

45. It was only about ten years at most, following Pentecost, when James wrote his Epistle. He was a prominent figure and spiritual authority in the Christian community within the city.
46. Cyrus Scofield's background comments that introduce the Letter of James include the following remarks:

As head of the first Christian church, that at Jerusalem, James was a man of great authority (Acts 12:17; 15:13–29; 21:17–18).¹ He writes to the twelve tribes who were dispersed abroad, that is, the Christian Jews dispersed throughout the Roman Empire.²

47. And James was the pastor-teacher at the local congregation which met at a synagogue within the city of Jerusalem.
48. In the book of James, he is giving that congregation an overview of principles, doctrines, and behavior patterns that are to be expected in the assembly where economic, social, and peerage standings are dismissed.
49. All are members of the royal family of God which provides each person the same equal opportunity to grow in grace.
50. Among them are varying doctrinal inventories, but each person possesses the freedom to grow in grace in an environment where partiality is not practiced by the pastor, deacons, or members.

James 2:5 [IM #15] Begin to concentrate, fellow members of the royal family of God; has not God elected to privilege [Phase 1: eternity past] the poor of this world [Phase 2, time], to be rich by the systematic accumulation of doctrine inside the evanescent divine power system, as heirs of the kingdom of God [Phase 3, eternity] which He promised to those who love Him? (EXT)

James 2:6 [Peroration] But you have dishonored the poor man. Is it not the rich who oppress you and personally drag you into court?

1. The **Peroration** of a formal speech is the conclusion by which the previous points are summed up in a forceful appeal to the ones addressed.

¹ The passage in Acts 15 is the report of *The Council at Jerusalem*, an event held at James's church in c. A.D. 45, which occurred after the writing of the Letter of James.

² C. I. Scofield, ed., "The Letter of James: Background," in *The Scofield Study Bible: NASB* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 1689.

2. The Peroration typically uses the third mode of persuasion called **πάθος** (**páthos**), designed to elicit passion from the soul of the one addressed. It appeals to standards to which he should emotionally respond.
3. First of all, James is going to appeal to the man's sense of discernment regarding practical matters. This is sometimes referred to as common sense and is defined as follows:

The endowment of natural intelligence possessed by rational beings; ordinary, normal or average understanding; the plain wisdom which is every man's inheritance. More emphatically: Good sound practical sense; combined tact and readiness in dealing with the every-day affairs of life; general sagacity.³

4. Our chazzan [**צָזָן (chazzan)**] has a position of leadership in the church including the welcoming of those whose obvious intent is to study the Word of God under the teaching ministry of James.
5. Associated with that assignment is the seating of parishioners when necessary but never to do so in a partial way. Partiality toward Mr. Golden Fingers has caused the chazzan to reveal his status in the cosmic system.
6. In the process, he has lost his common sense. Here is a synopsis of his dossier:
 - 1) In your recent association with Mr. Golden Fingers, common sense tells us your partiality has been amplified because of his recent court case against you.
 - 2) He obviously had the authority to place you into custody.
 - 3) The arrest resulted in him taking you to court.
 - 4) On the other hand, you are now impartial to your friend, Mr. Poor Beggar, who has done nothing to you.
 - 5) Because Mr. Fingers retains some sort of power over you is why you now kowtow to him while ostracizing your old friend.
 - 6) Principle: When a believer's circumstances cause him to lose "combined tact and readiness in dealing with the every-day affairs of life," he has entered into the advanced stages of reversionism.
 - 7) Because of this, Mr. Chazzan is said to "have dishonored the poor man."
7. The verse begins with the particle **δέ (dé)**: "but," which is a conjunction of contrast between Mr. Beggar, who is deprived of material things, but at the same time rich in doctrine, and Mr. Chazzan who is in advanced reversionism.

³ *The Oxford English Dictionary* (1971). s.v. "common sense."

8. We have done research on what the Bible has to say about poor people. Each one of them is two decisions away from spiritual prosperity: (1) the decision to express faith alone in Christ alone for salvation and (2) decisions to grow in grace inside the evanescent divine power system.
9. Mr. Usher, functioning on human viewpoint, human good, and evil, is in the advanced stages of reversionism, and is suffering inversion of thought while Mr. Beggar is relying on divine viewpoint, divine good, and grace orientation.
10. Mr. Chazzan is told by James that he has “dishonored the poor man.” “Dishonored” is the aorist active indicative of the verb **ἀτιμάζω (atimázō)**: “To dishonor, treat with indignity, to abuse.”
11. The aorist tense is culminative which implies that “the act was already in progress thus bringing the action to a conclusion.” By shunning the beggar and ordering him to sit on the floor is an obvious act of prejudice.
12. The next term refers to the victim of this bias: “the poor man.” We have the word **πτωχός (ptōchós)**, which refers to those who are economically disadvantaged and considered low class by the chazzan.
13. The attitude of the Jewish community in Jerusalem at the time James wrote his epistle was complex with many competing ideas about who and what Jesus was. Among them were the **Ἐβιωναῖοι (Ebiōnaíoi)**: Ebionites (Eb'-i-ō-nītes): “poor people.”

Ascetics who chose poverty as a way of life and who may have drawn their name from this term for poor men. Four Scripture verses seem central to the Ebionites. Matthew 5:3 mentions the poor in spirit; Luke 4:18 and 7:22 speak of the poor. Deuteronomy 18:15 was as central to their theology as the other references were to their chosen life style. On the whole they rejected the Pauline epistles, clinging instead to aspects of the Jewish law; therefore they are to be numbered among the Jewish Christian sects.

Origen knew of two groups of Ebionites, those who accepted the virgin birth and those who saw Jesus as a prophet fathered by Joseph. Eusebius adds that the Ebionites who did accept the virgin birth still rejected the preexistence of Christ. Ebionites therefore seem to be a continuing reflection in the early church of the Judaizers seen in Acts and the epistles as opponents of Paul. (p. 339)

In addition to accepting Jesus as the prophetic successor to Moses (whether virgin born or born of Joseph) and practicing asceticism, particularly poverty ... (saw) Christianity as obedience to a moral code that was higher than or fulfilled the law.

Some may have tended toward a Gnostic dualism. Many were vegetarians and practiced various ritual ablutions culminating in baptism.⁴ (p. 339–40)

14. With regard to the book of James, understanding the heretical theology of the Ebionites gives insight for this excerpt that addresses the mind-set for the poor in first-century Jerusalem and Palestine.

James contains a running attack on the rich both inside and outside the community. The opposite of the rich man is the πτωχός (*ptōchós*), though one cannot assume that the latter is as such characteristic of the environment of author and readers. A reason for the repudiation of the wealthy is that God has chosen the πτωχοί τῷ κόσμῳ [*ptōchoí tó kósmō*] (James 2:5), the poor before the world. A religious quality is obviously attached to πτωχός. The attitude of the community is not at all one of identification with the poor, and the author can only hope that it will incline back to solidarity with the oppressed. Though he himself is a friend of the poor, this fact does not control his thinking. Hence the section cannot be regarded as documenting Christian Ebionitism. It is scarcely Jewish either. As far as the situation in James is concerned one can merely say that the rich were beginning to seek entry into the church and the poor had already come to be esteemed less highly.⁵

15. This attitude is evidence that the chazzan has something negative going on in his soul. His obvious rudeness to his friend the beggar indicates a clear attitude of bias in favor of a fashionably dressed man whose fingers are loaded with golden rings.
16. This is where common sense enters the evaluation. Something has happened between the chazzan and Mr. Golden Fingers to cause this sudden fawning attitude.
17. What has happened is indicated later in the verse which helps expose the crass behavior of the usher. Golden Fingers has brought the man before the courts. The King James uses the phrase “judgment seats.” The phrase however is not the word we might expect to find of **βῆμα (bēma)** as in 2 Corinthians 5:10 where it refers to the Evaluation Tribunal of Christ.
18. In verse 6, it is the noun **κριτήριον (kritérion)**: “courts of justice.” This word refers to the establishment’s halls of justice in downtown Jerusalem.

⁴ V. L. Walter, “Ebionites,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1984). 339–40.

⁵ Ernst Bammel, “πτωχός,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Friedrich, trans. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1968), 6:911.

19. Mr. Beggar has done nothing to Mr. Chazzan but be a friend. Mr. Fingers, however, has brought the chazzan before the courts due to some violation of Jewish law.
20. In the first century, Judea was a division in the Roman Province of Palestina. Rome managed violations of the Empire's laws, but the Jews had jurisdiction over local laws. Here are some ideas about which of these laws Mr. Chazzan may have violated.
21. This summary is compiled from *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary*'s entry of "Law":

Crimes against an individual's person. Murder, assault and battery, miscarriage, rape and seduction, oppression of the defenseless, kidnapping, and slander. (pp. 751–52)

Laws dealing with Crimes Against Property placed a higher value on human life than on possessions. But it also allowed people to have private possessions by protecting them from theft and fraud: stealing, blackmail, loan fraud, weights and measures, lost animals, boundaries. (p. 752)

Laws Relating to Humane Treatment. Protection of animals and human beings. (pp. 752–53)

Laws About Personal and Family Rights. Parents and children, marriage, hired servants, slaves, aliens. (pp. 753–54)

Laws Against Property Rights. Lost property, damaged property, unsafe property, land ownership, inheritance laws. (pp. 754–55)

Laws Regulating Other Social Behavior. Worshiping idols, sacrificing children, homosexuality, slashing or tattooing one's body, and practicing magic, sorcery, or divination.⁶ (p. 755)

22. Among all of these categories of crimes, which among them could have Mr. Chazzan personally committed against Mr. Golden Fingers? Under *Crimes against an individual's person* I suggest slander. *Laws dealing with Crimes against Property* I propose loan fraud or weights and measures. *Laws Against Property Rights*, I conclude lost or damaged property is likely.
23. My reasoning for citing these violations is because they do not require incarceration but restoration or restitution. The problem that can emerge in these cases is the inability to immediately restore the injured party to his previous condition.

⁶ *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, rev. ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1995), 751–55.

24. Consequently, we find Mr. Chazzan in debt to Mr. Fingers. He may be unable to satisfy the man's damaged reputation from slander, repay him the money lost because he committed fraud in obtaining a loan, manipulating weights and measures in the sale or purchase of merchandise, or restore or replace damaged property.
25. All of these situations are clearly presented in the last sentence of the verse which is the interrogative, "Is it not the rich who oppress you and personally drag you into the courts?"
26. Mr. Golden Fingers is referred to in a collective masculine plural of the noun **πλούσιος (plousios)**: "the rich, the wealthy." This indicates that oppression is primarily imposed by those who have resources to do so. The verb "to oppress" is the plural present active indicative of **καταδυναστεύω (katadunasteúō)**: "to oppress, exploit, dominate; exploitation by the rich."
27. The prefix, **κατά (katá)** means, "down upon, toward, against someone," while the verb **δυναστεύω (dunasteúō)** means, "to hold power or lordship, be powerful or influential, to be lord over."⁷
28. In our context, it means to use the power of one's position in society to tyrannize the poor. It is the use of authority and power to impose harsh treatment upon the defenseless.
29. Well, look who is defenseless now. In the same way the chazzan has just oppressed the beggar, Mr. Golden Fingers is presently oppressing the chazzan. This has resulted in the usher showing deference to the man who took him to court.
30. Here we see that in the pecking order of life, if believers do not orient and adjust to the triune authority of divine justice, then they will be victimized by the idiosyncrasies commonplace in *cosmos diabolicus*. Here are some principles on this subject:
 1. James's example does not describe all people who have wealth. He is instead making the point that in the devil's world many who possess economic power use it to oppress the poor.
 2. It is arguably true that wealth does grant power to those who have it, but at the same time imposes responsibility on how they use that power.

⁷ Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, "δυναστεύω," in *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 9th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1940), 452, 453. This verb is from Classical Greek, not Koine.

3. In an honorable society, the rich understand they have the means to use their capital to enter into free enterprise but to do so requires them to hire personnel to produce the widgets.
4. Principle: Money itself does not produce a commodity; goods, or services. It provides the means to do so. People are needed to produce the product.
5. It must be noted that in the twenty-first century, androids are beginning to take the place of human personnel. The eventual downside is that unemployed humans will not be able to afford the android-produced products.
6. Therefore, those with wealth must accept the responsibility to avoid oppressing the poor. They have a right to exchange their labor for a fair day's wage with emphasis on fair.
7. It is understood that the profit motive is the principle that energizes free enterprise. But when the economic principle of capitalism is manipulated by those in power the brilliance and genius of that system is contorted ultimately by central planning.
8. One of the best analysts of economic systems is Dr. Friedrich von Hayek. His book, *The Road to Serfdom*, published in 1944, is considered a definitive refutation of central planning. Here are some excerpts from the essay, "Hayek's *The Road to Serfdom*," by Dr. Lawrence H. White, professor of economics at George Mason University:

Hayek noted that different planners with different interests will likely fight about what the plan ought to emphasize. The plan imposes one set of priorities. The representatives of various businesses, labor unions, and government agencies will have different interests and different views about the proper set of priorities. To get a single coherent central plan the political system will tend to select a strongman who decides which plan will rule.

The chapter "Who whom?" points out that the choice is not central planning or no planning at all. The alternative to central planning is a million plans, each person with his own plan or her own plan. The plans are coordinated through a price system, which gives people signals about the most valuable use of resources, but doesn't tell anybody what they have to do with their property. Central planning is essentially a system where somebody plans for everybody else.

Whether private property in the means of production is officially abolished (as in the Soviet Union) or not (as in Nazi Germany), all the most important decisions are taken out of the hands of individuals. (p. 51)

The chapter "Why the Worst Get on Top" argues that, despite good intentions, when you concentrate power in a central planning system, it will attract unscrupulous and ruthless people. The people who end up holding the reign of power are not going to be the most virtuous people. Somebody who's unscrupulous and ruthless is going to rise to the top in a system where one will dominates all other wills. Mussolini, Hitler, and Stalin did not rise to the top by accident. (p. 52)

In the socialist calculation debate Hayek had argued in economic terms why central planning isn't going to deliver prosperity. It's not going to coordinate activities as well as a market system does. It's not going to encourage the *discovery of better ways* to do things. That kind of discovery is what drives the market process. It is the entrepreneur who drives the market process by discovering lower-cost ways to produce things. In a centrally planned system there's no room for discoveries, for new plans. There is little impetus to technical progress under a central planning system. For these reasons central planning is not going to deliver the prosperity that the market economy delivers.⁸ (p. 53)

9. Capitalism is the only way that an economy can be guaranteed to produce prosperity for both the entrepreneur and the employee.
10. The rich man in James 2 is clearly an entrepreneur who has done well, well enough to afford fine clothes and a cluster of golden rings for his fingers. He is a member of the "Upper Class." Where the actors in our cast fell in Jerusalem society is the subject of these excerpts from the book, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*:

THE WEALTHY CLASS.⁹ The various extravagances of the rich in Jerusalem in their houses, their clothing, their servants, as well as their rich offerings and bequests to the Temple and their monuments ... give indications of this luxury: R. Meir records that the people of Jerusalem tied up their bundle of branches at Tabernacles with gold thread.

⁸ Lawrence E. White, "Hayek's *The Road to Serfdom*," in Mises, *Hayek and the Austrian School*, ed. Gary Wolfram (Hillsdale, Mich.: Hillsdale College Press, 2017), 51–53.

⁹ Mr. Golden Fingers.

The banquets given by wealthy people were an important part of life, and frequent references to customs peculiar to Jerusalem suggest that the city set the tone of contemporary etiquette throughout the land. We hear that the host weighed most carefully the social advantages of inviting a large number of guests against providing good entertainment.

Undiluted wine was drunk from crystal drinking glasses at table, and when spirits were high people might well start handclapping to accompany the dancing, as did for example the 'great men' of Jerusalem at the circumcision of Elisha whose father belonged to the aristocracy. (p. 92)

There is reliable evidence that at Passover time in Jerusalem poor people were invited in from the street. On certain political occasions there was a feast given for 'the whole populace' of Jerusalem, such as Marcus Agrippa gave on his visit there, and Archelaus \är-ke-lä'-us\ on the death of his father Herod. (p. 93)

From time immemorial Jerusalem had attracted the wealth of the nation—merchants, landowners, tax-farmers, bankers and men of private means. Several members of the Sanhedrin came from these circles. The councilor Nicodemus (John 7:50) was wealthy. It is said that he brought a hundred Roman pounds' worth of ointments and spices for Jesus' burial (John 19:39). Jerusalem merchants dealing in grain, wine and oil, and wood, who belonged to the Council between AD 66-70, are mentioned in rabbinic literature. When Joseph of Arimathea, another member of the Sanhedrin, is described as εὐσχήμων [euschémōn: "Elegant; of good standing, prestigious, honorable, respectable"] (Mark 15:43), the papyri make it clear that this means a wealthy landowner. He was a rich man (Matt. 27:57) and owned a garden to the north of the city with a family grave hewn from the rock (John 19:41; cf. 20:15). The main part of his property would probably be in his native city, since the Jerusalem site had evidently not been long in the possession of his family, for the grave was newly hewn. (pp. 95–96)

THE MIDDLE CLASS.¹⁰ Next to the merchants, who imported goods from a distance and stored them in large warehouses, were the retail traders who had shops in one of the bazaars. Then came the small industrialists or craftsmen who owned their own premises and did not hire themselves out for wages. These constituted the middle classes: there were no industrial factories. This was true of the Jerusalem of the time of Jesus.

It is evident, however, that the middle classes did best for themselves when they were connected with the Temple and its pilgrims.

¹⁰ Mr. Chazzan.

The Temple officials and workers were very well paid, as is shown by the report, exaggerated though it is, that the shewbread bakers and makers of incense received first twelve, then twenty-four minas, or about an eighth, a quarter, or half a talent each day. (p. 100)

The tavern trade depended almost entirely on the pilgrims, whose main requirement was a large space with plenty of room for their mounts and beasts of burden. (p. 101)

The pilgrims brought considerable traffic to those engaged in the catering trades. In the first place there were the offerings which the pilgrims had to bring, which varied according to the purpose of their pilgrimage. At Passover time they brought a lamb and possibly a free-will offering. (p. 102)

The rest of the trades in Jerusalem also profited to a greater or lesser degree from the pilgrim traffic. If a man was to fulfil the commandment to rejoice at the festival he had to see that his women-folk enjoyed themselves too. The Babylonian Jews gave their wives bright clothes for Passover, and the Palestinians white linen, most of which will have been bought in the city. It may generally be assumed that people would take home souvenirs of Jerusalem, and their liberality expressed itself in gifts to the Temple, which resulted in commissions to the craftsmen of the city. (pp. 103–104)

THE POOR.¹¹ We are entirely dependent for our knowledge of the poorer classes on literary sources, and these leave much to be desired when it comes to detailed information. (p. 109)

The sources are sufficiently adequate to enable us to form some idea who constituted the poorer classes. We must distinguish between those of the poor who earned their own living, and those who lived, either partly or wholly, on relief.

A. SLAVES AND DAY LABORERS. We find most of the slaves in the city, as domestic servants, and even here, except at court, their number is not large. (p. 110)

Day laborers were much more numerous than slaves. On an average their services earned one denarius a day (Matt. 20:2, 9). (p. 111)

B. THE SUBSIDIZED POPULATION. It is typical of Jerusalem that a large section of the population lived chiefly on charity or relief. (pp. 111–12)

Begging in Jerusalem was concentrated around the holy places, i.e. at that time around the Temple, but beggars were not allowed in every part of the Temple. (p. 117)

(End JAS2-60. See JAS2-61 for continuation of study at p. 601).

¹¹ Mr. Beggar Man.