

Sometimes the questions I get from readers are short and to the point, but require long answers over a number of posts. Here's one of the recent ones:

QUESTION:

Could you write a blog on the book of James and why it is considered a forgery?

RESPONSE:

I think this question deserves an entire thread of responses. I haven't talked much about the letter of James on the blog (at least so far as I can remember and tell!). So why not? It's a short "book" - just five brief chapters. You can read it in fifteen minutes. Go ahead! What I say about it will then make better sense.

The best known feature of the letter is that it *seems* to be opposing the writings and teachings of Paul. But does it? Martin Luther, father of the Reformation, thought so. He included the book only as an appendix to the New Testament.

I talk about the letter, and the reasons I don't think it was actually written by James, the brother of Jesus, in both my popular book, Forged, and my longer scholarly book Forgery and Counterforgery. There are indeed a lot of scholars today who think that James actually did write it. I used to think so myself! But when I started looking deeply into the matter, I came away thinking "no way." I'll explain why in later posts.

For now, I'll start the discussion by saying a few words about the book itself, apart from the question of who wrote it. This post and the next come from Forged.

In the New Testament we find at least one book that appears to attack Paul's teachings, or at least a later misinterpretation of Paul's teachings. This is a letter that claims to be written by someone named James. In the early church it was widely assumed that this James was the brother of Jesus.

(This) James was known throughout the history of the early church to have been ...

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