

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 (*anēr*)] 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 *epiblēō* 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.



23. “This is normally seen when the speaker is addressing a superior.”¹ 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.
24. The present tense also carries the idea of repetition such as “keep on sitting here.” “This is your seat.” Followed by, “in this good place.” But “good place” is not quite it. The phrase looks like this in the Greek text: **Εὖ κάτου ὦδε καλῶς**: “You sit here well.”
25. The Greek vocabulary word for **καλῶ**, or “well,” is the adjective **καλός** (*kalós*) and it means, “honorable”: “You sit here in this place of honor.”
26. Then, James hypothetically addresses the usher, saying, “... and you say to the poor man.” We’ve seen this term used before to describe this man. It is one word: **πτωχός** (*ptōchós*).
27. This word refers to a person in abject poverty, utter helplessness, and destitution:

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.²

28. So, the usher is a man of no integrity. In his reversionistic mind, he grovels in doing favors for the man who incarcerated him. He has paid his debt or is out on bail or probation. He’s trying to get in the prosperous man’s good graces.
29. Having done the best he could, he then turns to deal with his old friend but with quite the opposite approach. He is about to use two imperative moods, but they are not of the variety of accommodation he used with the aristocrat.
30. We first have the orist active imperative of the verb **ἵστημι** (*hístēmi*): “Stand,” followed by **ἐκεῖ** (*ekēi*): “there!” He follows this with a second command, **ἢ** (*ē*): “or,” with the present active imperative of the verb **κάθημαι** (*káthēmai*): “sit” plus the adverb **ὦδε** (*hōde*): “here!”
31. Taken together these two are imperatives of command and read, “Stand there or sit here!” There is a slight difference between the two. The command “to stand” is an orist tense while the command “to sit” is in the present tense.

As a command, the imperative is usually from a superior to an inferior in rank. It occurs frequently with the orist and present.

¹ Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar: Beyond the Basics* Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 487.

² Ernst Bammel, “πτωχός,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Friedrich, trans. ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1968), 6:911.



The basic force of the imperative of command involves somewhat different nuances with each tense. With the *aorist*, the force generally is to *command the action as a whole*. In keeping with its aspectual force, the aorist puts forth a *summary command*. With the *present*, the force generally is to *command the action as an ongoing process*.³

32. The usher's commands may be distinguished by his tone of voice leading to the following conclusions: the aristocrat "*has his place*" while the beggar "*knows his place*."
33. Where the beggar's place is depends on two options. He can continue to "stand there," indicating away from the front of the auditorium. The "there" indicates the beggar has assumed a standing position in the back. "The force of the present tense is to command the action as an ongoing process."
34. The aorist tense is a command to stay put whereas the present is a command to "consistently sit down by my footstool." We visualize a footstool as a small, low, portable bench without back or arms as a support for the feet.
35. Interestingly, the King James translates this phrase, "sit her under my footstool." This is obviously impossible for the beggar to do.
36. The words, "by" and "under," is the Greek conjunction **ὑπό (*hupó*)**, and is consistently translated "under," in Greek lexicons and dictionaries. But as is the case with words in every language, there can be more than one translation which is the case here.
37. Our context may be classified as early Christian literature and this excerpt clears things up:

ὑπό with the accusative case, under, down against, down beside. ὑποπόδιον [*hupopódion*] footstool. This could have been something like what was found in a synagogue of the 2nd. or 3rd. century—a stone bench running along the walls, with a lower tier for the feet of those sitting on the bench.⁴

38. This usher, or chazzan, of the synagogue is presented as a person in the throes of advanced reversionism. He gives favor to the one in ostentatious attire while treating rudely the poor man whose clothes are worn out and threadbare. Our Lord's description of the Pharisees may be applied to this usher's decision to seat the aristocrat up front:

Matthew 23:6 "They love the place of honor at banquets and the chief seats in the synagogues." (NASB)

³ Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 485.

⁴ Cleon L. Rodgers Jr. and Cleon L. Rogers III, *The New Linguistic and Exegetical Key to the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1998), 556.



39. The word “footstool” completes the three-part protasis. Here is our expanded translation for verses 2 and 3 [For v. 2, see visual: James 2.2-EXT]:

NOTE: There are 3 imperative moods in v. 3, all made by the reversionistic usher and underlined in blue. These will not be included among our ongoing survey.

James 2:3 and you kowtow to the one who is carrying his flashy multicolored mantle and toga, and you say in a pleasant voice, [3d 3CC] “You sit here in this place of honor,” and you say officiously to the beggar, “Stand there or sit down by my footstool,” (EXT)

40. We have now completed the protasis which introduces three, third-class conditions: **(A) Condition #1:** If an aristocrat enters into the synagogue who appears to be wealthy and is also a man to whom you are obligated; **(B) Condition #2:** and there also enters a beggar in filthy clothes and is also a friend; and **(3) Condition #3:** You kowtow to the aristocrat by giving him a choice seat but talk down to the beggar by ordering him to sit on the floor.
41. The precise definition of such a conditional sentence follows:

A conditional clause (also called a *protasis*) is an adverbial clause, typically introduced by *if* or *unless*, establishing the condition in a conditional sentence. Usually this is a direct condition, indicating that the main clause (also called the *apodosis*) is dependent on the condition being fulfilled.⁵

42. This brings us to the apodosis which occurs in:

James 2:4 [the apodosis] have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil motives? (NASB)

1. The protasis has described the congregation of this synagogue to be in the advanced stages of reversionism. This is clarified by the opening verb, the aorist passive indicative of **διακρίνω** (*diakrínō*): “to discriminate.”
2. James is the pastor of the Messianic Jews of Jerusalem. He has given a sermon to the congregation by describing the mental attitudes of a fictitious usher toward two men, a wealthy aristocrat and a poor beggar.
3. The mental-attitude breakdown by the usher is stated in the apodosis beginning with the verb, *diakrínō*. This refers to the collective decline over time of the doctrinal inventory of parishioners.
4. The verb means “to differentiate by separating; to conclude that there is a difference; to make a distinction; differentiate; concede superiority to someone.”⁶

⁵ Bryan A. Garner, *The Chicago Guide to Grammar, Usage, and Punctuation* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2016), 166.

⁶ Bauer, “διακρίνω,” in *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 231.

