In my previous post explaining why I think the Mythicist position – that there never was a man Jesus – is simply untenable, I pointed out that among the things Paul says, none is more specifically relevant than the fact that he indicates that he was personally acquainted with Jesus’ own brother James (along with Jesus’ disciples Peter and John).

When Paul mentions knowing and spending time with James, it is decidedly not in order to prove that he knew him. The comments he makes are completely incidental, explaining to people who already know about James how it is that he, Paul, met with him on a couple of important occasions. One of these occasions was just three years after Paul converted – so in about 36 CE.

At that time Paul paid a visit to Jerusalem to meet with Cephas and James, the leaders of the church there. Paul is reluctant to mention that he had gone there, since the entire point he is making is that he did not learn anything of relevance for his gospel message from the founders of the church in Jerusalem, but independently knew the truth about Christ’s death and resurrection from a revelation from Christ himself. So he stresses that this meeting was fully three years after he had already known the truth of the gospel and that he didn’t meet with any of the other apostles, only those two.

Fourteen years later …

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Carrier and James the Brother of Jesus
Paul’s Acquaintances: Jesus’ Disciples and Brother