

The Epistle of James

James 3:1-18

- Questions

1. What caution or warning does James make about teachers and why (3:1)?

2. Who is the “perfect man” (KJV) and why (3:2)?

3. What three items does James use to illustrate the power of small things (3:3-5; see 1:26)?

4. What two dangerous things does James use to illustrate the tongue (3:6, 8)?

5. What negative things are associated with the tongue (3:6)?

6. What can and cannot be tamed (3:7-8)?

7. What sinful inconsistency regarding the tongue does James address (3:9-10)?

8. What three things does James use to illustrate this inconsistency (3:11-12)?

9. What does a truly wise person do with his wisdom (3:13)?

10. What are the characteristics and results of earthly wisdom (3:14-16)? Can you define each one?

11. What are the characteristics and results of heavenly wisdom (3:17-18)? Can you define each one?

- Digging Deeper

1. What is the connection between James 1:26 and James 3:1-12? What is the connection between James 1:5 and James 3:13-18? What is the connection between James 2:13 and James 3:17?
2. How do you reconcile the scriptures that encourage teaching (2 Tim. 2:2; Heb. 5:12; etc.) with James 3:1 which seems to discourage teaching?
3. What is it about being a teacher that will bring about “greater condemnation” (KJV) or “stricter judgment” (NASV) (3:1)?
4. What is “the course of nature” – KJV (3:6)?
5. What, if anything, can be done with the tongue if the tongue cannot be tamed (3:8)?
6. What is “wisdom” (3:13)?

- Applications for Today

1. The Lord’s church needs teachers (2 Tim. 2:2; Heb. 5:12), but teachers must be aware of their great responsibility and accountability (3:1; Mt. 12:36-37). Teachers are held accountable for their teaching (2 Tim. 2:15), for the example they set before the students (1 Tim. 4:12), and for the souls they teach (1 Tim. 4:13-16; Heb. 13:7, 17). One must never teach with the motive of wanting to bring attention to themselves (Mt. 23:7-8).
2. The Christian must control the tongue (3:2-8; Prov. 10:19; 13:3; 17:27; 21:23; 29:20).
3. Small things can start big problems (3:5; Prov. 16:27; 26:18-28).
4. The tongue can lead a person to hell (3:6; Rev. 21:8).
5. Man is made in the likeness and image of God (3:9; Gen. 1:27-27; 5:1; 9:6; 1 Cor. 11:7).
6. We are not to speak out of both sides of our mouth (3:9-10; 1 Tim. 3:8).
7. The tongue should be used for righteousness: preaching, praying, edifying, truth-telling, singing praises, blessing, etc. (3:10; Col. 4:6; Tit. 2:8).
8. The tongue should not be used for wickedness: lying, profanity, gossip, backbiting, murmuring, cursing, etc. (3:10; Eph. 4:29; 1 Pet. 3:10).
9. The earthly wisdom of man leads to every vile deed (3:14-16; Rom. 1:18-31; 2 Cor. 12:20; Gal. 5:19-21).
10. The heavenly wisdom of God leads to peace (3:17-18; Gal. 5:22-23).