

In two previous posts I gave an overview of the letter of James, one of the real gems hidden away in the New Testament (it takes 15 minutes to read it, max. Try it! Great little book.) Now I want to devote several posts to address the question I was originally asked about it. Was it really written by James, the brother of Jesus, as traditionally claimed?

I deal with that question at some length in my book Forgery and Counterforgery. I think the discussion is accessible to the non-expert. Here is how I begin (some of this has been edited to make it slightly more user-friendly). It ends up being an important issue: do we have a writing from Jesus' own brother? Now *that* would be interesting! But, alas, I think not.

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The letter of James begins simply enough: "James, a slave of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes in the dispersion, greetings" (1:1). A number of persons are named James in the New Testament, including the father of Joseph (Jesus' "father," Matt. 1:16), the son of Zebedee (Matt. 4:21 etc.), the son of Alphaeus (Matt. 10:3 etc.), the father of Jude (Luke 6:16), and, most famously, the brother of Jesus (Mark 6:3 etc.). There is a compelling two-pronged argument that the author of this short letter intends his readers to understand that he is the best known James, Jesus' brother, the head of the church in Jerusalem. On one hand, the author does not....

Alas. To see the rest of this post you will need to be a blog member. But there is hope! You can become one. And joining means simply paying a small membership fee, every penny of which goes to charity. So why not??

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