

Where is the Wise Man?

1 Cor 1:20

*Read Scriptures: I Cor 1: 20-25; James 3:13-17

I Cor 1:24b "CHRIST THE POWER OF GOD AND THE WISDOM OF GOD"

Christ's wisdom is meek and has all the qualities mentioned in James 3:17. Also, "wisdom" in the book of Proverbs is much more than the ability to use knowledge and experience in the practical affairs of life.

True wisdom is a matter of the heart; it comes from submission to God and reverence for Him. The wise person listens to instruction.

Prov 1:5 "Let the wise listen and add to their learning and let the discerning get guidance."

The wise person:

- OBEYS: Prov 10:8 "The wise in heart accept commands, but a chattering fool comes to ruin."
- RETAINS WHAT HE LEARNS: Prov 10:14 "Wise men store up knowledge..."
- FLEES FROM SIN: Prov 14:6 "A wise man fears the Lord and shuns evil, but a fool is hotheaded and reckless."
- CONTROLS THE TONGUE: Prov 16:23 "A wise man's heart guides his mouth and his lips promote instruction" ((or) makes his lips persuasive)
- SEEKS TO WIN OTHERS TO THE LORD: Prov 11:30 "...he who wins souls is wise."
- IS DILIGENT IN WHATEVER GOD GIVES HIM TO DO: Prov 10:5 "He who gathers crops in summer is a wise son..."
- GUARDS HIS HEART because that is the "wellspring of life." Prov 4:23 "Above all else, guard your heart for it is the wellspring of life."
NKJV : "Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life."

Prov 4:7 "WISDOM IS SUPREME; THEREFORE GET WISDOM."

Knowledge enables us to take things apart, but wisdom enables us to put things together and relate God's truth to daily life.

James is talking about two kinds of wisdom – one is DEMONIC and the other is DIVINE. He is contrasting TRUE WISDOM and FALSE WISDOM in three different aspects:

- I. CONTRAST IN ORIGINS: James 3:15, 17a
- II. CONTRAST IN OPERATIONS: James 3:13-14, 17
- III. CONTRAST IN OUTCOMES: James 3:16&18

I. CONTRAST IN ORIGINS – James 3:15, 17a

There is a “heavenly wisdom” that comes from God, and there is a “man-made wisdom” that does not come from God. The Christian believer has three enemies: the world, the flesh, and the devil (Eph 2:1-3). These enemies are suggested by the terms “earthly, sensual, devilish” (James 3:15b). Man’s wisdom is foolishness to God (I Cor 1:20) and God’s wisdom is foolishness to man (I Cor 2:14). Man’s wisdom comes from reason while God’s wisdom comes from revelation. Man’s worldly wisdom will come to nothing (I Cor 1:19), while God’s wisdom will endure forever. Also, Prov 9:10 says, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.”

The origin and source of our wisdom is Jesus Christ. Col 2:3 “in whom (Christ) are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.” The first step toward true wisdom is the receiving of Jesus Christ as Savior. The Word of God is also our wisdom according to Deut 4:5a & 6a (NKJV) “Surely I have taught you statutes and judgments, just as the Lord my God commanded me, that you should act according to them in the land which you go to possess. Therefore be careful to observe them for this is our WISDOM and your UNDERSTANDING in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes and say, ‘Surely this great nation is a WISE and UNDERSTANDING people.’”

The Scriptures are able to make us “wise unto salvation.” James 1:5 indicates that we find wisdom through believing prayer. The Holy Spirit of God is the Spirit of wisdom and revelation. Eph 1:17 “I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know Him better.” And He directs us in the wisest paths as we trust God’s Word and pray.

Therefore the ORIGIN of true wisdom is GOD. (Let the whole congregation say that.)

II. CONTRAST IN OPERATIONS – James 3:13-14, 17

What are the EVIDENCES of false and worldly wisdom?

1. ENVY (3:14)

This word carries the meaning of selfish ambition and zeal. The wisdom of the world says “PROMOTE YOURSELF.” Sad to say, there is a great deal of selfish, carnal promotion among God’s people. The Pharisees used their religious activities to promote the praise of men (Matt 6:1-8). “No flesh should glory in His presence” (I Cor 1:29). Is our zeal for the Lord spiritual or carnal? Do we rejoice when others succeed or do we have secret envy and criticism? Do we feel burdened when others fail or are we glad? When the wisdom of the world gets into the church, there is a great deal of FLESHLY PROMOTION and HUMAN GLORIFICATION.

2. STRIFE OR SELFISH AMBITION (3:14):

This means “party spirit.” It was used by the Greeks to describe a politician canvassing for votes. Let us remember Phil 2:3 “Let nothing be done through strife or vain glory...”

3. BOASTING (3:14)

Pride loves to boast, and nothing is prouder than the wisdom of men. It is tragic to see mutual admiration societies among God's people. When God's wisdom is at work, there is a sense of humility and submission and you want God to get all the glory.

4. DECEIT (3:14)

"Lie against the truth."

The sequence is not difficult to understand: selfish ambition to party spirit to rivalry to boasting. Boasting usually involves lies and exaggeration. This kind of worldly wisdom has invaded the church of Jesus Christ again and again from the first century. May the Lord help us to discern the difference.

What a relief to turn the EVIDENCES of true spiritual wisdom:

1. MEEKNESS (3:13)

Meekness is not weakness; it is power under control. Meekness the right use of power, and wisdom is the right use of knowledge. They go together.

2. PURITY (3:17)

This indicates the importance of holiness. God's wisdom leads to purity of life and man's wisdom eventually leads to sin.

3. PEACE (3:17)

Man's wisdom leads to rivalry and war (James 4:1-2) but God's wisdom leads to peace. It is a peace based on holiness, not on compromise. "The work of righteousness will be peace" (Is 32:17).

4. GENTLENESS (3:17)

Matthew Arnold called this "sweet reasonableness." It carries the meaning of MODERATION without COMPROMISE, GENTLENESS WITHOUT WEAKNESS.

5. COMPLIANCE (or) WILLING TO YIELD (3:17)

God's wisdom makes the believer agreeable and easy to live with and work with. Man's wisdom makes a person hard and stubborn. The compliant person is willing to hear all sides of a question, but he does not compromise his own convictions. He can disagree without being disagreeable (James 1:19).

6. MERCY (3:17)

The person who follows God's wisdom is controlled by mercy. Luke 6:36 "Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful."

7. GOOD FRUITS (3:17)

People who are faithful continuously are fruitful. The Spirit produces fruit to the glory of God (Jn 15:1-16).

8. DECISIVENESS (3:17 NIV) UNWAVERING (NASB)

This suggests the SINGLENES OF MIND and is the opposite of wavering (James 1:6). Wisdom from above brings strength from above.

9. SINCERITY (3:17)

When God's wisdom is at work, there is openness, honesty, and transparency, "speaking the truth in love" (Eph 4:15).

III. CONTRAST IN OUTCOMES (James 3:16,18)

Origin determines outcome. Worldly wisdom produces trouble (3:16) – envy, strife, confusion, evil works, etc; one of the reasons the world is in such a MESS is because men have refused to accept the wisdom of God. God's wisdom produces blessing (3:18). "Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness."

There is a vast difference between man-made results and God-given fruit. Fruit is the product of life and fruit has in it the seeds for more fruit. The Christian who obeys God's wisdom sows righteousness, not sin; and peace, not war. What we are is what we live, and what we live is what we sow. What we sow determines what we reap. If we live in God's wisdom, we sow righteousness and peace and we reap God's blessing. If we live in man's worldly wisdom, we sow sin and war and we reap "confusion and every evil work."

Let us examine ourselves by asking the question: What kind of wisdom is guiding us – DIVINE (or) DEMONIC wisdom?

Let us yield to God's Wisdom and enjoy all that God has promised for us in His Word.

PSALM 20:7 (NIV)

*Some trust in chariots and some in horses,
But we trust in the Name of the Lord our God.
They are brought to their knees and fall,
But WE RISE UP and STAND FIRM."
AMEN.*