

James 3:13-18
Earthly and Heavenly Wisdom – 3

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Introduction

Wisdom is more than knowledge. Knowledge is essential, but wisdom involves how we live according to our knowledge. **There are two different types of wisdom.** One is of God and is true.

With God's wisdom comes blessing. The world also presents a type of wisdom, but it is false. It might seem right in the immediate situation, but it contains the seeds of disaster.

In this passage of James, wisdom is given as another test of true and living faith. **The kind of faith a person possesses will be evidenced by the kind of life they live.** Those who possess earthly wisdom will demonstrate that wisdom in their choices and their lifestyle. Those who possess God's wisdom will evidence it by a Spirit controlled life

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James 3:13-18

Who *is* wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct *that* his works *are done* in the meekness of wisdom. ¹⁴ But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. ¹⁵ This wisdom does not descend from above, but *is* earthly, sensual, demonic. ¹⁶ For where envy and self-seeking *exist*, confusion and every evil thing *are* there. ¹⁷ But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. ¹⁸ Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

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The Test of Wisdom

James 3:13

Who *is* wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct *that* his works *are done* in the meekness of wisdom.

We looked at the words “understanding” and “wisdom”.

Understanding here refers to “specialized knowledge” of knowing how to live righteously.”

Wisdom refers to implementing that knowledge into living righteously.

Our lives should be evidenced by works done in meekness and wisdom.

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False Wisdom - Motivation

James 3:14

But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth.

The wisdom that is of the world, is **based on man's own understanding, standards, and objectives, is false and ungodly**. In false wisdom, man is supreme. False wisdom does not recognize God's sovereignty, God's will, or God's truth.

It gives rise to bitter envy and self-seeking in the core of our being. It results in a me first attitude which is contrary to a Christ centered life.

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False Wisdom – Its Characteristics

James 3:15

This wisdom does not descend from above, but *is* earthly, sensual, demonic.

False wisdom “**does not descend from above**”. True wisdom is given by revelation by God's Spirit. False wisdom is **all that which is other than God's**.

There are three characteristics of false wisdom and they correspond to the three great enemies of the

believer. They are the world, the flesh, and the devil. These correspond to false wisdom in that it is earthly (of the world), sensual (of the flesh), and demonic (of the devil).

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False Wisdom – Its Characteristics

James 3:15

This wisdom does not descend from above, but *is* earthly, sensual, demonic.

False Wisdom is Earthly

The wisdom of this world is **limited** to the present, material world of time and space. It is restricted to things that man can theorize, discover, and accomplish by himself. It has no place for God or the things of God. It has no place for spiritual truth or illumination.

Earthly wisdom is **motivated by pride and centers on self**. It spawns a society whose cry is “Do your own thing,” “Have it your way,” and “Look out for number one.” It pervades philosophy, education, politics, economics, sociology, psychology, and every other dimension and aspect of contemporary human life.

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False Wisdom – Its Characteristics

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This wisdom does not descend from above, but *is* earthly, sensual, demonic.

False Wisdom is Sensual

False wisdom is **sensual, natural, fleshly**. It relates only to the fallen, unredeemed man, who is corrupted by the Fall and separated from God. It originates in the “natural man [who] does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” (1 Cor. 2:14).

Those who rely on this wisdom are “sensual persons, who cause divisions, not having the Spirit” (Jude 19). All their feelings, desires, appetites, standards, and impulses are grounded in a humanistic view of the world and of man, who, understandably, becomes the measure of all things. Such wisdom not only feeds the flesh but also is foolish.

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False Wisdom – Its Characteristics

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This wisdom does not descend from above, but *is* earthly, sensual, demonic.

False Wisdom is Demonic

False wisdom is **demonic**. Although it is human, earthbound, and fleshly, its root source is Satan himself, working through his demonic forces. **Satan has always promised wisdom to those he tempts, asserting that God's Word should be doubted and his own accepted.** This was the essence of his temptation in the

Garden of Eden. Thus was born the lie that man can be his own god. To the world's philosophers, religion in general and biblical Christianity specifically are relics of a superstitious, prescientific age that relied on fantasy to explain what had not yet been discovered by man's own efforts.

1 Timothy 4:1

Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons.

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False Wisdom – Its Results

James 3:16

For where envy and self-seeking *exist*, confusion and every evil thing *are* there.

Reiterating the two motives behind false wisdom, namely, “envying and self-seeking”, James says that wherever they exist, “**confusion and every evil thing are there**”. “Confusion” and “every evil thing” cover a multitude of bad results. They certainly include anger; bitterness; resentment; lawsuits; divorce; racial, ethnic, social, and economic divisions; and a host of other personal and social disorders. They also include the absence of love, intimacy, trust, fellowship, and harmony.

"Confusion" has the basic meaning of **instability**. It includes an idea of disorder and can be used to refer to rebellion and anarchy. It is the same word used in James 1:8 for the unstable double-minded man, and James 3:8 for the “unruly” tongue full of poison!

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False Wisdom – Its Results

James 3:16

For where envy and self-seeking *exist*, confusion and every evil thing *are* there.

“God is not the author of confusion but of peace” (1 Cor. 14:33), Biblical wisdom brings harmony, unity, peace, and love. All the conflicts, crimes, battles, and wars of the world are evidence of the devastation caused by human wisdom.

“**Every evil thing**” is the **broadest possible category** of the bad results produced by human wisdom. **In its better sense “evil” means worthless; in its worst, it means vile and contemptible.** It is used several places in the New Testament to contrast the works of those who are saved and obedient from those who are unsaved and disobedient (see John 5:29; Rom. 9:11; 2 Cor. 5:10). “**Thing**” means “work,” “deed,” “event,” and “occurrence”. The idea is that absolutely nothing of any ultimate good results from human wisdom.

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So What ...

We must be very careful. Our sin nature is very slippery, and we can easily fall into doing what is right in our own eyes in any given circumstance. All we need to do is take our eyes off from Jesus and we will find ourselves walking in the wisdom of this world. It might even feel right until the consequences set in.

So we must keep our mind in True Wisdom. We must be focusing on the things of Christ and not the world. We must want to please Jesus more than anything else. Only then will we overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil!

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