

## A Glimpse Of A 1<sup>st</sup> Century Assembly

- Some assembly passages. (1 Tim. 2:1-14; 1 Cor. 11, 14; Acts 20:7-11).

### Respect Of Persons

**JAM 2:1 My brethren** [Christian brothers], **do not hold** [have] **your** [lit. the] **faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with {an attitude of} personal favoritism** [lit. face receiving].

1. "my brethren" - 1:19; 2:5, 14; 3:1; 5:1.
2. "glorious lord" - This may have several ideas.

a. Denoting one reigning in glory, worthy of glory - 1 Cor. 2:8.

1CO 2:8 the wisdom which none of the rulers of this age has understood; for if they had understood it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory;

b. Lit. "the Lord, of the glory" are in apposition to Jesus Christ and have the idea of "the glorious Lord".

3. James is addressing those professing to believe in Jesus Christ as their Lord.
4. "hold the faith" has the idea of practicing one's faith in Jesus.
5. Saving faith in Jesus excludes partiality, and treating others in any contemptible way.

#### Note:

1. "personal favoritism" or "respect of persons" lit. means "face receiving."
  - a. This is judging by looks or appearance.
  - b. This is judging or showing favoritism based on race, position, education, wealth, etc.
2. "Respect of persons" was forbidden in O.T. (Lev. 19:15; Deut. 1:17).

LEV 19:15 ' You shall do no injustice in judgment; you shall not be partial to the poor nor defer to the great, but you are to judge your neighbor fairly.	DEU 1:17 'You shall not show partiality in judgment; you shall hear the small and the great alike. You shall not fear man, for the judgment is God's. And the case that is too hard for you, you shall bring to me, and I will hear it.'
--	--

3. God is not a respecter of persons (Acts 10:34, 35; Rom. 2:11; 1 Pet. 1:17).
4. "your" is added. Lit. "the faith of the Lord of us Jesus Christ of the glory."

## Two Men (Visitors) Entering Assembly

**JAM 2:2 For if a man comes into your assembly** [congregation, meeting assembly] **with a gold ring and dressed in fine** [expensive, splendid] **clothes, and there also comes in a poor** [beggar] **man in dirty** [cheap, shabby] **clothes,**

1. Lit. the word is “synagogue.” See Matt. 4:23; Lk. 4:20; Acts 17:1.

a. It was also used by metonymy for the place of worship. (Lk. 7:5).

LUK 7:5 for he loves our nation, and it was he who built us our synagogue. "

b. The word “Synagogue” can have the meaning of assembly or meeting place.

c. It here denotes the assembly of Christians.

d. There is no evidence he is talking about the literal Jewish Synagogue.

e. Christians may have, at times, called their assemblies [meeting places] by Jewish names.

f. There were some similarities between the Synagogues and the Christian assemblies.

Both were governed by a plurality of elders.	Weekly assembly
Neither used instrumental music in worship.	Teaching God’s word.
Both had Prayer	Scripture Reading - Lk. 4:16

2. Christians met in homes and rented facilities as a general rule. (1 Cor. 16:19).

a. This was not because it was wrong to have a building.

b. This was likely true for several reasons.

This was likely what was available.	Sometimes authorities limit the freedom in what Christians are permitted to do or own.
A lack of funds to build likely was a factor in some or many circumstances.	There are places today where Christians are not permitted to have property or these rights are rarely granted.

3. You can almost see the Christians becoming very excited when the rich man came into their assembly.

4. They manifested contempt for the poor man coming into the assembly.

5. They did not turn the poor man away, but treated him shamefully.

6. It is not stated if either man was a Christian, but it is certainly possible one or both were Christians.

7. Their partiality was a form of snobbery and contempt.

### Sinful Response Of Assembly

**JAM 2:3 and you 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 [beggar] man, "You stand over there, or sit down by [Gr. hupo, under] my footstool,"** NIV "sit on the floor by my feet"

- 1 The poor man is dishonored because he is poor. "pto'chos" - poor, beggar. See Lk. 16:25.
2. His character and faith are ignored or never considered.

**Note:** Asking a visitor, Christian or not, to stand or sit on floor was rude and a mark of discourtesy and partiality.

**JAM 2:4 have you not made distinctions [showing discrimination] among yourselves, and become judges with evil motives [thoughts]?**

1. They judged the worth of the man based on appearance.
2. They became judges with evil thoughts. Lit. it can be rendered "evil-thinking judges."
3. They judged the poor man as worthless and perhaps even sinful because of his appearance and lack of wealth.
4. Men today often do the same thing.
  - a. It is real easy to fall into the sinful practice of showing favoritism to the wealthy.
  - b. The wealthy often expect more and receive just what they expect.

**Note:** The Greek "diakrino" [dee a kree'\_no] means "judge, make a distinction, doubt"

### **"The Poor Of This World"**

**JAM 2:5 Listen, my beloved brethren [brothers]: did not God choose the poor of this world {to be} rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?**

1. God chooses men through the gospel - not arbitrarily. (2 Thess. 2:13, 14; Rom. 1:16; Jas. 1:18).
  - a. The words "to be" are supplied by translators.
  - b. God chose the poor *to be* "rich in faith" and "heirs of the kingdom."
  - c. The meaning is God makes those who are "rich in faith" "heirs of the kingdom."
2. The poor are often more receptive to the gospel than the rich. See Lk. 6:20; 1 Cor. 1:26.

LUK 6:20 And turning His gaze on His disciples, He began to say, "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.	1CO 1:26 For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble;
--	--

3. But many poor reject Christ and refuse to trust God.
4. Some rich have accepted Christ. (1 Tim. 6:17-19).
5. All Christians, rich or poor, should seek to be "rich in faith," that is "rich toward God.."

LUK 12:21 "So is the man who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

**JAM 2:6 But you [in contrast] have dishonored [insulted, humiliated] the poor man. Is it not the rich who oppress [persecute and domineer, take advantage of] you and personally drag you into court?**

1. The rich often abused and practiced great injustices against the poor.
2. "Drag" implies force. (Acts 9:1; 16:9; 21:30). See Matt. 10:7; Jno. 16:2.
3. The rich had the favor of the courts, and the poor had no chance of justice.
4. James 5:4 is an example of how the rich treated them.

**JAM 5:4 Behold, the pay of the laborers who mowed your fields, and which has been withheld by you, cries out against you; and the outcry of those who did the harvesting has reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.**

- Withholding wages was a common way of mistreating and oppressing the poor.
- "Sabaoth" means "armies." (Rom. 9:29; Jas. 5:4). NIV has "the ears of the Lord Almighty."

**JAM 2:7 Do they [the rich] not blaspheme [speak evil of, slander, insult] the fair [honorable] name [of Christ] by which you have been called?**

1. Literally "they blasphemy the good name called on you."
2. Many rich cursed the name of Jesus. See 1 Cor. 12:3; Mk. 15:32.
3. This likely refers to the name of Christ that was blasphemed by the rich.
  - a. Jesus was poor and had not been to the schools of the rich.
  - b. His parents and family were poor.
  - c. He died a shameful death on the cross and died as a criminal.
  - d. Things like this likely were used to blasphemy the glorious name of Christ.
  - e. They would portray Him as a weak, deluded, sinful man.
4. It might refer to the name Christian.
  - a. This name only occurs 3 times in the Scriptures

ACT 11:26 and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. And it came about that for an entire year they met with the church, and taught considerable numbers; and the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.	ACT 26:28 And Agrippa replied to Paul, "In a short time you will persuade me to become a Christian."	1PE 4:16 but if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not feel ashamed, but in that name let him glorify God.
---	--	--

b. Some believe it was given to Christ’s followers as a term of derision, but it really came from God.

ISA 62:2 And the nations will see your righteousness, And all kings your glory; And you will be called by a new name, **Which the mouth of the Lord will designate.**

c. The new name was not believers, children of God, sons of God, disciples, etc. These were old names.

**JAM 2:8 If, however, you are fulfilling** [keeping] **the royal law, according to the Scripture, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself,’ you are doing well.**

1. “royal law” - Lev. 19:18. We are not sure why loving neighbor as self is called “the royal law.”
2. It could be for some or all of these reasons.

a. King of all other laws	c. Comes from King and is a law of the kingdom
b. Proper even for kings to obey	d. Leads to fulfillment of other laws.

3. Some may have argued that they were merely obeying the second greatest commandment of the Law by honoring the rich man.
4. Somehow the poor man was not on their neighbor list, and he was treated shamefully.

### Partiality Is Sin

**JAM 2:9 But if you show partiality** [respect of persons, favoritism], **you are committing sin {and} are convicted by the law as transgressors** [violators].

1. He stands condemned by all the Law when he violates any portion of it.	4. Loving neighbor as self has always been God’s law.
2. Showing favoritism was and is sin.	5. “Law” may refer to Mosaical law or “law of Christ” or both.
3. See Lev. 19:18; Matt. 22:39; Rom. 13:8, 9.	6. God has never approved partiality under any law.

#### Note:

1. It is possible some were claiming they were fulfilling “the royal law” by treating the rich man as they wanted to be treated.
2. If this was their claim, it was invalidated by their shameful treatment of the poor brother.
3. They certainly did not want to be treated in the shameful way they were treating the poor brother.
4. Paul is not saying the Law of Moses was binding upon Christians, but those who appealed to it were condemned by the very law they appealed to for justification of their actions.

### Violating The Law

**JAM 2:10 For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one {point,} he has become guilty of** [violating]

**all** [the law]. The Gr. “en’ochos” denotes “guilty, liable.”

1. One could not pick the laws he wanted to obey and glory because he kept them.
2. The law is a unit and the one who breaks one law is a transgressor of the law.
3. This does not mean the person is guilty of breaking every law, but breaking one law makes you a law breaker.
4. Paul wrote, “**For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law, to perform them."** (Gal. 3:10).

**JAM 2:11 For He who said, "\Do not commit adultery,\” also said, "\Do not commit murder.\” Now if you do not commit adultery, but do commit murder, you have become a transgressor of the law.**

1. One does not have to break every law to become a violator of the law.
2. Breaking one law makes a person a lawbreaker. See Exod. 20:13, 14; Deut. 5:17,18.

### **“Judged By The Law Of Liberty”**

**JAM 2:12 So speak and so act, as those who are to be judged by {the} law of liberty [freedom].**

- JAM 1:25 But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man shall be blessed in what he does.

- |   |
|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. N.T. is a law (Jas. 1:25; 2:12; Gal. 6:2; Heb. 8:10; 1 Cor. 9:20-22). See Jn. 12:47, 48.</li><li>2. It is “law of liberty” because through it we are freed from Satan and condemnation. (Rom. 8:1).</li><li>3. It does not mean we can do as we please. (Rom. 6:1, 2; Gal. 5:19-21).</li><li>4. It is a “law of liberty” because through it we are adopted into God’s family and enjoy His blessings.</li><li>5. Those who obey gospel receive salvation in Christ, that is, everlasting life.</li></ol> |
|---|

**JAM 2:13 For judgment {will be} merciless to one who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs [is victorious] over judgment.**

- “katakaucha’omai” - “to vaunt one’s self against, to glory over, to assume superiority over.” (Rom. 1:18; Jas. 2:13; 3:14).

ROM 1:18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,	JAM 2:13 For judgment will be merciless to one who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment.	JAM 3:14 But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth.
--	--	---

1. Their action of partiality was an action that showed no mercy.
2. Even under “the law of liberty” no mercy will be shown those who do not show mercy to others.
3. There is a coming judgment (Acts 17:30, 31; Rom. 14:12; 2 Cor. 5:10).
4. Mercy overcomes judgment - “mercy triumphs over judgment.”
5. We must be merciful. (Matt. 5:7; 6:14,15; 18:35).
6. Not showing partiality is one way of showing mercy.
7. There are many other ways we must be merciful.

Forgiving - Matt. 18:23-35	Being a friend
Helping - Jas. 1:26, 27; Gal. 6:10; Lk. 10:25-37; 1 Jn. 3:17.	Speaking good of others
Teaching - Mk. 16:16	Not super-critical - Matt. 7:1-5
Showing kindness - Eph. 4:32	Restoring if fallen - Gal. 6:1.

### **Ways Christians Show Favoritism Today**

1. Race or Nationality or family	7. Personality
2. Wealth or occupation	8. Power and influence
3. Fame	9. Gender
4. Education or lack of it	10. Age
5. Attractiveness or size	11. Residence
6. Position or rank or tenure	12. School

#### **Other Lessons**

1. We should seek to honor all. (1 Pet. 2:17; Rom. 13:7).
2. All members of Christ’s body are vital, and we should treat all with respect. (1 Cor. 12:14-31).
3. We should not disgrace a brother and especially on the basis of favoritism.
4. When we do honor someone, it should be on the basis of their Christian character - not partiality.
5. If we rebuke someone, it should be because of sin - not because of wealth or some other form of favoritism. (1 Cor. 5:9-13).
6. We must not be bias against the rich, but neither are we to show favoritism toward them.

7. We should have the attitude that God has.

ACT 10:34 And opening his mouth, Peter said: "I most certainly understand now that God is not one to show partiality,  
ACT 10:35 but in every nation the man who fears Him and does what is right, is welcome to Him.

"Scripture taken from the NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE®,  
© Copyright 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation

Used by permission." ([www.Lockman.org](http://www.Lockman.org))