

- Human good and evil are testimonies for Lucifer whose title, Satan, means defense attorney, a function he employs in his legal appeal on behalf of himself and the fallen angels.

The Production of Operational Death: James 2:1–17.

James 2:1 My brethren, [**Imperative Mood**
#14] do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus
Christ with an attitude of personal favoritism. (NASB)

- This verse begins with James’s appeal to fellow members of the royal family of God. The pronoun, “my,” indicates he is addressing fellow Messianic Jews.
- The “attitude of personal favoritism” is the arrogant assumption one’s faith in Christ is superior to that of others. The mind–set of the believer should be grace oriented toward the Father whose perfect plan provided the true humanity of Jesus Christ that resulted in salvation.
- James refers to the Jesus both as “Lord”: **κύριος** (*kúrios*) and “glory”: **δόξα** (*dóxa*) referring to the Shekinah Glory. These appellations incorporate Jesus into the Old Testament passages where the Second Person of the Trinity is called “Lord” and was presented visually as a cloud.
- Here are some references to the Shekinah Glory of the Lord:

God’s glory revealed itself in and through Jesus Christ (John 1:14). When the glory of Jehovah is spoken about, it refers to the revelation of God’s person, nature, and presence to mankind, sometimes with visible phenomena. The glory of Jehovah went with His people out of Egypt and was shown in the cloud which led them through the wilderness (Exodus 16:7, 10). The glory of God also filled the tabernacle (Exodus 40:34, 35). (p. 479)

The glory and the glorifying of Jesus Christ means the revelation of His essential deity, that which He is in the mind of the Father, though veiled from man by the limitations of the incarnation (James 2:1).¹ (p. 479–80)

- James is addressing the assumption of spiritual superiority in the souls of some. It will be demonstrated in this paragraph that many in the Jerusalem church have allowed the grace of salvation to be distorted into legalism in application.

¹ Spiros Zodhiates, gen. ed., “δόξα,” in *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*, rev. ed. (Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 1993), 479–80.



6. Without consistent advance in one's spiritual growth, a believer will revert to the behavior patterns of his recent unbelief. The sin mentioned here is self-centered arrogance which is reflected in the advanced stages of reversionism.
7. The church is a semipublic place for believers to meet for the study of the Word of God. Each person is treated as a member of the royal family of God. But without grace orientation to all, the absence of doctrine would show favoritism to some, but prejudice to others.
8. This is the situation in James's church in Jerusalem. The problem with the arrogant usher is introduced in this first paragraph. The example given addresses the obvious absence of grace orientation.

James 2:1 Fellow members of the royal family of God, [**imperative mood # 14**] do not exhibit the mental attitude of partiality in your faith in our Lord Jesus, the Shekinah Glory. (EXT)

v. 2 For if [γάρ (gár): 3-phase **protasis** of 3d-class conditional clauses] [1] a man [ἀνὴρ (anḗr)] comes into your [plural] assembly with a gold ring and dressed in fine clothes, and [2] there comes in a poor man in dirty clothes,

v. 3 and [3] you [plural] pay special attention to the one who is wearing the fine clothes, and say, "You sit here in a good place," and you say to the poor man, "You stand over there, or sit down by my footstool,"

v. 4 [**apodosis**] have you [plural] not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil motives? (NASB)

1. The second verse begins with the particle γάρ (gár) used as a conjunction and translated "if." It introduces an amplification of the negative commandment against partiality in verse 1 followed by three prohibitions.
2. This usher illustrates such stages as emotional revolt, negative volition, blackout, and scar tissue of the soul.
3. This mind-set is clearly the opposite of the soul prosperity provided by one's advance in the plan of God. Instead, the mental attitudes common to those in reversionism are partiality, favoritism, bias, prejudice, cruelty, and vindictiveness.



4. The verse is introduced by the particle *gár* which, when preceding the subjunctive mood, always indicates the protasis of a third-class condition indicating a possibility. In this case, the protasis is made up of three “if” clauses: (1) “a man comes into your assembly with a gold ring and dressed in fine clothes,” (2) “there also comes in a poor man in dirty clothes,” and (3) “you pay special attention to the one wearing fine clothes ... and you say to the poor man.”
5. James’s intent is to head off the possibility of someone in the church becoming partial to some, but not to others.
8. The verb is the aorist middle subjunctive of **εἰσέρχομαι (*eisérchomai*)**: “to enter into.” What is entered is the **συναγωγή (*sunagōgḗ*)**: “assembly.”
9. This Greek noun is brought into English as *synagogue* and is defined similarly by the Hebrew—**מוֹעֵד (*moeth*)** and Greek—**συναγωγή (*sunagōgḗ*)** languages. Here’s a good English definition:

Synagogue. The regular assembly or congregation of the Jews for religious instruction and worship apart from the service of the temple, constituting, since the destruction of the temple, their sole form of public worship; hence, the religious organization of the Jews.²
10. The Greek word is used 111 times in the New Testament and it refers to the meeting place of the Jews. There are a few exceptions, such as the phrase, “synagogue of Satan,” in Revelation 2:9 and 3:9.
11. The only reference to synagogue as an assembly of Christians is in our passage, James 2:2, as “an assembly-place for Judeo-Christians.”³
12. This unique use of synagogue by James referring to a Christian assembly is expanded upon by Dan G. McCartney:

“Your [assembly]” (literally “your synagogue”) is often taken as evidence either of a Jewish audience or that the church members are still meeting with non-Christian Jews for worship. But James calls it “your” synagogue and refers to actions within the synagogue as a whole, not a subgroup within the meeting. James is referring to a Christian gathering, to which visitors rich or poor may come.

² *The Oxford English Dictionary* (1971), s.v. “synagogue.”

³ Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, 3d ed., rev. and ed. Frederick William Danker (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), 963.



If James is an early letter, then “your synagogue” is perfectly understandable as a reference to an early Christian church’s local gathering for worship. It might be expected that the early Christian gatherings borrowed much of the terminology as well as the structure of Jewish gatherings for worship and hearing of Scripture.

The Greek word συναγωγή (*sunagōgē*) had a perfectly ordinary use as “gathering” or “assembly” long before Judaism gave it a technical meaning, and it was used by the church even into the second century to refer to Christian gatherings for worship.⁴

13. James refers to Christians meeting in local churches throughout the Roman Empire but with emphasis on the local church in Jerusalem of which he is its pastor-teacher.
14. In his illustration, James singles out two people that enter into the synagogue’s congregation who are greeted by a fictitious usher⁵ who is in the advanced stages of reversionism, but with application to everyone in the congregation.
15. This is brought out by the accessories displayed by the rich man toward whom he is partial. This rich man is described by the masculine noun ἀνὴρ (*anēr*): “a nobleman,” a man of high standing in the community.
16. He is described as wearing a “gold ring” which in English leads us to believe he has one ring on one finger. However, the words, “gold ring,” translate the masculine singular noun χρυσοδακτύλιος (*chrusodaktúlios*): “gold-fingered.” This converts the singular word into a collective plural:

The colorful word χρυσοδακτύλιος (literally “gold-fingered”) does not appear in earlier Greek sources, but Epictétus does refer to a hypothetical scene where a gray old man enters having “many gold rings on his fingers” (χρυσοῦς δακτυλίους ἔχων πολλοῦς; Epictetus, *Diatribai* 1.18.22).⁶

Ring. To be χρυσοδακτύλιος (*chrusodaktúlios*), “golden-ringed,” perhaps with more than one, indicated wealth and social rank: “a man with a golden ring” (James 2:2).⁷

⁴ Dan G. McCartney, *James* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 138.

⁵ “Hazzan [káz-zán’]. In the Talmudic period, a synagogue official, superintendent, or officer” (*Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary*, 2d ed. (1953), s.v. “kazzan.”)

⁶ William Varner, *James* (Bellingham, Wash.: Lexham Press, 2014), 229.

⁷ Philip Wendell Crannell, “Ring,” in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, gen. ed. James Orr (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1956), 4:2594.



The English phrase *with a gold ring* is only one word in Greek. This word is not found anywhere else in the New Testament. Literally, it means “gold-fingered.” In other words, it is not just one ring, but a finger laden, loaded with gold rings.⁸

χρυσοδακτύλιος, with a golden ring on the finger. It was common to wear rings in the ancient world either as a signet ring or as a piece of jewelry for adornment. Sometimes more than one ring was worn, and the social status of a person could be noted by the quality of his ring.⁹

17. In our society, men who subscribe to traditional standards generally wear no more than two rings: wedding and class or organizational. In biblical times in Palestine, the upper crust was prone to be far more conspicuous and with the intent to emphasize their wealth and station in society.
18. This glittering opulence didn't stop there. This man is also described as being “dressed in fine clothes” (NASB). The King James has, “in goodly apparel,” that is even more obscure. In light of the thousands of dollars-worth of gold rings, “fine clothes” doesn't adequately describe the man's attire. Was it a privately tailored Oxford or off-the-rack from Macy's? Let's see.
19. What we have in the Greek text is **ἐσθῆτι λαμπρῶ** (*esthēti lamprá*): “clothing fancy.” In the English translation we invert these two words, so we'll take up “fancy” first. The vocabulary word is the adjective **λαμπρός** (*lamprós*): bright, dazzling raiment:

The meaning of *lamprós* is derived from the fact that it arises from the composition of the luminous rays of all colors. Splendid, gorgeous.¹⁰

Pertaining to having a glistening quality—of garments, especially white ones: bright, shining.¹¹

Terms derived from *lámpō*, “shine, beam,” all express something like luminosity and brilliance. The New Testament used *lamprós* above all with clothing. The accent is on beauty, richness, and magnificence, as in the case in James 2:2–3. The fine clothes indicate the high social rank of the one wearing them: wealthy, a person of consequence.¹²

⁸ Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *Ariel's Bible Commentary: The Messianic Jewish Epistles* (Tustin, Cal.: Ariel Ministries, 2005), 242.

⁹ Cleon L. Rogers Jr. and Cleon L. Rogers III, *The New Linguistic and Exegetical Key to the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1998), 556.

¹⁰ Spiros Zodhiates, ed., “λαμπρός,” in *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*, rev. ed., 910.

¹¹ Bauer, “λαμπρός,” in *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 963.

¹² Ceslas Spicq, “λαμπρός,” in *Theological Lexicon of the New Testament*, trans. and ed. James D. Ernest (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994), 2:364, 365.



20. The problem with these lavish descriptions of the man’s sartorial attire is that one may wrongly assume since he is a man of high standing in the community, he must also be a man of integrity.
21. We will learn later in the chapter that this dressed-to-the-nines, Mr. Golden Fingers, has used his civic power to throw Mr. Reversionistic Usher into the city clink.
22. Consequently, a man who has mistreated him in the past enters first followed by a man he regards as a friend follows behind. Why would he cotton to his enemy while giving the shaft to his friend? Reverse process reversionism.
23. This is what happens when a believer goes through a series of bad decisions, has prolonged residence in the cosmic systems, violated, or is assumed to have violated, local laws, and is motivated to constantly protect his own posterior.
24. This is played out by insulting a friend while obsequiously ingratiating himself with an enemy. His reversionism makes him bow and scrape, an idiom that “alludes to the old-fashioned custom of bowing so deeply that one’s foot draws back and scrapes the ground.”¹³
25. What is “bright, and dazzling” comes next, the feminine noun **ἔσθής** (*esthēs*): clothing, raiment, outfit. It would be described down South as “high cotton.”¹⁴
26. What now follows is the second use of the aorist middle subjunctive of **εἰσέρχομαι** (*eisérchomai*): “to enter in” i.e., a second personality follows Mr. Golden Fingers down the aisle. He is identified by the masculine noun, **πτωχός** (*ptōchós*): “poor man.” Many are poor, but this man is that and more:
πτωχός. Being economically disadvantaged, originally ‘begging,’ dependent upon others for support.¹⁵
27. Whereas Mr. Golden Fingers is shining like new money, Mr. Poor Man is wearing “dirty clothes.” The adjective is **ῥυπαρός** (*rhuparós*): “filthy, foul, or soiled.” referred
28. These words describe a man who is down on his luck. He’s had a bad week on the streets scrounging for basic essentials to stay alive. He hasn’t shaved or bathed, and with no way to clean his clothes. He is poverty-stricken and his appearance is the very definition of squalid. On top of these things, he is hungry.

¹³ Christine Ammer, *The American Heritage Dictionary of Idioms* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1997), 73–74.

¹⁴ Cotton fabric is classified into three large groups: ordinary, middling, and fair, the latter referred to as “high cotton.”

¹⁵ Bauer, “πτωχός,” in *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 896.



29. The illustration James has presented takes us to the next verse to see how the reversionistic usher treats this man.

James 2:2 **If** [the protasis of three, third-class conditions] a nobleman [ἄνθρωπος (*anér*)] enters into [εἰσέρχομαι (*eisérchomai*): 1st 3CC] the synagogue of Messianic Christians wearing golden rings on all his fingers and dressed in a dazzling, expensive outfit, and there also enters [2d 3CC] a beggar in filthy clothes, (EXT)

James 2:3 and you [plural] pay special attention [3d 3CC] to the one who is wearing the fine clothes, and say, “You sit here in a good place,” and you say to the poor man, “You stand over there, or sit down by my footstool,” (NASB)

1. The protasis continues into verse three with the phrase “and you pay special attention” which is one word in the Greek, the aorist active subjunctive of **ἐπιβλέπω** (*epiblépō*).
2. The King James translates this word, “and you have respect.” Well, that’s not it at all. *Epiblépō* does not indicate respect here. Respect is defined as:
Respect. To consider worthy of esteem. Act of noticing with attention; consideration. Esteem; deferential regard; also honor. Expressions of respect or deference.¹⁶
3. The New American Standard’s translation is fine, but it does not indicate the nuance that is contained by the word *epiblépō* as does Walter Bauer:
ἐπιβλέπω. To pay close attention to, with implication of obsequiousness.¹⁷
4. Obsequiousness and other synonyms are negative-sounding words by themselves, but in defining *ἐπιβλέπω* they are spot on:
Obsequious. Servilely attentive; fawning. Subservient. Subservient. Work or character typical of slaves or servants of low degree. Obsequious, a revealing of one’s sense of inferiority in the presence of one’s superiors. Truckle. To yield obsequiously to the will of another. Fawn.¹⁸

¹⁶ “Respect,” in *Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary*, 2d ed. (1953), s.v. “respect.”

¹⁷ Bauer, “ἐπιβλέπω,” in *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, 3d ed., 368.

¹⁸ *Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary* (1953), s.vv. “obsequious, subservient, truckle.”



5. **Ἐπιβλέπω** is the compound, **ἐπί-** (*epí*) which means “to look on,” plus the verb, **βλέπω** (*bléō*). It does not mean to “have respect.” The usher has absolutely no respect for Golden Fingers. The above words clearly define his attitude. The NASB phrase, “you pay special attention,” describes the meaning of this one word and the adjective, *obsequious*, is an excellent English translation.
6. The best way to scale this down to one word is to find a synonym that adequately defines *epibléō* but is also a verb. The word that fulfills all these requirements is *kowtow*. Its use is described under this entry:
- Kowtow. To prostrate oneself before, bow down to, genuflect to, make obeisance before. She didn't have to kowtow to a boss: grovel to, be obsequious to, be servile to, be sycophantic to, fawn over, cringe to, bow and scrape to, truckle to, suck up to.**¹⁹
7. Dictionaries define *kowtow* as, “an obsequious act” or “to show servile deference.” This is the third, third-class condition of the protasis that began with the “if” clause leading off verse 2.
8. To whom is the usher kowtowing? “The one who is wearing the fine clothes.” This is misleading. In verse two, we learn he was “dressed in fine clothes.” In verse 3, he is “wearing the fine clothes.” This may appear to be repetition, but it’s not.
9. The word here is the present active participle of **φορέω** (*phoréō*) which requires some investigation. First of all, the word “dressed” in verse 2 does not appear in the Greek text. What does appear is the phrase, “in fine clothes.” We’ve translated this, “dressed in a dazzling, expensive outfit.”
10. However, in verse 3, the phrase is, “wearing the fine clothes.” The word “wearing” does appear in the Greek text. It is the present active participle of **φορέω** (*phoréō*) and defined as follows:
- To carry or bear habitually or for a considerable length of time, bear constantly /regularly. James 2:3.**²⁰
- φορέω; to bear, bring. Particularly a form implying the repetition of continuance of the simple action expressed by *phoréō*, to bring, carry, bear.**²¹
11. The man is not wearing these garments he is carrying them. In verse 2, his clothes are described as “dazzling and expensive.” In verse 3, he is carrying some of them.

¹⁹ Christine A. Lindberg, comp., “kowtow,” in *Oxford American Writer's Thesaurus*, 3d ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 507–508.

²⁰ Bauer, “φορέω,” in *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 368.

²¹ Zodhiates, gen. ed. “φορέω,” in *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*, rev. ed., 1451.



12. Bible dictionaries that discuss the culture of Palestine in the first century A.D. give some information on dress, including some detail on the differences of dress between rich and poor. The following excerpts provide a summary that I have collected from pertinent entries in *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Manners and Customs*:

Three developments characterize the clothing of Palestine. (1) Greek styles in the almost thirty Hellenistic cities influenced many among the upper-class. (2) Instead of an almost universal preference for wool fabrics in earlier periods, many now chose linen. (3) With more dyes available and more dye works in operation, people increasingly wore more gaily colored clothing than in previous periods.

The literary and archaeological information available to us concerns the clothing of Judea more than the rest of Palestine.

The basic garment consisted of a tunic made of two pieces of woolen material, joined at the top with a hole for the head to pass through. The tunic ... extended roughly to the knee or mid-calf. Tunics were normally decorated with two vertical stripes (and) usually were red, yellow, or black ... or they were multicolored. [Commonly the width of the stripe indicated age or prestige.] (p. 447)

The mantle served as the Hebrews' other main garment. This consisted of one piece of cloth worn over the tunic. The mantles were yellow or brown and often decorated with checkerboard patterns. (p. 378)

The price of dying depended on the color and the dye used, so the poorest tended to wear white clothing. But all classes liked to have some color in their wardrobes.²² (p. 485)

13. From these excerpts we are able to apply some clarity to the wardrobe of the two men in our passage. The man "dressed in fine clothes" is most likely wearing linen material. The coloring of his wardrobe is multicolored beginning with his tunic. It contains two multicolored, vertical stripes which were wide rather than narrow indicating his high station in Jewish society.

This undergarment was held together by a girdle or sash of linen or leather, at times decorated with precious gems.²³

14. Those of the upper class could afford to have elaborate mantles and, if a Roman citizen, a toga which is quite possibly the case here:

²² Howard F. Vos, *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Manners and Customs: How People of the Bible Really Lived* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999), 447, 378, 485.

²³ Allen C. Myers, ed., *The Eerdmans Bible Dictionary* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1987), 224.



Toga. Loose draped outer garment of Roman citizens. Throughout the history of the empire it remained the state dress, the garment of the emperor and high officials. Made from an oval-shaped piece of material, the toga had voluminous folds, requiring such skill to drape that often a special slave was retained for this operation. Because the mass of folds prevented active pursuits, the toga became the distinctive garment of the upper classes. After about A.D. 100, the toga began to diminish in size.²⁴

15. An interesting side note on this subject is how upper-class men wore their hair and beards:

Men wore their hair short, about the length shown on the familiar statues of Roman rulers, such as Julius Caesar or Augustus. They were either clean shaven or had short beards, trimmed close to the face.²⁵

16. The poor man is a mess with a tunic and mantle, probably white but dingy, dirty, and worn. His hair was long and untrimmed and allowed his beard to grow long and untrimmed.

17. In our passage we have distinguished the social differences that James conveys between the affluent aristocrat and the bedraggled beggar by observing the dress worn by each when entering the synagogue.

18. So far, the expanded translation of verse 3 reads this way:

James 2:3 and you kowtow to the man carrying the dazzling and expensive mantle and toga ...

19. We have established that the aristocrat entered in a white tunic with wide vertical, purple stripes and a belt studded with glistening precious gems.

20. In addition, he is carrying an elaborately colored mantle and toga each decorated with flashy, expensive jewels.

21. The third, third-class condition continues with the usher's instructions to the aristocrat and beggar respectively, "You sit here in a good place," and you say to the poor man, "You stand over there, or sit down by my footstool."

22. Our usher considers the aristocrat as the grand pooh-bah, the beggar as persona non grata. He first accommodates the former by saying, "You sit here," the present middle imperative of the verb **κάθημαι (kathēmai)**: "to sit." The present tense indicates linear action. The middle voice is deponent which is active in meaning. The imperative mood used here is a request or polite command.

(End JAS2-57. See JAS2-58 for continuation of study at p. 571.)

²⁴ *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 15th ed. (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2010), 11:818.

²⁵ Vos, *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Manners and Customs*, 447–48.



23. “This is normally seen when the speaker is addressing a superior.”²⁶ It is translated “Sit here,” the usher’s tone of voice one of courtesy emphasized by the phrase “in a good place,” indicating it is to his benefit to do so.

²⁶ Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar: Beyond the Basics* Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 487.



