mortal woman and God.

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Jesus. Joseph and Barlow



Foreword

What follows is just a story, perhaps with a few grains of truth and perhaps not. It's an attempt to examine the early years of a troubled youth who was an anonymous carpenter for most of his life, but who spent his last two or three years as an enigmatic, charismatic preacher who is said to have per-

formed thousands of miracles; in addition to being the posthumous founder of the largest religious group on the planet.

The Early Years

The most famous man in the world, Jesus of Nazareth, didn't have an especially happy childhood. Despite being generally gentle and highly intelligent, young Jesus was often at odds with his parents.

The prime example of this was when the family traveled from their home in Galilee to Jerusalem for Passover. Jesus, a few months shy of his 13th birthday, secretly left the caravan and was nowhere to be found. For several days, Joseph and Mary searched for their son before finally locating him.

He was not discovered playing with other boys in some adventurous and boisterous game, but rather sitting placidly with the elders in Temple and amazing them with his questions and knowledge of religion and philosophy.

"Please come home with us Jesus," said Joseph.

"I'll come back to your house later. I still have many things to discuss with these learned teachers," the boy replied.

His Mother Mary spoke; first addressing the scholars:

"Thank you gentlemen for the courtesy and kindness you have shown my son. However, you should know that he left us without telling us where he was going. He has been absent from his family for three days."

Then to Jesus she said, "Please come back with us now Jesus."

The boy stared hard at his mother but didn't say anything. Reluctantly, he got up and followed Joseph and Mary outside.

"Why did you come get me?" Jesus demanded to know, as soon as they were out of hearing distance from the group of teachers and elders. "Did you not know that I was doing the business of my Father?"

"We are your parents Jesus," Mary affirmed. "I am your mother and Joseph is your father. You must return home and help in the family business."

"The salvation of mankind is my business," insisted the youth. "And Joseph is not my father."

"I gave birth to you, and Joseph is your earthly father. Does not your Heavenly Father say to honor your parents and their wishes?"

"For now it shall be as you request Mother. I'll stay with you and I will learn carpentry from Joseph, but you must understand that I am destined not to build chairs, tables, and houses; but to build a pathway to heaven where the homes are not made of wood and stone, but of that which is eternal."

Barlow

Over the next three years the boy kept his word and labored in Joseph's shop every day but took no initiative, putting in just enough effort to squeak by. Jesus didn't know it but things were about to change.

A young stranger rushed into the shop as Joseph struggled to lift a heavy door onto a pair of wooden saw horses while Jesus was gazing up at the roof of the barn as he absent-mindedly sanded the top of a just built table.

"Please let me help you with that door sir," said the shabbily dressed youth who was about the same age as Jesus. He had curly black hair and the beginnings of a mustache and beard sprouting on a face that was a few shades lighter than most people of the area.

Without a further word the boy helped Joseph finish his work on that door and three more before Jesus finished smoothing his one table top.

"You're a pretty good carpenter son, what's your name?" Joseph asked.

"The whore I dropped out of didn't keep me around long enough for a first suckle let alone give me a name. She dumped me at a tavern in Jerusalem where they kept and fed me, mostly just calling me 'the kid' or 'brat'. Eventually the customers took to calling me the name of the bar, 'Barlow' and it stuck, so I guess that's my name."

"You're new here. When did you get into town?"

"I've been wandering for close to a year sir, ever since I left the tavern where I was abandoned. I guess I'm looking for something I've never had; perhaps a home. Four days ago I arrived here and have been mucking stables in return for eats. In one of the stables I saw a sturdy wooden bench. The owner said you made it for him. He said you're a fine craftsman and that you might need some help. I was hoping maybe I could work for you in exchange for food and perhaps a corner to sleep in."

Jesus casually listened to the conversation while dawdling with his table top. Putting down his sanding tool he edged closer to Joseph and the newcomer.

“I’m Joseph and that’s my son Jesus, and yes we can use some help. I’ve got a job for you Barlow and we’ll fix up a nice room for you here in the shop. As for food, you’ll eat well, and you’ll dine with the family; my wife Mary as well as Jesus and his younger brothers and sisters.

“You won’t regret it sir. I’ll be a great help and I’m happy to be here doing the Lord’s work.”

“What do you mean by saying carpentry is the Lord’s work?” interrupted Jesus angrily.

“Hi Jesus. I heard about you and I want to learn from you too. But you might be able to learn something from me as well. Carpentry is the Lord’s work. So is farming, mining, sewing, cooking, and anything that people do in their day to day lives. Not everyone can be a Rabbi or a great teacher. But we all serve God in our own way. Another thing; a spiritual leader has to have a flock. Otherwise it would be a bunch of Rabbis preaching to a bunch of Rabbis. How do you think that would work out?”

Jesus laughed in spite of himself and had to agree, saying....

“That’s an excellent point Barlow.”

Looking at the poorly dressed boy who was about the same size and age as himself, Jesus was suddenly aware that he had found a kindred spirit. The pair became fast friends. And to his amazement Jesus discovered that working alongside Barlow, he began to enjoy carpentry work.

Over time, the shop thrived as never before. There was more work coming in than the three of them could handle working six days a week- they rested of course on the Sabbath. Joseph hired more workers. Their tables, chairs, cabinets, benches and such, were so highly prized that soon even the Roman Government came knocking on the barn door with fistfuls of orders.

Barlow and Jesus came up with an improved method of joining wooden sections without the use of the heavy, awkward iron nails of the era. Employing their system the boys were able to craft boxes, chairs, tables, doors and much, much more without one single iron spike being driven through the wood. In

this manner they avoided the unsightliness and the damage often caused by the crude nails of the period.

The joints of their bureaus and drawers and such were connected by dowels driven into slightly smaller pre-made holes. By forcing the dowels into the tinier area, Barlow and Jesus were able to fabricate seamless furniture that looked as though it had been constructed from a single block of wood.

Joseph and Mary

One night after dinner Joseph and Mary were outside their home gazing at the sky while reclining in newly constructed lounges built using the methods developed by Barlow and Jesus.

“He’s a full grown man now Mary, eighteen years old and able to do whatever he wants. I doubt he’ll stay at home much longer. It’s only because of Barlow that he’s stayed as long as he has.”

“Yes Joseph. Barlow was literally a Godsend. His coming here three years ago brought prosperity and stability to our home. We’ve been worried about Jesus all his life.”

“It started when he was a baby in Bethlehem. No sooner had he been born than a group of old men showed up proclaiming that you had given birth to a Messiah. They gave us some money and some other valuables and left as quickly as they came.”

“And we never heard from them again Mary. I think we would have forgotten all about that if Jesus hadn’t started that crazy talk about being the son of the Heavenly Father.”

“Joseph, I’m not sure that it is crazy talk. You know that I had never been with a man before we were married and yet I was pregnant. I told you of the dream. An angel named Gabriel informed me that I was to have a child of God. He also said my 94 year old Aunt Elizabeth was going to have a child – which she did. Elizabeth and her husband had never been able to have children even when they were young.”

“I’m sure you believe the dream Mary but I still am certain it was just that: a dream. I’m sure I’m the real father of Jesus even if you and he don’t think so.”

“You’ve been a wonderful father Joseph and I know he appreciates you. But he’s convinced that someday he’s going to get a message from the heavens setting him on a mission to save the people of the world.”

“I tend to doubt it Mary but I do thank God every day for sending us Barlow. He’s been our son’s best friend and kept him in focus these last few years. Before, he was always getting into trouble with the other children over his wild claims that he’s been chosen to save mankind. Since he’s been spending most of his time with Barlow we don’t hear the accusations from neighbors anymore about Jesus being crazy.”

“That’s been a blessing Joseph. As you say, he is a man now, but I just don’t know what’s going to become of him. I think that Barlow will have more of a hand in whatever our son decides to do with his life than we will.”

Barlow's Real Identity

It was Jesus however who had a hand in changing Barlow's life. As they worked side by side, the two friends discussed all manner of topics, including the young women of the city.

"Lately I've been seeing Sarah, that pretty girl who sometimes comes into the shop with her father. It's fairly serious Jesus. I'm starting to think that I'd like to marry her, but she'll probably never have anything to do with the likes of me."

"Why do you feel that way Barlow? Everyone in the city admires you. You're the best carpenter for miles around, even better than Joseph. The whole region says you have a handsome face, though it's a bit on the light side. In truth you could have your pick of any lady in Galilee."

"Not with the birthing I had. I dropped on the floor from between the legs of a common prostitute who never even looked at me before giving me away, I am literally a bastard. I am....."

"You are wrong Barlow. Your birth was much different than you suspect. You were greatly loved and desired by your real parents. I've known for some time now who you really are."

"What are you saying Jesus? Look, I know you get premonitions and such and they usually do pan out, but how can you know about me?"

"It took a while for me to figure things out Barlow but gradually I pieced it together. At a very young age you were left in the care of an innkeeper in Nazareth, but you weren't dropped off there as you claim."

"How'd I get there then?"

“It was arranged by your aged parents before they died. They trusted a friend, the owner of the tavern, to take care of you and raise you. He was given a generous payment to do so and for about a year he gave you good care. It all changed when he married a greedy woman much younger than himself. She was so costly to maintain that she nearly bankrupted him. It was she who seeded the myth that you were dropped at the doorstep of the inn.”

“I had parents? Tell me about them and tell me how you know all this?”

“Part of it I divined just by thinking. You know that frequently things just come to me. I had a general idea of how you came to be a ward of the Barlow Inn, but I filled in the gaps by speaking with some of the elders.”

“You found somebody that knew about me?”

“Yes I did. I learned that a woman of extreme age and her husband came to the Barlow Inn with a young boy, about two years old. The two old people were in poor health and near death with no one to care for the child after they were gone. For a price, the owner of the establishment agreed to keep the toddler, which was you. As I said, the tavern owner soon fell victim to a grasping, covetous woman who absorbed all the money that was meant for you.”

“Who were the old people and who were my parents?”

“That’s the part you’re not going to believe! You were born three months before I was, to a distant relative of my Mother’s, named Elizabeth. She was very, very old and had never been able to have children. However, in a dream she was told by a spirit that although she was past 90 and her husband close to 100, she would have a child. Against all odds and laws of nature she did become pregnant and just short of her 94th birthday delivered a baby boy. You were that child. Your mother was your mother but your father was not the old man. He was a spirit, a God!”

“That’s impossible Jesus. That’s the same thing that you always say about Joseph, that he isn’t really your father.”

“He really isn’t my father. My mother had a dream too. A spirit came to her and said that Elizabeth, your Mother, was to produce a child, despite being barren and almost a century old. The spirit said to my Mom, ‘You too will have a child Mary. Despite being a virgin, you will bear the son of God.’ My Mom was engaged to Joseph at the time and when they were married she was already pregnant though she had never been with any mortal man.”

Barlow rubbed his forehead repeatedly as if to massage this information into his brain. He didn’t speak for several minutes until after he developed the following conclusion...

“So you and I are cousins number one. And number two we both were fathered by a spirit, or maybe even by God Himself!”

“You got it Barlow. It’s a fact.”

“I don’t think so Jesus. I’m pretty sure I’m going to stick with my yarn of dropping out of a whore who dumped me and ran. That may make me a bastard but I think I’d rather be that than the son of a spirit.”

“Think about it Barlow. This is all in His plan. You didn’t just drop into Joseph’s carpenter shop because you saw a bench he made. You were guided into it by Him.”

“By Him you mean God.”

“Our Father!”

“Maybe your father Jesus, but I’m not convinced.”

“I can do things Barlow, convincing things. You’ve seen a few examples, but I want you to accept what I say on faith and not just because I can perform eerie feats like lifting a heavy bench from the floor without touching it.....”

As he spoke, Jesus cast a hard gaze upon a bulky wooden bench with iron legs. It occupied almost the entire length of one of the shop's walls. As he stared at it, he lifted his pointer finger from his waist towards his nose and the bench rose in synchronicity to the motion of his wrist and hand. Stretching out his fingers as wide as possible Jesus cast his arm toward the ceiling and the bench ascended slowly and steadily until it grazed the underside of the roof.

“Don't make me prove things. From now on accept what I say in faith,” Jesus said sternly as the bench floated back to the floor as he lowered his arm.

“Okay Jesus. After seeing that, I have to believe. But does this mean that since my father is a spirit that I can't marry Sarah?”

“I think you probably can Barlow. As for me I can't marry. Our Father has a plan for me but I don't know what it is yet. The truth is I want to get started on His work but what the job is hasn't been revealed. Sometimes I think I'll be an old man with a beard down to my knees before He finally tells me what I'm supposed to do.”

For almost another year the two men continued to work for Joseph. Barlow married Sarah and moved away. In future, with a new name that he selected for himself, Barlow would become a noted figure in biblical history.

(Author's note: Any reader with an interest, only has to do a little research in 'The Book' to find Barlow's historical name on the Jesus tree. Hint – he was NOT John the Baptist, although John was a cousin to Jesus.)

A full dozen years passed before Jesus finally learned the nature of his earthly mission. His destiny was to preach to, and heal the people of Galilee. More than that, he was to serve himself up as a martyr and be the spark to ignite the flames of a new religion that would spread over the entire earth.

Of Barlow it is reported that in later life, he often spoke of Jesus. When people bemoaned Jesus' death, Barlow said.....

“Don’t cry for Jesus. He did not die. He rose from the dead on the third day and he lives still. He never died, but sailed up to Heaven like a bird on wing. He lives there still as a flesh and blood being reclining on fluffy white clouds. He will return to Earth when all the men and women in all the lands obey his prime directive – ‘Do Unto Others.’ When that happens he will return and build an eternal heaven here on earth.”

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The End.

So concludes this brief attempt to peek into the formative years of the strange carpenter who, as a boy, was considered a lunatic by many of the children of his neighborhood. In my mind I can hear little Abe’s mom telling him, “you can go outside and play for a while but stay away from that crazy boy Jesus. If he comes near you, get back in the house right away.”

In my own life, one of my sons at the age of three or four, reported that he had lived before and had a wife and children in a previous existence. For a few years, up until he reached school age, he often spoke of his wife from the former life.

As for me and my wife, we questioned him and were somewhat amused by his yarns. As he grew, the tales diminished. He finished his school years and began a 20 year long stint in the military. Retiring with both rank and honors, he has led an exciting life, without revisiting the imaginings of his childhood.

But what if I had, or you had, a son who imagined himself to be literally the Son of God? I don’t have the will or the talent to do it, but I think that if some writer sets about to do a full length treatment of the young Jesus, it will make a compelling book, along with the obligatory film to follow.

If you write it, I’ll read it.

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Cape Cod, Massachusetts

Summer of 2018

My intention is to include this narrative in a future collection of short stories. If you are interested you can check out just about everything I've written, on this site as well as on virtually all of the major online retailers.

My most read book is The Creature from the Bridgewater Triangle. My creature sighting not only led to the book but also to appearances in two films as well as a spot on Destination America's Monsters and Mysteries in America.

My second best selling book is Ghosts of Cape Cod, which for more than two years was in the top 10 list of best selling E-books in two sales charts, Travel and Cape Cod. The "Ghosts of Cape Cod" is also an Audio Book narrated by NPR host Scott Pollak.

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