

Lecturer presents new image of Christian leader

By CYNTHIA WENDELL
and BETH JONES

The Foundation of Wayne Community College sponsored a lecture/slide show, "Excavating Jesus," on Thursday, March 21, 2002, in the Music Room of the Dogwood building beginning at 7:30 p.m.

Bill Brettman, Director of the Humanities Program for the Foundation, welcomed guests and thanked Sheila Bishop, Director of The Foundation for Biblical Archaeology, for helping to sponsor the lecture.

TFBA, which raises tax-deductible funds for archeological expeditions, is based in Goldsboro.

Brettman introduced the lecturer for the evening, Dr. James Tabor who spoke to nearly 70 people, including students, faculty, and chiefly, members of the community.

Tabor, archeologist and professor of religious studies at UNC-Charlotte, borrowed the lecture title from a book of the same title, which John Dominic Crossan and Jonathan L. Reed wrote in which they explore "the key discoveries for understanding Jesus in his world."

Tabor's lecture was structured around the "top 10" archeological sites in Israel relevant to an understanding of events in Christ's life.

Tabor, who earned a Ph.D. at the University of Chicago, taught previously at Notre Dame and William and Mary College.

He said he has paid for many of the expeditions he has been part of in Jerusalem.

Using slides to illustrate his points, Tabor suggested that Christ was not so much a carpenter by profession but a stone mason, supporting this contention with passages from the gospels that contain stone imagery and slides that showed stone buildings in

Nazareth and Sepphoris, the area where Christ spent his childhood.

Tabor, who specializes in ancient Judaism and the Christian origins, drew a portrait of Jesus as someone who was aware of urban life, and had been exposed to high culture.

The purpose behind Tabor's lecture was to share what he and other archeologists have learned about "the historical Jesus beyond the text." Tabor proposed that Jesus would have been to Sepphoris, a cultural center being rebuilt during his adolescence.

Tabor called himself a "romanticist archeologist," one who likes to speculate that Jesus walked on some of the same stone steps Tabor and others have trod.

Tabor also spoke of the accidental discoveries that make archeology exciting and sometimes dangerous, noting that some caves like the ones where the Dead Sea Scrolls were found could collapse.

In one of the 11 caves where discoveries have occurred, archeologists have found artifacts arallel the New Testament in cave four.

Tabor of continued archeological research as a result of the lack of funding and time. He has been on 21 digs.

Tabor also said that the ownership of the lands of archeological findings makes digging "tricky": the Greeks own the land but the Palestinians, Jews, and Christians claim an interest in the artifacts. "We need to dig the Essene quarter, but a 'mapping means that every centimeter is analyzed with laser precision, and some countries are reluctant to grant permission."

Tabor gave two Web sites for more information: www.tfba.org and www.unnc.edu/jdtabor. Tabor also answered questions from the audience.

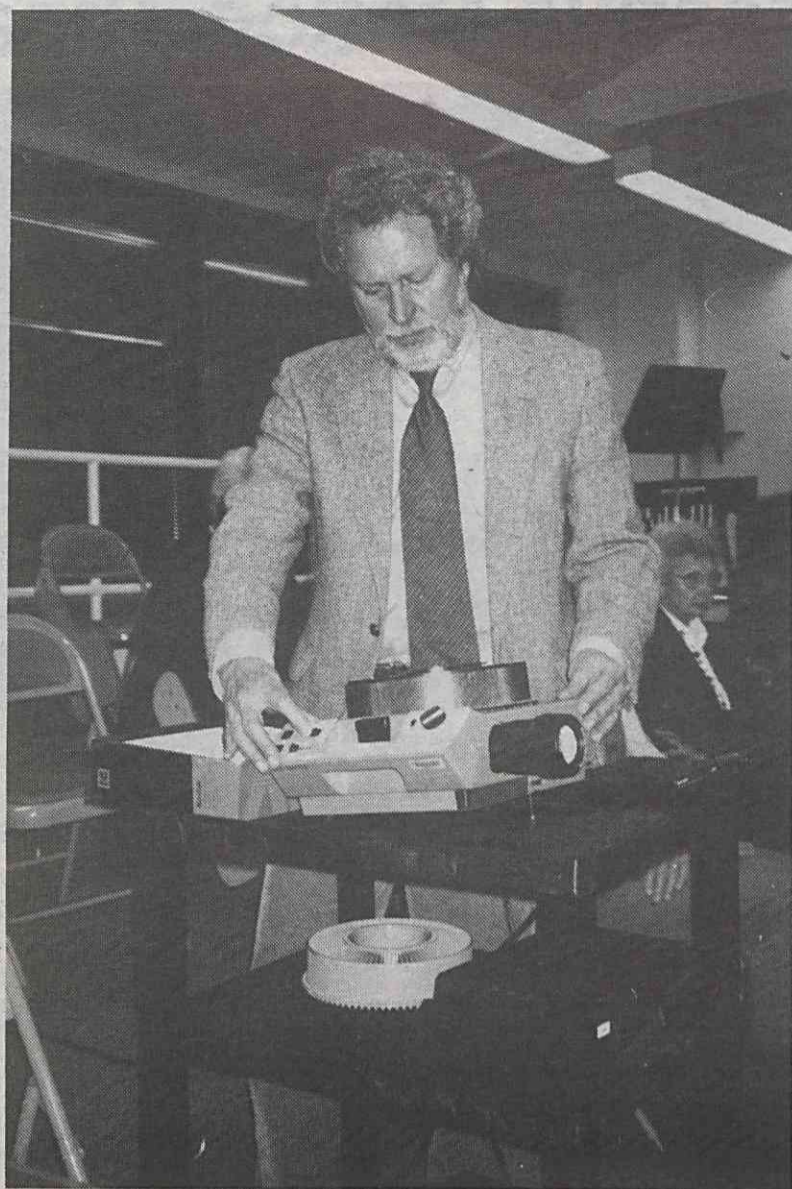


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Dr. James Tabor prepares the slide projector before beginning his lecture, "Excavating Jesus."



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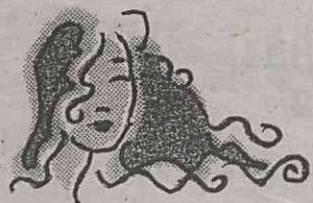


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