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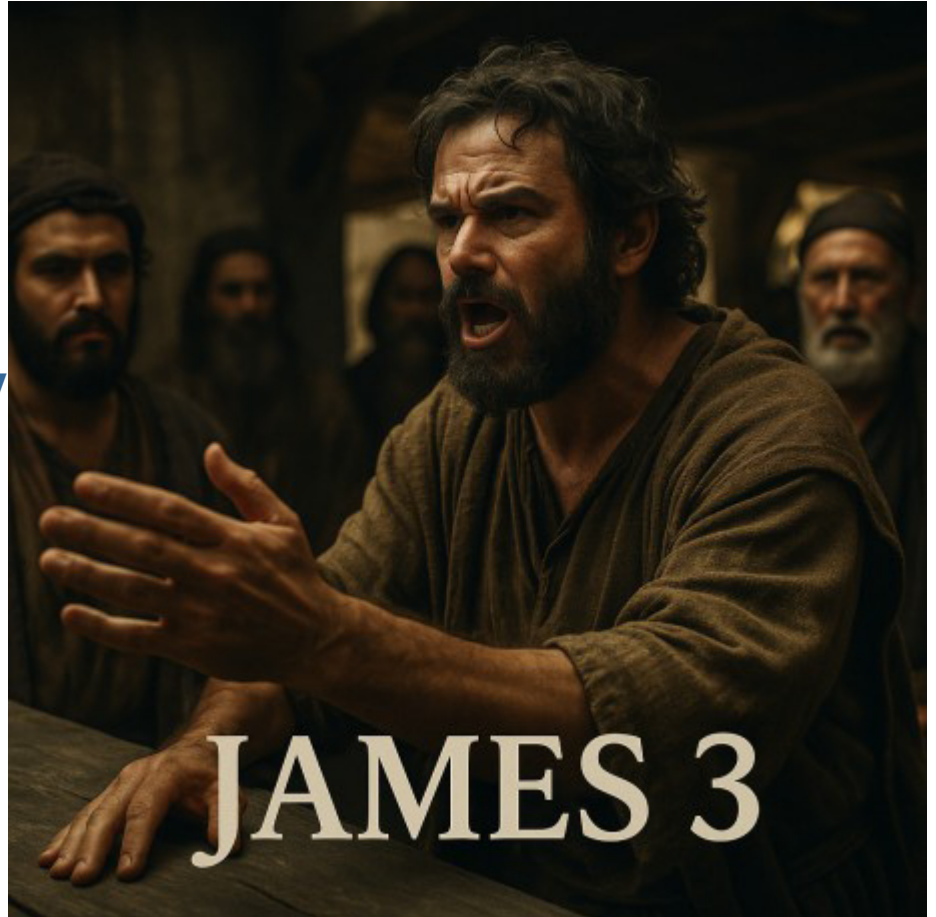
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James 3 This study has not been posted on facebook yet



By Dan Maines

James 3

James 3:1

Let not many of you become teachers, my brothers and sisters, knowing that as such we will incur a stricter judgment.

† James warns that teaching is not for ambition or status but for responsibility. Teachers will be judged by the weight of their words.

† The Mishnah (Aboth 1:1) places great honor on teaching, showing its influence, but James stresses the danger, since

false teachers were common in the first century.

† Paul rebuked those who preached another gospel in **Galatians 1:6-9**, showing how destructive bad teaching can be.
† Josephus (Antiquities 20.9.1) records leaders who misled the people by false words, confirming James' concern about stricter judgment.

James 3:2

For we all stumble in many ways. If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to rein in the whole body as well.

† All stumble, but mastery of speech reveals maturity. If the tongue can be controlled, the whole body follows.

† Philo of Alexandria (On the Special Laws 2.12) taught that speech is the mirror of the soul, and controlling it shows true wisdom.

† Jesus pointed to perfection in **Matthew 5:48**, calling His disciples to wholeness, which James applies to the tongue.

† The Dead Sea Scrolls (1QS 5.24) warned that careless lips betray the inner man, affirming James' teaching.

James 3:3-5

Now if we put the bits into the horses mouths so that they will obey us, we direct their whole body as well. Look at the ships too: though they are so great and are driven by strong winds, they are nevertheless directed by a very small rudder wherever the inclination of the pilot determines. So also the tongue is a small part of the body, and yet it boasts of great things. See how great a forest is set aflame by such a small fire!

† James uses three metaphors: a bit for a horse, a rudder for a ship, and a spark for a fire. The tongue, though small, has power to guide or to destroy.

† Josephus (Wars 4.3.2) records how reckless words in Jerusalem stirred revolt and bloodshed, showing the destructive power of speech.

† The Dead Sea Scrolls (1QS 10.21) warn against perverse lips that divide community, proving James' point.

† Tacitus (Annals 15.44) shows how a rumor about Christians spread quickly in Rome, proving how a small spark of words can cause wide destruction.

James 3:6

And the tongue is a fire, the very world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our body parts as that which defiles the whole body and sets on fire the course of our life, and is set on fire by hell.

† The tongue corrupts the whole body if unchecked. Jesus said in **Matthew 15:11** that it's what comes out of the mouth that defiles.

† James calls the tongue "set on fire by hell," linking destructive speech to satanic influence.

† The Mishnah (Aboth 15:5) listed slander as one of the sins that remove a person from the world, showing its deadly seriousness.

† Early Christian writings like the Didache (3.6) warned believers against "foul speech," echoing James' image of fire destroying life.

James 3:7-8

For every species of beasts and birds, of reptiles and creatures of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by the human race. But no one among mankind can tame the tongue, it is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.

† Humanity subdued creation as in **Genesis 1:28**, but the tongue remains untamed.

† **Psalms 140:3** compared wicked tongues to serpent venom.

† Tacitus (Histories 5.9) described how lies and slander against Christians fueled violence.

† Philo (On the Virtues 22) called the uncontrolled tongue "a wild beast more savage than any creature," in harmony with

James' words.

James 3:9-10

With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people, who have been made in the likeness of God, from the same mouth come both blessing and cursing. My brothers and sisters, these things should not be this way.

† The contradiction is hypocrisy. To bless God and curse His image-bearers cannot stand together.

† Clement of Rome (1 Clement 21) rebuked double speech, commanding believers to keep their words consistent.

† The Dead Sea Scrolls (1QS 4.9-11) contrasted the blessings of the Spirit of truth with the curses of the Spirit of deceit, showing James' warning reflected in their community rules.

James 3:11-12

Does a spring send out from the same opening both fresh and bitter water? Can a fig tree, my brothers and sisters, bear olives, or a vine bear figs? Nor can salt water produce fresh.

† Nature teaches consistency. A spring cannot yield both fresh and bitter water. A fig tree cannot bear olives, nor a vine figs.

† The Dead Sea Scrolls (1QH 6.34-35) contrasted the waters of truth with waters of deceit, showing the same truth James expresses.

† Jesus taught in **Matthew 7:16-18** that trees are known by their fruit, and bad trees cannot bear good fruit. James echoes his brother's teaching.

James 3:13

Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom.

† True wisdom is shown in conduct, not boasting. The Greek word for gentleness means strength under control.

† Jesus called Himself gentle in **Matthew 11:29**, setting the

model for believers.

† The Dead Sea Scrolls (1QS 4.2-6) describe wisdom as humble and peaceable, matching James' teaching.

† Josephus (Antiquities 12.3.3) records that arrogant leaders destroyed peace, while humble wisdom brought stability, proving James' principle in history.

James 3:14-16

But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth. This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing.

† James exposes false wisdom. It is earthly, natural, and demonic, rooted in envy and ambition.

† Josephus (Antiquities 20.8.5) describes how ambition and jealousy in Judea led to corruption and violence.

† The Mishnah (Sanhedrin 10.1) lists jealousy as a destroyer of peace, a reflection of James' words.

† The fruit of selfish ambition is always division, proving it is not from God.

James 3:17-18

But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peace loving, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial, free of hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

† Heavenly wisdom is marked by purity, mercy, and peace. It produces sincerity and fruit, not hypocrisy.

† Hebrews 12:14 commands the pursuit of peace with all men.

† The Dead Sea Scrolls (1QS 4.26) describe the works of light as mercy, humility, and peace, echoing James' list of heavenly wisdom.

† Early church writers like Origen noted that the true mark of righteousness is peace sown among brethren, directly tying into

James' words.

How it applies to us today

† James 3 reminds us that our tongues can build or destroy. In an age when words spread instantly, James' warning is even sharper.

† Teachers especially must guard their words, knowing they bear stricter judgment.

† Believers must reject envy, ambition, and strife, and sow peace and mercy instead.

† True faith is proven in consistent speech, where blessing flows without cursing.

† This is the fulfilled perspective we proclaim at Fulfilled Prophecies †

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† Mishnah, Aboth 15:5 – slander removes a man from the world

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† Philo of Alexandria, On the Special Laws 2.12 – speech as mirror of the soul

† Philo of Alexandria, On the Virtues 22 – the tongue as a savage beast

† Josephus, Antiquities 12.3.3 – humble wisdom brings peace

† Josephus, Antiquities 20.8.5 – ambition and jealousy cause strife

† Josephus, Antiquities 20.9.1 – false leaders misleading the people

† Josephus, Wars 4.3.2 – violent speech sparking revolt

† Tacitus, Annals 15.44 – rumor spreading against Christians

† Tacitus, Histories 5.9 – slander fueling hatred of Christians

† Dead Sea Scrolls, 1QS 5.24 – careless lips betray the inner man

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