

72. What does the world offer such an individual to assuage his lust for happiness? Power is one. But a lust for power over others lasts only until someone more powerful comes along.
73. A new search must be employed. How about something mind-altering? Alcohol, drugs, inhalants. This works as long as the body can hold out.
74. Each of these weakens or damages the liver, lungs, or heart. They must always be ingested or inhaled again. Faux happiness resumes for a time until the body disposes of the agent.
75. How about sex? Operation Any Port in a Storm? Any consenting adult? Any nonconsenting adult? Any child? Any sex, gender, or combination thereof? Any animal? Any corpse? Any ménage à trois?
76. All these expressions of evil are motivated by personal lust to acquire or reacquire happiness in any form, anytime, anywhere.
77. The method chosen in search for this happiness or the people involved is not the issue in the mind of the frantic. The issue is the personal lust to assuage any form of pseudo happiness and to prolong it as long as possible.
78. The usher in our paragraph displays his partiality toward the well-to-do, schmoozing him with a seat down front hoping to aggrandize himself for personal reasons.
79. The hazzan has had a recent experience with this rich man. He is in some way indebted to him. His desire is to be extremely partial to him for personal reasons.
80. Here is the expanded translation of verse 1:

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 glory. (EXT)

James 2:2 For if [3-phase protasis of 3d-class conditional clauses] [1] a man [ἀνὴρ (anér)] 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,



James 2:3 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. Starting with verse 2 and following, James presents a situation where he uses as an illustration what could occur within the Christian church.
2. James presents an usher discriminating against a member who is not well clothed in favor of another whose dress obviously indicates he is well-off.
3. What verse 1 introduces is the problem of advanced reversionism. 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 prohibitions.
4. This usher illustrates such stages as emotional revolt, negative volition, blackout, and scar tissue of the soul.
5. 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.
6. The verse is introduced by the particle **εάν (eán)** 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” phrases: **(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.”
7. 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.

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.

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. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), 963.

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



14. In his illustration, James singles out two people that enter into the synagogue's congregation who are greeted by a fictional 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 Epictetus does refer to a hypothetical scene where a gray old man enters having "many gold rings on his fingers" (χρυσοὺς 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

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 were prone to be far more conspicuous and with the intent to emphasize their wealth and station in society.

⁵ "Hazzan [káz-zän']. 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.

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.



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 outfit. 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 λαμπρᾷ** (*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 *lāmpō*, "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

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.

¹⁰ Spiros Zodhiates, ed., "λαμπρός," in *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*, rev. ed. (Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 1993), 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.

