

The Book of James (Part 2) November 15, 2025

The following text is a message from Corner Fringe Ministries that was presented by Daniel Joseph. The original presentation can be viewed at <https://www.cornerfringe.com/media/753xbvg/the-book-of-james-part-2>

*Portions of this document have been edited from the video message to better present a comprehensive, written document. Special attention was given to preserve the original context, but this document is not verbatim. Scripture verses are in the red text with other quotes in blue. Therefore, it is recommended that this document is printed in color. The Hebrew words are generally accompanied by the transliteration into the English alphabet. In most cases, the Hebrew is to be read from right to left.

Authenticity and Authority of James: Luther's Opposition

This transcript of a sermon titled "**The Book Of James (Part 2)**" by Pastor Daniel Joseph of Corner Fringe Ministries, explores the historical **authority and canonicity** of the Epistle of James. Daniel asserts that James was widely accepted as divine scripture by early church figures like **Clement of Rome** and **Origen**, as well as being included in early canons such as the **Peshitta Syriac**. However, the sermon details how the book's authenticity became a subject of debate in the 16th century due to **Martin Luther's** strong objections. Luther controversially questioned James's apostolic authorship and rejected it as authoritative because he believed it **contradicted Paul** by emphasizing **justification by works** over faith alone. The text concludes by affirming James's inclusion in later major canons, arguing that the historical evidence overwhelmingly supports its place as inspired Scripture despite Luther's criticisms.

[Daniel Joseph]

We are going to continue in our series on James, and remember, we're still in this introductory phase of stepping back and getting the behind-the-scenes look at the epistle itself, appreciating a little bit of its historicity, which is really going to be the focus today. In fact, there's only one thing we're going to be looking at, and that is the authority and the canonicity of this epistle.

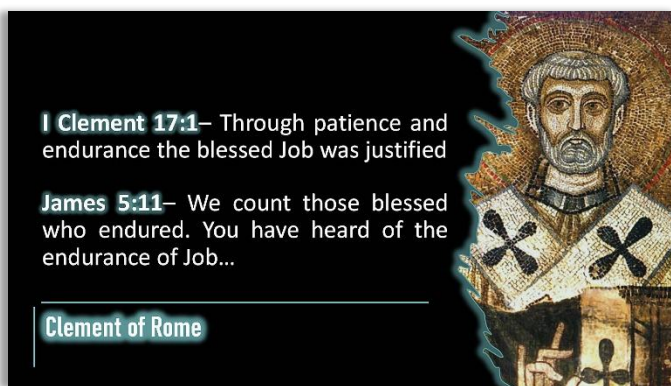
Now, I need you to hear me carefully. Historically speaking, there are times, and my emphasis is on that portion, there have been times where this epistle has been debated. Very important. There have been discussions and debates. There were certain times in Christianity when people raised concerns about the Epistle of James. It is absolutely vital and imperative that we get into the historicity of this book in the context explicitly, to look at the authority. So, what I want to do is begin today by pushing things all the way back as far as we can, going back to the first century.

We have a man by the name of Clement of Rome. It's said that Clement was actually a student of the apostles themselves, even more specifically Peter and Paul. So, we are talking about someone who is as close as you could possibly be to the apostolic gospel, the gospel the apostles brought forward. Now, one of the most important documents we have in existence today in early Christianity is the work known as First Clement, which was written by Clement of Rome, and he wrote this to the Corinthians. So, he's writing for Rome. The Church of Rome is writing to the Church at Corinth, and what's interesting

is that it is building upon the reality of what Paul laid as a foundation. Remember when Paul wrote to the Corinthians, he was writing to them because there were schisms, there were divisions, and there were issues in Corinth. You can only imagine, after the death of Paul, how things went in Corinth. The wheels came off the bus, as they say.

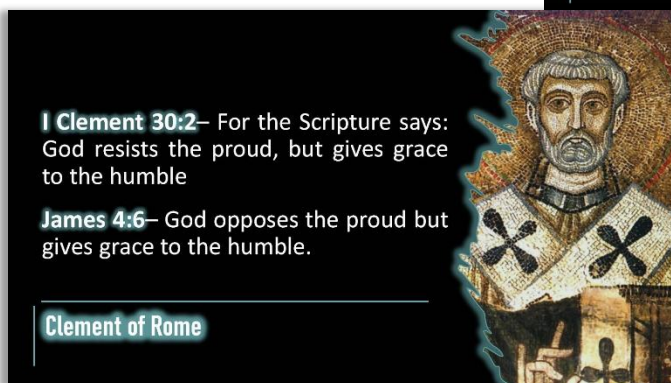
Basically, because of that, Clement steps up to the plate. He writes this behemoth of an epistle. Sixty-five chapters to set things in order, to convict, to edify, and even go beyond that. It's this profound work that's dated to about the end of the first century, so this is a very early attestation.

One thing I can tell you, and this is where I want to get to the point. There is no question that Clement had an intimate knowledge of the Epistle of James, and not just an intimate knowledge; he valued it. So much so that you see in his work, First Clement, he starts drawing from it. So, I want to share some of this with you just to give you an idea. We're not going to cover the gamut, but this gives you an idea.



We read in 1 Clement 17:1—**Through patience and endurance the blessed Job was justified.** Well, that sounds familiar because James said in James 5:11—**Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job...** And where do you think Clement got that? He got it from James.

Looking at 1 Clement 10:1, **Abraham, was called the friend.** Again, that's interesting because this is what James brings to the table. —James 2:23b—**... And he (Abraham) was called the friend of God.**

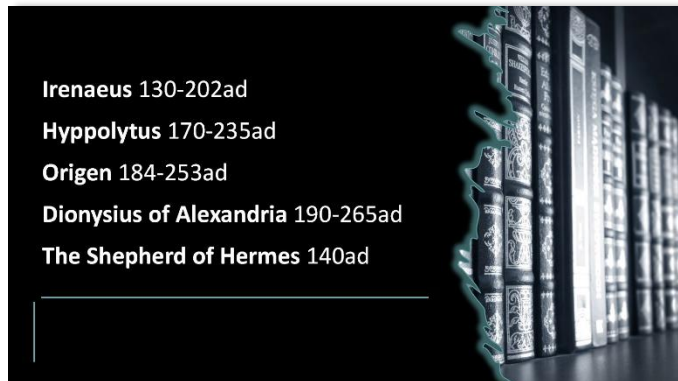


We look at 1 Clement 30:2—**For the Scripture says: God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.** Well, again, it comes right out of James. — James 4:6—**...God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble.**

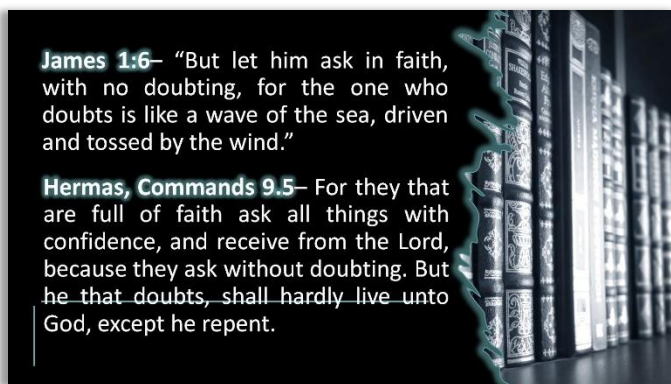
And we could go on. Clement actually talks about Rahab, and James talks about Rahab. There is no question, Clement has this intimate knowledge and respect and values

this epistle and is drawing from it. It's a very, very early attestation.

Then you move forward to all of these early church fathers, men like Irenaeus, who is said to draw from James Chapter 2. Hippolytus of Rome also said to draw from James Chapter 2. Then you have Origen. Now, Origen is the first one in history to actually call the Epistle of James “*divina Scriptura*,” divine Scripture. I mean, we're getting into the ancients here. This is a very, very early attestation to the authority of the epistle itself.



Then you look at moving from Origen, and we have Dionysius of Alexandria, literally a direct quotation from the epistle itself. And then you have the shepherd of Hermes. Now this is the early second century, 140 AD. If you're not familiar with the Shepherd of Hermes, anyone who studied early church history knows this is a profound work; it's all over the place. The Shepherd of Hermes spread throughout the church; it was being read by many. It was very controversial, but even The Shepherd made its way to Codex Sinaiticus, one of the most important biblical manuscripts we have today—incredible.



And so, it's a work that I will flat out tell you, no, I don't value The Shepherd of Hermes as Scripture. But what I can tell you is it has a plethora from James within The Shepherd. There's no question about this. And again, just to prove the point, I'll bring this to the table. James says in James 1:6— “But let him ask in faith, right in Chapter One, with no doubting; the context is if you lack wisdom, you need to ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, driven and tossed by the

wind.” Well, what does The Shepherd say? It says this: —Hermas, Commands 9.5— For they that are full of faith ask all things with confidence, and receive from the Lord, because they ask without doubting. But he that doubts, shall hardly live unto God, except he repent.

We have many, many others I could bring to the table to show there's no question they're drawing from this. In fact, just so you know, this is not just my own opinion. Many scholars have come to the table, like *The Pulpit Commentary* by Spence-Jones, H. D. M. (Henry Donald Maurice)— Again, “whole sections of ‘The Shepherd’ are framed with evident recollection of St. James.” There's no question; there's an abundance of evidence to where you're not going to refute it.

To further press the envelope, getting into the historicity of this epistle, Spence Jones goes on and says this, and listen to this commentary; this is incredible. The Epistle [James] is included in both the ancient Egyptian Versions, the Memphitic and Thebaic, which belong to the third or even possibly to the second century. This is what I really want to zone in on. While even earlier it finds a place in the Peshito Syriac, which undoubtedly dates from the second century. Now, what is the Peshitta? It's the canon of the Word. It's one of the earliest Bibles we have.

Here's a point I want you to appreciate. In the Syriac Peshitta, as it pertains, let's just focus on the New Testament. The original Syriac Peshitta only had 22 books. There are 27 books in our New Testament today. Five books did not make it in the first edition of the Peshitta. They are 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, Jude, and Revelation. Those five books were not included in the earliest Peshitta, but James was; James was included.

So again, I mean, you want to talk about some serious early attestation. Spence goes on and says, "[From the days of Eusebius down to the sixteenth century scarcely a doubt was raised with regard to its authenticity.](#)" Basically, the scholars come on the scene and say, "Listen, the authenticity and canonicity of James were virtually uncontested through the history of Christianity" until you get to the 16th century.

I want to bring this statement to life and show you how true this is. Spence says, "From the days of Eusebius" and we're going to start there. I want to take you back to the church historian, Eusebius, and read the following: —Eusebius, *Church History*— [Since we are dealing with this subject it is proper to sum up the writings of the New Testament which have been already mentioned. First then must be put the holy quaternion of the Gospels, meaning the four Gospels, following them the Acts of the Apostles. After this must be reckoned the epistles of Paul; next in order the extant former epistle of John, and likewise the epistle of Peter, must be maintained.](#)

Moving ahead, [After them is to be placed, if it really seem proper, the Apocalypse of John, meaning the Book of Revelation, concerning which we shall give the different opinions at the proper time. These then belong among the accepted writings](#) (emphasis added). What is called the *homologoumena* (ὁμολογούμενα) in Greek, or simply, in English, these are the accepted writings.

Here's what I want you to see. Eusebius lays out separate categories where certain books are falling. Everything we just went through falls under here, the accepted writings, but that's not the only category. We press on: [Among the antilegomena \(ἀντιλεγόμενα\), these are the disputed writings, which are nevertheless recognized by many; he doesn't say they're recognized by some, he says they're recognized by many, and are extant, meaning to this day we have them, the so-called epistle of James and that of Jude, also the second epistle of Peter, and those that are called the second and third of John, whether they belong to the evangelist or to another person of the same name](#) (emphasis added).

In other words, Eusebius doesn't know who 2 and 3 John belong to. But be that as it may, look at this. We're dealing with the Epistle of James, Jude, 2 Peter, and 2 and 3 John, all of which today are irrefutable; we call this divine scripture. It's divinely inspired, meaning it's totally authoritative. We submit to the authority of these books.

But here's what I want to go back to. He said it's "nevertheless recognized by many." Now there is discussion; this is what I wanted to tell you: As you go through history, there are some who raised concerns about it. Now, what would be the difference between the people here that are being recognized by many and the "some" that struggle with it? I want you to understand when we get into the disputed writings, it doesn't mean the ones they're rejecting. That's not the concept of disputed writings. It's the difference of whether that epistle is getting read publicly in the church or whether they're at home reading it privately.

So, there are those that were accepting it, and this tells you, Eusebius is telling you, there are churches out there which are preaching from the pulpit the Epistle of James, while there are others holding back.

It doesn't mean they're not reading it. It doesn't mean they don't even value it. It just means they're not going to preach it publicly. Alright, so here you're seeing this, but as I showed you already. Going to the ancients, going back even to the earliest, which is the Peshitta. There's no question that many absolutely had it as scripture and they valued it.

Eusebius goes on to further put this into perspective. He says this: **Among the rejected writings** (emphasis added), and this would be *Notha* (Νόθα). These are the *Notha*. This is the illegitimate group, totally rejected; **must be reckoned also the Acts of Paul, and the so-called Shepherd**, as in the Shepherd of Hermes **and the Apocalypse of Peter, and in addition to these the extant epistle of Barnabas**. I am not a fan of the Epistle of Barnabas. That's a letter I have studied over the years, and I'll reserve my comments on it, but it rightfully belongs under *Notha*. It rightfully belongs in the rejected writings. And then it says, **And the so-called Teachings of the Apostles**,; which is the Didache. It's one of the earliest Christian documents we have, which is really kind of a phenomenal read. But these in Eusebius's times and in his geographical location fall under the group of "we're rejecting these." These will not be read publicly ever; this was the mindset.

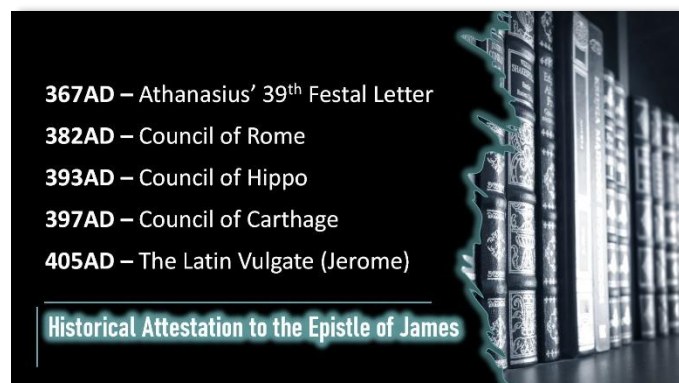
But then Eusebius goes on: **And besides, as I said, the Apocalypse of John**, the Book of Revelation, **if it seem proper, which some, as I said, reject, but which others class with the accepted books** (emphasis added). Notice, I mean, we're not even talking about the disputed category. We're talking about totally rejected. The Book of Revelation, at this time, coming from Eusebius, was rejected by some; they would not accept it, and they would not read it, while others were preaching from the Book of Revelation. It just shows you the morphing of Christianity and what it would accept and what it would reject; there's a lot of discussion.

As we go back to 367 AD, which is a couple of years ahead of Eusebius, we find Athanasius coming on the scene, and in his 39th Festal Letter, which is his Easter letter. They would have him do this annual Easter letter. Athanasius brought forth a canon. In fact, his canon is the very canon we have today in our Bibles; it's unbelievable. This is the earliest attestation to the canon once we hit the 4th century. In fact, I'll tell you, once you get to the 4th century, Christianity and its canon become crystallized, and things begin to lock down. With Athanasius, the New Testament is as we have it today and includes the Book of James.

Then we move to the Council of Rome with Pope Damasus presiding at the Council of Rome. He's important because he's the one who commissioned Jerome to do one of the greatest works in the history of Christianity, which was to create the Vulgate, the Latin translation. That was the Bible for over a thousand years. And so during this council, the Council of Rome brought the canon we have today and said, "This is scripture." We're closing the canon; these are all the accepted books. What book is included? The Book of James.

Moving ahead to the Council of Hippo, which the famed Augustine presided over. The Council of Hippo follows the Council of Rome, and they, too, make a declaration,

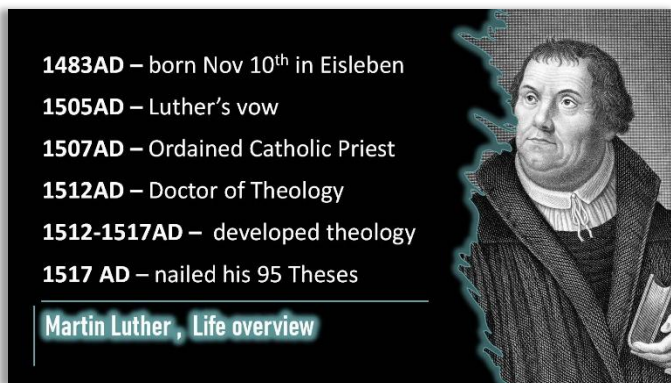
"This is scripture, James included." Moving ahead, the Council of Carthage, which again, Augustine and



Aurelius were together at, with Aurelius technically presiding over, but Augustine was present. They would reiterate what the Council of Rome said and what the Council of Hippo said, and they would say, "This is scripture as we have it today, including James."

And then, of course, the most famed Bible to this day, if you will, some would argue, is the Latin Vulgate, and it included James. And so, what I'm telling you is as you go throughout history and you look at this, man, James was definitely received. We're talking about what the ancients thought.

And so, as we look at this statement made by Spence Jones—Spence-Jones, H.D.M. *The Pulpit Commentary*—[From the days of Eusebius down to the sixteenth century scarcely a doubt was raised with regard to its authenticity.](#) That is a very, very accurate statement.



What happened in the 16th century? I'll tell you what happened. Martin Luther. Martin Luther comes on the scene. To give you a little bit of perspective on Martin Luther, I'm going to give you a brief overview of his life.

Beginning in, 1483, Luther was born on November 10th in Germany. In 1505, and this is critical, at the young age of 21, he's almost 22 years old Luther has a traumatic experience. This brutal thunderstorm rolled

in. It's so terrifying and so fierce that Luther actually makes a vow, and he says, "If I make it through this thunderstorm, I'm going to commit my life. I'm going to become a monk." He makes it through the thunderstorm, and he makes good on the vow. He goes into the Augustinian monastery and actually becomes a monk. This happened because of the traumatic experience.

Only two years later, he would be ordained a Catholic priest. So, this is a man immersed in Roman Catholicism, immersed in the Catholic Church. Five years later, he would get his Doctor of Theology. And this is when Luther would begin to teach. He becomes a professor at the University of Wittenberg. So, Luther is just rising and rising and rising.

Then we see over the next five years, 1512 to 1517, is where he begins to be enlightened, one might say, where he begins to develop his understanding of what we understand today in regard to Luther and what he's most well-known for, and that is being saved or justified by faith alone. By faith alone. This begins to develop. He really becomes a scholar in the Word.

As we come to the end of 1517, in October, one of the most pivotal moments in the history of Christianity happens right here; it's the birth of the Reformation. It's where Luther nailed his 95 theses to the church door at Wittenberg, and these 95 theses ripped the Catholic Church to shreds, rightfully so. Luther had definitely crossed a line here that many others would have never crossed. He got bold because he started to see the corruption that existed in the Catholic Church, and it was abhorrent to him.

The fact that you would have indulgences—one of his theses, number 27 specifically attacked indulgences, by which the Catholic Church found a great way to raise money so they could repair St.

Peter's Basilica in Rome. They told people, "Listen, if you don't want to be tormented in Purgatory, we can shorten your stay; just give us some money." So much so that the propaganda arm Johann Tetzel came out with this little poem: "As soon as the coin in the coffer rings, the soul from purgatory springs." Luther was in the throes of the Catholic Church, doing this, trying to compel people and preying upon their fear that, yeah, if you don't give us money, you're going to spend who knows how long in purgatory suffering.

Ultimately, Luther would altogether reject the whole notion of purgatory as a totally man-made doctrine. When Luther sees this, he's had enough. I must tell you, I think much of what Luther exposed in the Catholic Church was noble. Those 95 theses were the birth of the Reformation. Luther didn't set out thinking, "Now I'm going to create a whole new faith, a whole new denomination." That wasn't the case. He was looking at a church which he had grown up in, that he's been immersed in, and it's totally corrupt; he wants to purge the corruption and move on. That's all he's looking to do.

Then we move a couple of years ahead, not very far, to 1519, and then it gets into the very well-known Leipzig debate, and we could do multiple messages on that alone. But this is where Luther denies papal supremacy, and he declares scripture alone has the authority, something that we can all get behind. He was saying, "You know what, the authority is in the Bible; it's not in man". Luther saw this. So, in the Leipzig debate, he's ripping all of this corruption that has crept into the church to shreds.

Then you come to 1520, and it's another cross-the-line moment. In 1520, Luther had this work—it's kind of a treatise, if you will—on the Babylonian captivity. And there he is, I mean, no holds barred, very frank, and very forward about what he thinks about the Catholic Church. To give you an idea, one of the quotes is the following: "I know for certain that the Pope is the Antichrist, and his throne is that of Satan himself."



Now, if we were living in the days of Luther, I personally would have stood with him in that statement. How do you think that went over? Well, the next year, he was excommunicated. That's not going to go over well; you don't challenge papal authority. You don't challenge the system of the Catholic Church and survive that. In fact, he's excommunicated by Pope Leo X and summoned by the Holy Roman Emperor Charles to come to the Diet of Worms (*Reichstag zu Worms*) in Worms, Germany.

Why do you think he's being summoned? They are done. What's crazy is the next thing that happens is this: In 1521-22, Luther is abducted, but it's not a bad abduction, as crazy as that sounds. Frederick the Wise saw what the church was doing and was terrified that Luther was going to be assassinated or arrested at the very least. He has him abducted and hides him away in Wartburg Castle. This is where Luther would change the world. That is not hyperbole; he would actually change the world. He would literally translate the Bible, and his manuscripts that he was working on weren't a translation from the Vulgate, from the Latin. His translation came primarily from Erasmus's Greek New Testament. He translated it from Greek into German.

The mindset of Luther is the people, the poor people, the lay people, need to have the Word for themselves and get it out of the hands of the corrupt Roman Catholic Church which is abusing its power. And the beauty of that mindset (John 8:32) the truth will set you free. Give the Bible to everyone. It is not an exaggeration to say this moment, where Luther translates the New Testament, is one of the greatest moments in the history of Western Christianity, probably second only to the Vulgate. It transformed Germany itself and actually reformed its own language. It ended up reforming Europe and ultimately the world. Luther is considered to be one of the most influential men in the history of Christianity. He's called the father of Protestantism.

I can't put into words the magnitude of this man and his influence. Then the rest of his life, prior to his death in 1546: he realized the papal lie, the Roman Catholic lie stating priests shouldn't get married. He was being enlightened by the Scriptures, so he gets married, and he goes on preaching and teaching. His teaching launched the Reformation, and it spread like fire.

I want to highlight the totality of Luther's life is the time spent at Wartburg Castle when he translated the Bible from Greek into German. I believe that work can be tangibly felt, even today, more than we could possibly appreciate, but I'm going to try to put it into context for you.

That translation, and specifically just the New Testament, Luther's New Testament, has the same 27 books we have, but guess what? They were organized a little differently. He compartmentalized 23 books of the New Testament and separated four. Which four? These four: Hebrews, James, Jude, and Revelation. It's just ironic; I chuckled this morning when it hit me. I thought to myself, "Oh my goodness, at this point, because we have started James, I've done a study of three of these four books." That'll be more enlightening by the time we get to the end of today.

These four books he did not hold at the same level as the rest of the New Testament. He had a two-tier cannon. So, these books he put at the end. Now, I'm going to show you what Luther wrote in his Bible. He has a preface to this part that he saved for the end of his 1522, which would be called the September Testament. I want to show you what he said: — Martin Luther, *Preface to the Book of Hebrews*— "Hitherto," or in other words, "therefore," "[we have had the right certain chief books of the New Testament,](#)" meaning all those 23 other books; outside of these, those are chief books. These are the ones which are wholly divine and authoritative. But "[the four following had, in ancient times, a different reputation.](#)"

Sometimes when you start peeling back history you begin to mourn. For me, what we're about to go through; I mourn on the verge of weeping; it's so painful. It's hard for me to fathom that a guy like Luther, who had literally influenced the entire world—Protestantism exists in large part because of Luther's work—and here, in his opening statement about Hebrews, James, Jude, and Revelation, he declares, they had a different reputation. What does that indicate? If you're a layperson, and remember the whole point of this 1522 New Testament is to reach the poor people, the people who haven't had the Word for themselves. They don't have access to church history. They don't know.

So, if I'm going through the New Testament, and I've read these beautiful 23 books, and then I get to this point, and he tells me that Hebrews, James, Jude, and Revelation—let's say—have a different reputation, I'm going to tell you what I think. I would think, I don't want these. If you're telling me the early church rejected these, why are we even talking about this? You know what blows my mind? You make a statement like this, that in ancient times, they had a different reputation. Well, do tell. The only

problem is he doesn't tell; he says nothing. Luther made this radical statement, and there is nothing from the ancients that follows. For me, as a student of the Word, the lack of that kind of discipline is alarming, especially when he was literally doing a translation of the Bible, and this was inserted within.

Let me show you what he says next. He doesn't get into what the ancients say; he says this: *In the first place, that this Epistle [Hebrews] is not St. Paul's, nor any other apostle's is proved by the fact that it says, in Hebrews 2:3, that this doctrine has come to us and remains among us through those who themselves heard it from the Lord.* In other words, what he's saying is that we know Hebrews isn't an eyewitness account. Reading this, we're just going to discard it; it's not an eyewitness. Well, here's the deal. Luke is not an eyewitness; he bore witness to the accounts. Do we believe the Gospel of Luke is Scripture? Do you believe Acts? That's the second book of Luke. Do you believe that's Scripture? I mean, it's astounding; you want to talk about a feeble argument.

We read on. *Thus it is clear that he speaks of the apostles as a disciple to whom this doctrine has come from the apostles, perhaps long after them.* He doesn't know. Jumping ahead, *Again, there is a hard knot*, meaning this is an enigma, this is a conundrum, *in the fact that in chapters 6 and 10*, and keep in mind we're talking about Hebrews, *it flatly denies and forbids to sinners repentance after baptism, and in Hebrews 12:17, it says that Esau sought repentance and did not find it.* (Emphasis added).

This is so concerning. I have a really hard time wrapping my arms around this Christian icon of Luther making these statements. Everyone can go to your Bibles, open up to Hebrews 6 or Hebrews 10, and there is some strong language. But it doesn't say what he's conveying: that if you sinned after you were baptized, there's no hope for you or your loss for all eternity. That's not what it says. What it says is that if we willfully sin after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins. The writer of Hebrews is saying the person who is rebelling and refuses to turn back—he can't be saved. Luther turns that into if you sin at all after you're baptized, you're doomed. It's not what the writer conveys. This is very concerning and it is in his Bible.

Continuing: *"This seems, from what he just said, as it stands, to be against all the Gospels and St. Paul's epistles; and although one might make a gloss on it, the words are so clear that I do not know whether that would be sufficient."* Isn't that amazing? He just portrayed the Book of Hebrews as the antithesis, the arch enemy to that of the Gospels and the writings of Paul. Again, if I'm this poor German soul who has never had a Bible in my hand, but now I have it in simple German that I can read, and I read this part, I'm not going into Hebrews. No way, I don't need that. Why would I waste my time?

He goes on and says, *"My opinion is that it is an epistle of many pieces put together, and it does not deal with any one subject in an orderly way."* I have 63 weeks of teachings that prove differently. You will be hard-pressed to find a more sophisticated approach to Christology than the Book of Hebrews. It's a masterpiece; it is magnificent and it is awe-inspiring.

Jumping ahead, Luther says, *"And although, as he himself testifies in Hebrews 6:1, he does not lay the foundation of faith, which is the work of an apostle ..."* This is another moment of lack of discipline because I'm going to say you can go home, read the Word, and guess what you will see? The writer never said he didn't lay the foundation of faith. He said, not lying, and in the Greek, it's there, *palin* (πάλιν), "laying again" the foundation of faith from dead works, repentance. What the writer is saying is that we need to move from the elementary principles into the deeper things of God; that is what he's conveying. Luther turns it on its head, and this is a guy who knows Greek. I struggle with the lack of discipline here with a guy who can handle the Greek quite well, and he's trying to convince his audience of this. Now,

that is astounding to me. Therefore, what the argument states is, if it's not the work of an apostle, we can't trust it.

... nevertheless he does build finely thereon, now listen, [with] gold, silver, precious stones, as St. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 3:12. Therefore we should not be hindered, even though wood, straw or hay be mixed in with them ... I'm going to give you insight into what he's referring to. The Christological piece the writer of Hebrews brings in, well, that to him is the gold, the silver, and the precious stones. But the radical obedience that is demanded by the faith, when he comes out and says in Hebrews 10:26, **"For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth ...,"** Luther calls that wood, straw, and hay. In other words, he's saying the Book of Hebrews is holy mixed with the profane.

Here's what I can tell you. If you were just to post this statement as is online, with no name affixed to it, there's only one way to describe it. Heresy. In fact, I'll just flat out tell you, there was a gentleman over a decade ago, who attempted to disparage the Book of Hebrews. Why? It didn't fit his theology, and that, by definition, my friends, is heresy. This is the problem that Luther has.

He goes on, **"but accept this fine teaching with all honor; though to be sure, we cannot put it on the same level with the apostolic epistles."** (Emphasis added). Luther says it is not authoritative, not at the level of all the other 23 gospels and epistles that we have in the New Testament.

I want to jump ahead now and get to our subject. This is what he has to say about the Epistle of James. **Though this epistle of St. James was rejected by the ancients, I praise it and consider it a good book, because it sets up no doctrines of men but vigorously promulgates the law of God.** (Emphasis added). Again, I have a problem with this, and this is why, at the beginning of this teaching, I went back and showed you the ancients. I went back and clearly showed you the early attestation to this, yet Luther comes and flat-out says it is rejected. Again, you're a poor German soul. You've opened the book, and you're getting close to the end of Luther's Bible, of the New Testament, and then you read this preface to the Book of James. Are you going to read it? Are you going to digest it as authoritative when it was rejected?

Again, I want to make a special note. Is he going to go on and show evidence? You make a statement like this: Show me. What are you talking about? Nothing, not a whisper. But he does go on and say this: **However, to state my own opinion about it, though without prejudice to anyone, I do not regard it as the writing of an apostle; and my reasons follow. In the first place it is flatly against St. Paul and all the rest of Scripture in ascribing justification to works.** Luther literally just presented a false dichotomy here. In other words, you can't believe in the doctrine expressed by the Apostle Paul and in the rest of Scripture, or that of James. You have to pick either one or the other. They're diametrically opposed to one another. Luther is pitting Paul against James.

It's interesting to me; I still see the same rhetoric today. There's this notion, this idea, that there is no biblical harmony between law and grace. There's no relationship whatsoever to faith and works. And yet I can tell you, as we begin to go through this series, you're going to see the biblical relationship, the beautiful harmony, and the natural spiritual relationship that exists between these things, between faith and works, and between law and grace. This is not an opposition.

It says that Abraham was justified by his works when he offered his son Isaac; though in Romans 4 St. Paul teaches to the contrary, meaning James and Paul couldn't be farther apart. They're not saying the same thing; they're opposing one another. **That Abraham was justified apart from works, by his faith**

alone, before he had offered his son, and proves it by Moses in Genesis 15. Now although this epistle might be helped, meaning the Epistle of James, and an interpretation devised for this justification by works, **it cannot be defended in its application to works of Moses' statement in Genesis 15.** (Emphasis added).

It is infuriating that a man at this level shows such a lack of discipline. Any scholar worth his weight in salt knows you do not isolate a passage from the rest of Scripture, and that is literally what he just did. What he's saying is that when we talk about being justified, you don't get to go outside of Genesis 15. The only verse you can look at in regard to being justified is Genesis 15:6.

Oh, my goodness, could you imagine if I took the pulpit and told you, "You can't go outside of Luke 14:26, where Yeshua says, **"If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple."** You can't go outside of that. This is literally what he's doing. It is so hard for me to understand how this is even possible, and this was in the Bible. The Bible, which scholars will tell you across the board, changed the world. That's unbelievable.

For Moses is speaking here only of Abraham's faith, and not of his works, as St. Paul demonstrates in Romans 4. This fault, therefore, proves that this epistle is not the work of any apostle. There's no way this is authoritative; it totally contradicts. Can we just imagine for one moment, could it be you, Luther? I mean, just for one moment, can we ask the question, could you not understand? Could James be the authentic, authoritative, divinely inspired Holy Word of God conveyed by the Holy Spirit, the truth? Could it be you who doesn't understand?

He goes on: "In the second place its purpose is to teach Christians, but in all this long teaching it does not once mention the Passion," meaning the crucifixion, "the resurrection, or the Spirit of Christ. He names Christ several times; however he teaches nothing about him, but only speaks of general faith in God." Do you know what's ironic? This is modern-day scholarship. Pastors, teachers, anyone who has spent time in the Epistle of James, do you know what they're astounded by? The doctrine—how rich the doctrine of Christ is embedded within James. In fact, not some, but many, have gone as far as to say there is no other epistle so rich in the doctrine of Christ as that of James, outside of the Gospels. That's not kidding. In other words, one thing you're going to see as we start motoring through the Epistle of James, is that this is the teachings of Yeshua.

I think of those words that Yeshua said to Philip in John 14:9, **"Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip?"** That's how I feel. You've gone through the epistle, Luther. You've gone through the Epistle of James, and you don't see Jesus? The whole thing is filled with Jesus's teachings. It's astounding to me.

Now it is the office of a true apostle to preach of the Passion and resurrection and office of Christ, and to lay the foundation for faith in him, as Christ himself says in John 15, "You shall bear witness to me." Now, if you were just to encapsulate that statement, I wholeheartedly agree; that's true. That is a true statement. All the genuine sacred books agree in this, that all of them preach and inculcate Christ. And that is the true test by which to judge all books, when we see whether or not they inculcate Christ. For all the Scriptures show us Christ, Romans 3; and St. Paul will know nothing but Christ, 1 Corinthians 2. Whatever does not teach Christ is not apostolic, even though St. Peter or St. Paul does the teaching.

And then he says this, get this: [Again, whatever preaches Christ would be apostolic, even if Judas](#), as in Judas Iscariot, [Annas, Pilate, and Herod were doing it](#). All the betrayers of the LORD at the crescendo of His crucifixion, Luther is saying, if they would preach Christ, their words would be apostolic. It's dumbfounding that he would make such an error, such a ridiculous error like this, because actually Scripture tells us that people would come preaching another Jesus who's not another. They can come preaching the gospel of Christ, but (Matthew 7:16), **"You will know them by their fruits."** Paul says in Galatians 2:17, **"But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is Christ therefore a minister of sin?"**

In Matthew Chapter 7, we have Christians professing Christ, who, according to Luther, don't care what you look like. You could be Judas Iscariot; that's apostolic. Tell that to the Christians who are crying out in Matthew 7:22-23—²² **Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?'** ²³ **And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'** This almost seems fictional. If I didn't personally know that this was authentic, I would have said someone was setting him up; this is not Luther. There's no way a guy who could transform the world would say this stuff. It blows my mind.

He goes on and says this: ["But this James does nothing more than drive to the law and to its works. Besides, he throws things together so chaotically that it seems to me he must have been some good, pious man, who took a few sayings from the disciples of the apostles and thus tossed them off on paper."](#) He's basically saying, "James is a theological word salad. Nobody can make any sense out of it; it's total chaos." [Or it may perhaps have been written by someone on the basis of his preaching. He calls the law a "law of liberty," though Paul calls it a law of slavery, of wrath, of death, and of sin. Moreover he cites the sayings of St. Peter: "Love covers a multitude of sins," which is actually Proverbs 10:12, and again, Humble yourselves under the hand of God;" also the saying of St. Paul in Galatians 5, "The Spirit lusteth against envy."](#)

[And yet, in point of time, St. James was put to death by Herod in Jerusalem, before St. Peter. So it seems that this author came long after St. Peter and St. Paul](#), or you have the wrong James. And it's recognized there's a list of Lutheran scholars who flat out say Luther was mistaken; he was way mistaken. The James he's talking about died in Acts Chapter 12. It's not this James. The one who wrote this book was the brother of Yeshua. It is astounding to me that as you start going through this with a fine-tooth comb, it's a train wreck.

[In a word, he wanted to guard against those who relied on faith without works ...](#) Stop there because this is going to become palpable as we delve deep into James. When we get into the deep end of this, this is going to matter when talking about this. And even Luther recognizes that James, whom he wanted to be on guard against, said, "If you think you're just going to have a cognitive faith, wait a second; there's more to it." [But was unequal to the task in spirit, thought, and words.](#) It's astounding to me that he made that statement. [He mangles the Scriptures and thereby opposes Paul and all Scripture](#) (emphasis added).

He literally said this. He mutilates the Word by definition. Again, if you just grab this, could you imagine if I just took this and said, "Here are my thoughts on James," and I made a post under my name, and I just copied and pasted and put that out? I'd be called a heretic before the sun goes down. A heretic, and rightfully so. It is a frightening thing to me that this has been swept completely under the rug—nothing to see here. There's nothing to see here. He literally dismantles James and accuses James of abusing the Holy Word of God.

He tries to accomplish by harping on the law what the apostles accomplish by stimulating people to love. I have so much to say in regard to this that I'm saving as we get into this series. **Therefore, I will not have him in my Bible to be numbered among the true chief books**, though I would not thereby prevent anyone from including or extolling him as he pleases, for there are otherwise many good sayings in him. (Emphasis added). After you just said that he mutilates Scripture, then you want to come and say, "Well, you know, there's some good; there might be some good things, some nuggets." Again, he's kind of taking the mentality of Hebrews that, you know, wood, straw, and hay—all this weak stuff that is not profitable—is mixed with the holy. This is what he's doing.

One man is no man in worldly things; how, then, should this single man alone avail against Paul and all the rest of Scripture? (Emphasis added). That hardly needs any commentary. This is where he leaves it. There's no way; they cannot be friends, and they cannot be reconciled; it totally opposes.

Now, if I'm that poor German soul and I'm reading this, I'm done. I read the first 23; I'm not going to Hebrews, and I'm definitely not going to James. And we didn't even get into his commentary on Jude and Revelation, and I'm not going to take you there today. James was the focus. I want you to appreciate that there's some real history here which exists in creating an antithesis between law and grace, between faith and works, and I'm telling you, there's a beautiful biblical relationship that does exist. And it is really something when you see Protestants today serving as an echo chamber for this rhetoric. And this series is going to break that down, not through my opinion; we're going to get biblical. Amen?

[Closing prayer]

Abba Father, we give You praise and glory, LORD, and going through this history rips my heart out. It's gut-wrenching. I don't want to believe any of it. And the words that You said (Matthew 24:24), **if possible, even the elect** would be deceived. Those are the words that come to my mind. And how Satan presents himself as an angel of light. As ministers of righteousness would come and declare Jesus, but inside they are ravenous wolves tearing the sheep apart, leading us away from Your Holy Word. There is a perfect balance that is struck in Your Word.

And LORD, more than any time, we're told by the Apostle Paul (1 Corinthians 2:11), **"No one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God."** There's not a person here that can attempt to go to Your Word and say, "I will go in understanding. I will achieve and I will get the riches of the kingdom apart from Your Spirit." That's impossible. And that spirit is only given when we submit to You, Yeshua. Whoever would believe in You, out of his heart would flow the *mayim chaim* (מַיִם חַיִּים). The Spirit of the Living God is to come out of our mouths. It's to come out of our lives, not just loving in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.

LORD, I pray we become people who allow the totality of the Word to speak. It is You alone who is to shape our understanding. And LORD, the deception that's out there is so great, I can't even believe it. When we start peeling back layers of Christian history like this, I don't want to believe it. And I know that even despite all that, because of the power of Your grace, You have moved so mightily in the midst of all of it to those who gave their heart to You and held nothing back. They could identify as Catholic, they could identify as Lutheran, but I know this: You cannot deny Yourself. Once a person gives his or her heart to You, You will bring them in, and for that grace, LORD, I am thankful.

And LORD, I recognize I didn't grow up keeping the Sabbath, and I didn't even know what the Torah was. I knew nothing of Yom Kippur. And yet because of Your good grace and faithfulness, You brought me in. You brought me into the deeper things. And it is clear to me, LORD, that Your Word (Hebrews 4:12) **is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword**, and it is the only thing that gives us discernment to know the difference between right, that which is right, and that which appears to be right. We can't do it.

And so, LORD, we invite You; LORD Yeshua, You need to take the helm of this series. And may there not be one, not even one teaching that You have not organized or You have not spoken. Push me out of the way, and only let Your name be glorified, and only let the Spirit of Your truth come forth. And so, we just thank You for Your goodness, Yeshua. We pray this in Your name. Amen.