

“Are You Prejudiced?”
James 2:1-13

Prejudice is defined as holding a judgment or opinion before the facts are known, to prejudge. It can also mean a judgment or opinion held in *disregard* to the facts, an unreasonable bias. James deals with this issue in the early church by noting that this is inconsistent with *the* faith (Eph. 4:5; Jude 3) in *the* Lord Jesus Christ. James uses the title Lord (Greek *kurios*), a clear indication of Christ’s deity (Matt. 4:7). Calling Jesus the Lord of glory further demonstrates deity as God shares His glory with no one (Isa. 42:8).

James now illustrates by contrasting the reception given to a rich person and a poor person coming into the assembly (Greek *sungoge*). Based only on the outer appearance, one is given the better seat and place of prominence (Mark 12:38-39). The meeting places of the early church had very limited seating, most attendees sitting on the floor. To favor or show partiality in this manner is not a reflection of God, who shows *no* partiality but instead looks at the *heart* (Lev. 19:15-18; 1Sam. 16:7; Prov. 24:23; Matt. 22:8-10; Acts 10:34-48; Eph. 6:9; 1Pet. 1:17). The life of Christ exemplifies humbleness and impartiality in becoming a man, His genealogy and birth, growing up in obscurity in Nazareth, and ministering in despised areas like Galilee and Samaria (Phil. 2:5-9; Matt. 1:1-15; John 1:46, 7:41). Believers are to see everyone as image bearers of God and as one in Christ (Gal. 3:28).

God has indeed chosen the poor for the Kingdom (Matt. 5:3) and they are objects of His special concern (Lev. 25:25-27, 35-37; Ps. 41:1; 68:10, 72:4; Prov. 17:5, 28:27, 29:7, 31:9, 20; Gal. 2:10; James 1:27). The scriptures do not condemn riches but warn of its’ dangers (Matt. 13:22, 19:22-26; 1Tim. 6:9-10) while showing how wealth is to be used for God’s glory in the furtherance of His kingdom (Matt. 27:57-60; Acts 4:32-37, 10:1-2, 16:14-15; 1Tim. 6:17-19).

James warns that the rich are often the ones who persecute. This was true for both Christ (Matt. 26:57-58, 27:3-7; Mark 14:11; Luke 23:6-12; John 15:20) and the early church (John 16:2-3; Acts 4:1-6, 8:1, 12:1-4). We are not to judge hypocritically (Matt. 7:1-6). If we show partiality we sin and are not fulfilling the *royal law* to love our neighbors (Lev. 19:18; Matt. 22:27-40). The spirit of the Law is violated and the whole is broken. We must show mercy to others as God has first shown to us (Eph. 2:4-10).

