

IN OUR STUDY OF JAMES, ~ WE HAVE BEEN MAKING OUR WAY ~ 17

THROUGH THE MAJOR SECTION WHICH TAKES UP ~ 2:1 - 3:18.

▶▶ As we know, ~ there are 4 mini-essays in proverb form in this section. ⇨⇨ Review 1st 3 ..

TODAY, ~ WE'LL BEGIN TO LOOK THE 4th MINI-ESSAY, ~ 3:13-18.

IN THIS ¶, ~ JAMES DEALS WITH GODLY AND WORLDLY ~ WISDOM.

▶▶ James has already taught ~ that God grants wisdom, ~ godly wisdom, ~ 17

▷▷ to those who petition him in believing prayer. ⇨ Vs. 5

▷▷ And here, ~ in 3:13-18, ~ he goes into more detail about wisdom, ~ through the contrast ~ between godly and worldly wisdom.

OUTLINE

▶▶ James begins with a question, ~ 13a

▶▶ Follows ques. w/ challenge, ~ 13b

▶▶ Next, ~ describes worldly wisdom, ~ 14-16

▶▶ Then describes godly wisdom, ~ 17-18

JAMES BEGINS WITH A QUESTION, ~ 13a.

WHO IS WISE AND UNDERSTANDING AMONG YOU?

▶▶ James uses 2 nouns here, ~ wise and understanding.

▷▷ But they need not be taken as 2 different terms. ⇨⇨ They are synonymous.

▶▶ There can be a distinction between them. ⇨⇨ Not wrong, ~~ but doesn't seem best way.

▶▶ Quite possible, ~ based on overall context ~ James using the synonyms for emphasis.

▷▷ E.g., ~ James uses "wisdom" 3x after this, ~ but not "understanding."

▶▶ He may have put them together to form a doublet.

▷▷ I.e., ~ 2 near synonyms that are joined by a conjunction and used to express a single idea.

▷▷ E.g., ~ "weary and worn" ~ may mean ~ "very tired."

▶▶ Also, ~ keeping in mind the Jewishness of James' letter, ~ this pair of nouns is used in the OT as a doublet.

▷▷ Deut. 1:13, ~~ Choose for your tribes wise, understanding, and experienced men, and I will appoint them as your heads.'

▷▷ The two words could be taken together in a superlative sense to mean ~ "very wise."

▷▷ Choose for your tribes very wise and experienced men. 2/16

▶▶ Doublets in Greek ~ tend to serve ~ as a way of emphasizing ~ the meaning ~ of the attached terms.

▶▶ The pair ~ [wisdom and understanding](#) ~ may be looked at, ~ I would suggest, ~ as ~ 77

▷▷ truly wise ~ or, ~ great spiritual insight.

▶▶ Which, ~ I believe, ~ implies ~ James was emphasizing ~ a greater degree of wisdom than normal.

▷▷ I.e., ~ a true and superior wisdom.

▶▶ When you look at the larger context of [vv 13-18](#), ~ 77

▷▷ James has opened the door in [vs 13a](#) to ~ and is referring to ~ the wisdom from above.

↳↳ I.e., ~ godly wisdom, ~ which, ~ by its very name ~ shouts ~ true and superior wisdom.

▷▷ True in the sense of ~ 100% truth.

▷▷ Superior in the sense of ~ unmatched superiority.

▶▶ James' challenge in [vs 13b](#), ~ 77

▷▷ his noting that the wisdom from below is an inferior wisdom, ~ and his discussion in [vv 17-18](#) ~ all suggest this.

↳↳ Namely ~ that, ~ in [13a](#), ~ asking ~ who among them ~ has godly wisdom. 3/16

▶▶ Define this true and superior wisdom more fully.

▷▷ The Greek concept of wisdom ~ centered around ~ "knowledge," ~ "cleverness," and ~ "scholarliness."

▷▷ In biblical usage, ~ however, ~ especially in the OT, ~ godly wisdom ~ ¶¶

↳↳ is basically a ~ practical, ~ moral, ~ and spiritual ~ insight ~ given ~ only ~ by God.

▷▷ It is the ability from God ~ to discern ~ right from wrong ~ and good from evil.

↳↳ It is the power from God ~ that enables a person ~ to do and say the right thing ~ at the right time.

→→ And it has little to do ~ with intellectual capacity.

▷▷ Briefly put, ~ having godly wisdom, ~ which is ~ absolutely true ~ and superior to all other wisdoms, ~ ¶¶

↳↳ means ~ having great spiritual insight.

▶▶ So we can most likely frame his question this way.

▷▷ Who among you has godly wisdom, ~ which is, ~ by its nature, ~ absolutely true ~ and superior to all other wisdoms?

▶▶ Or, ~ based on James' challenge in 13b, ~ perhaps we can frame it this way.

▷▷ Who among you ~ claims ~ to possess godly wisdom, ~ which is, ~ by its nature ~ absolutely true ~ and superior to all other wisdoms? 4/16

FOLLOWS QUES. W/ CHALLENGE, ~ 13b.

BY HIS GOOD CONDUCT/BEHAVIOR ~ let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom.

▶▶ I.e., ~ the meekness, ~ or, ~ humility, ~ that ~ comes from wisdom.

▶▶ NLT; ~~ 13b, ~~ Prove it ~ by living an honorable life, ~ doing good works with the humility that comes from wisdom.

▶▶ 3rd pers. impv.

▷▷ Those who claim to possess godly wisdom ~ must prove it.

▶▶ And how must they prove it?

▷▷ By their good behavior. ⇔ Or, ~ By living an honorable life.

THOSE WHO CLAIM TO POSSESS GODLY WISDOM ~ MUST PROVE IT ~ BY LIVING AN honorable life.

▶▶ An honorable life = a lifestyle that pleases God.

SOUND FAMILIAR?

▶▶ Echoes the faith and works discussion of 2:14-26. ⇔ Claim gen. faith, ~~ prove it.

▶▶ Genuine faith ~ is invisible.

▷▷ An authenticating lifestyle ~ makes genuine faith ~ visible. 5/16

▶▶ Likewise, ~ godly wisdom ~ is invisible.

▷▷ An authenticating lifestyle ~ makes godly wisdom ~ visible.

▶▶ The inability to demonstrate one's faith ~ will prove ~ that it is not true faith.

▷▷ Likewise, ~ the inability to demonstrate godly wisdom, ~ will prove ~ that it's not godly wisdom one has.

▶▶ Good works = the proof of possessing genuine faith.

▷▷ And an honorable lifestyle = a proof of possessing godly wisdom.

BACK TO JAMES.

IN THE LATTER PART OF VS 3b, ~ explains what an honorable lifestyle is characterized by.

▶▶ Note the full idea from beginning of vs 13.

▷▷ Those who claim to possess godly wisdom ~ must prove it by living an honorable life, ¶¶

↳↳ [which is characterized by] ~ doing good works ~ with the humility that comes from godly wisdom.

▶▶ Now, ~ obviously, ~ not the only characteristic.

▷▷ But James is highlighting this one ~ to contrast the characteristics of worldly wisdom.

▷▷ Good works = works that are pleasing to God. 6/16

▶▶ The honorable life that we are to live ~ is characterized by doing good works ~ 77

▷▷ with the humility that comes from godly wisdom.

▶▶ IOW, ~ to meet the standard of an honorable life, ~ our good works ~ 77

▷▷ must be coupled ~ with the humility that originates in godly wisdom.

▶▶ Based on the contrasted worldly wisdom, ~ I would suggest the following.

▷▷ Good works coupled with the humility that comes from godly wisdom ~ are works ~ 77

↳ ↳ done without any thought of ~ self-promotion, ~ boasting, ~ or ~ doing something at the expense of others.

▶▶ Jesus displayed this humility. ~~ Phil. 2:6-8 (NIV).

▷▷ Paul writes that ~ Jesus ~ being in very nature God, ~ did not consider equality with God ~ something to be used to his own advantage; ~~ rather, ~ he made himself nothing ~ by taking the very nature of a servant, ~ being made in human likeness. ~~ 77

↳ ↳ And being found in appearance as a man, ~ he humbled himself ~ by becoming obedient to death ~ even death on a cross!

▶▶ In vs 5 of Phil. 2, ~ Paul exhorted us to ~ adopt the same attitude as that of Christ Jesus (CSB).

▷▷ Vv 6-8 are a description of Jesus' attitude.

▷▷ Jesus did not live ~ to please Himself. 7/16

▷▷ He came to serve ~ not ~ to be served.

▷▷ Though He was rich, ~ for our sake ~ He became poor.

▷▷ Jesus had an attitude of ~ selflessness, ~ humility, ~ others-centeredness, ~ 77

↳↳ servanthood, ~ self-sacrifice, ~ and giving with no thought of selfishly getting.

▷▷ This is the way of thinking ~ that guided Jesus.

▷▷ And this is the way of thinking ~ that is to guide us.

▶▶ Back to James.

▷▷ He says, ~ 77

↳↳ Those who claim to possess godly wisdom ~ must prove it ~ by living an honorable life, ~ which is characterized by ~ doing good works that are coupled with the humility that comes from godly wisdom.

▶▶ Notice, ~ this type of humility, ~ Christ-like humility, ~ does not originate within ourselves.

▷▷ It comes from God, ~ through ~ the true and superior wisdom ~ that he gives generously and freely ~ to believers who ask for it.

▷▷ Recall 1:5.

↳↳ If any of you lacks wisdom, ~ let him ask God, ~ who gives generously to all without reproach, ~ and it will be given him. 8/16

JAMES GOES ON IN VV 14-16 TO DESCRIBE WORLDLY WISDOM.

MORE SPECIFICALLY, ~ DESCRIBES ~~ 2 CHARACTERISTICS, ~~ THE SOURCE, ~~ THE distinctive nature, ~~ and ~~ the fruit ~~ of worldly wisdom.

▶▶¹⁴ But ~ if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, ~~ do not boast and be false to the truth. ⇒ 2 characteristics.

▶▶^{15a} This is not the wisdom that comes down from above. ⇒ source from below.

▶▶^{15b} but is ~ earthly, ~ unspiritual, ~ demonic. ⇒ Distinctive nature.

▶▶¹⁶ For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, ~ there will be ~ disorder and every vile practice. ⇒ Fruit.

IN VS 14, ~ JAMES ISSUES A WARNING.

But ~ if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, ~ do not boast ~ [i.e., ~ do not boast that you have godly wisdom] ~ and be false to the truth.

BITTER JEALOUSY.

▶▶ This kind of envy ~ seeks the best for oneself, ~ regardless of what might be good for another person, ~ ¶¶

▷▷ always wishing for others ~ to have less than oneself, ~ whether with possessions or with opportunities.

▶▶ In a group setting, ~ bitter jealousy ~ may manifest ~ a fierce desire ~ ¶¶

▷▷ to promote one's own opinion ~ to the exclusion of those of others. 9/16

THE WORD TRANSLATED AS ~ SELFISH AMBITION ~ REFERS ~ TO LOOKING OUT FOR and pursuing ~ only one's own interests.

▶▶It is the attitude that evaluates every situation in terms of how it benefits me.

▷▷I.e., ~ it's the attitude of "what's in it for me?"

▶▶It is also ~ a self-centered attitude ~ bent on gaining advantage and prestige for oneself.

THE PHRASE ~ IN YOUR HEARTS ~ goes with both ~ bitter jealousy and selfish ambition.

▶▶The phrase reminds us ~ that our sin problem ~ is not ~ external ~ but ~ internal.

▷▷It's not someone else's fault, ~ when we have ~ bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in our hearts.

↪↪God made that very clear in the Garden.

SO WORLDLY WISDOM ~ is characterized ~ by bitter envy and selfish ambition.

▶▶A far cry ~ from the humility ~ that comes from godly wisdom.

AND NOW THE WARNING JAMES ISSUES.

▶▶Do not boast and be false to the truth.

▶▶Based on contrast in the context between godly and worldly wisdom, ~ truth here ~ 77

▷▷is best taken as ~ that which is true and real ~ as against ~ that which is false and unreal. 10/16

▶▶ James' thinking then is this.

▷▷ Godly wisdom ~ is associated with humility.

▷▷ This ~ is the truth.

↪↪ Since this is the case, ~ ¶¶

→→ to boast about having godly wisdom ~ when you are jealous and ambitious ~ is a contradiction in terms.

↪↪ It cannot be true.

▶▶ Read vs 14 this way.

▷▷ If you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, ~ don't boast. ~ ~ ¶¶

↪↪ Don't say ~ that you have godly wisdom ~ when it isn't true.

IN VS 15a, ~ NOTES ~ WHAT IS NOT ~ AND IMPLIES WHAT IS ~ the source of worldly wisdom.

THIS IS NOT ~ THE WISDOM THAT COMES DOWN FROM ABOVE.

▶▶ I.e., ~ the wisdom ~ that is characterized by ~ bitter jealousy and selfish ambition ~ ¶¶

▷▷ is not ~ the wisdom that comes down from above, ~ namely, ~ from God.

THE TERM ~ FROM ABOVE ~ POINTS US BACK ~ TO 1:17-18. 11/16

▶▶ There God was seen ~ as the One ~ who pours out good gifts from above.

▷▷ This link ~ encourages the interpretation of godly wisdom ~ as the preeminent gift from above.

↪↪ It also clearly indicates ~ a divine origin for godly wisdom.

THE WISDOM ~ THAT IS CHARACTERIZED BY ~ BITTER JEALOUSY AND SELFISH ambition ~ is not ~ 77

▶▶ the wisdom that comes down from God.

▶▶ The source of this wisdom is not heaven.

▷▷ James does not spell it out, ~ but implies ~ that the source this wisdom is the opposite of from above.

▷▷ Also implies it from his description of its distinctive nature in 15b.

▷▷ I.e., ~ it is from below.

▶▶ Jesus told the Jews, ~ You are from below; ~~ I am from above. ~~ You belong to this world; ~~ I do not.

▷▷ The realm of this world.

▶▶ And this is the contrast James is highlighting.

▶▶ Godly wisdom, ~ which is absolutely true and superior to all other wisdoms ~ is from the heavenly realm. 12/16

▶▶ Worldly wisdom ~ is from the earthly realm.

▷▷ Paul notes God's opinion of worldly wisdom in 1 Cor. ⇒ 1 Cor. 1:18-25

↪↪ The wisdom of this world ~ is foolishness to God.

▷▷ Plus, ~ fallen and tainted by sin.

▶▶ Therefore, ~ this means that ~ worldly wisdom, ~ in contrast to godly wisdom, ~ 77

▷▷ is not absolutely true, ~ while it might contain some truth, ~ and ~ it is inferior to godly wisdom.

IN VS 15b, ~ JAMES DESCRIBES ~ THE DISTINCTIVE NATURE ~ OF WORLDLY WISDOM.

3 ASPECTS.

1st, ~ "EARTHLY" IN THE NT ~ CONSISTENTLY REFERS ~ TO THAT WHICH IS INFERIOR.

▶▶ Wisdom that is earthly ~ shuts out God ~ and limits its scope to things on this earth.

▷▷ Under-the-sun mentality.

2nd, ~ UNSPIRITUAL ~ EMPHASIZES BOTH ~ strictly human values and characteristics, ~ 77

▶▶ and ~ the absence of the Holy Spirit.

▷▷ 1 Co 2:14 (NIV), ~ The person without the Spirit ~ does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God ~ but considers them foolishness, ~ and cannot understand them ~ because they are discerned only through the Spirit. 13/16

3rd, ~ DEMONIC.

▶▶ May refer to being influenced by demons, ~ which sets worldly wisdom ~ in direct opposition to God.

▷▷ And what James says later seems to fit this. ⇒ Friend of world = Enemy of God.

TO SUMMARIZE, ~ WORLDLY WISDOM IS A ~ 77

▶▶ sin-tainted, ~ flawed, ~ and inferior ~ type of wisdom, ~ which is in direct opp. to God.

IN VS 16, ~ NOTES THE FRUIT OF WORLDLY WISDOM.

(NIV) FOR WHERE YOU HAVE ENVY AND SELFISH AMBITION, ~ there you find ~ disorder and every evil practice.

▶▶ Worldly wisdom inevitably leads ~ to disorder and every evil practice.

THE GRK WD TRANSLATED ~ DISORDER ~ IS ANOTHER FORM OF A WORD ~ 77

▶▶ that James has used in 1:8 and 3:8 ~ to describe ~ the "double-minded" person ~ and ~ the "double-speaking" tongue.

▷▷ These words are rendered, ~ respectively, ~ unstable ~ and ~ restless.

▶▶ The noun that James uses ~ connotes a ~ restless, ~ unsettled ~ state.

▶▶ Luke uses it to describe ~ the "tumults," ~ the uprisings and revolutions, ~ 77

▷▷ that will typify the period preceding Jesus' 2nd coming (Luke 21:9). 14/16

▶▶ And Paul, ~ pleading with the Corinthians to refrain from an ~ ¶¶

▷▷ unbridled, ~ unorganized display of individual spiritual gifts in the assembly, ~ ¶¶

↳↳ reminds them ~ that "God ~ is not a God of disorder ~ but of peace."

▶▶ James is no doubt saying ~ that worldly wisdom ~ leads to ~ disturbance and turmoil in a local church.

THIS IS QUITE CONTRARY ~ TO WHAT GOD WANTS IN A LOCAL FELLOWSHIP.

▶▶ So then let us pursue what makes ~ for peace ~ and for mutual upbuilding (Rom. 14:19).

▶▶ All things ~ should be done ~ decently and in order (1 Cor 14:40).

▶▶ And, ~ Be at peace ~ among yourselves (1 Thess. 5:13).

IN ADDITION TO DISORDER, ~ WORLDLY WISDOM LEADS TO ~ EVERY EVIL PRACTICE.

▶▶ The word ~ every ~ might here have the nuance ~ every kind of evil practice.

▶▶ Worldly wisdom ~ brings about ~ ¶¶

▷▷ just about every kind of evil practice that one could name.

WORLDLY WISDOM INEVITABLY LEADS TO DISASTROUS RESULTS.

▶▶ Both ~ in a local church ~ and ~ in a person's spiritual life. 15/16

MY... ~ ¶¶

THERE IS A WISDOM THAT COMES FROM ABOVE.

▶▶ I.e., ~ the true and superior wisdom ~ that comes only ~ from our heavenly Father.

▷▷ Which he gives generously ~ to all believers who ask for it.

AND THERE IS ANOTHER TYPE OF WISDOM EMANATING FROM THE WORLD.

▶▶ Worldly wisdom, ~ which is a sin-tainted, ~ flawed, ~ and inferior ~ type of wisdom, ~ ¶¶

▷▷ which is in direct opp. to God.

↪↪ And that inevitably leads to disastrous results.

UNFORTUNATELY, ~ POSSESSING WORLDLY WISDOM COMES NATURALLY FOR US.

▶▶ We must reject that mindset ~ in favor of asking for and receiving ~ ¶¶

▷▷ the true and superior wisdom ~ that comes only ~ from our very generous heavenly Father. 16/16