

**Sermon on the Mount—Judging
Matthew 7:1—6**

We now move on to what is probably one of the most well known verses in Scripture and most likely the most misunderstood and misinterpreted one as well. The problem, as is often the case, is that people will take a single verse out of context to prove what they think is right. (Yes, I am judging them. Are you judging me for doing so?) By taking a careful look at the context surrounding a verse, an accurate understanding can usually be achieved.

Judge and be Judged (verse 1)

This is the standard response to anyone who says something that could be interpreted as being judgmental. To see if this verse can be a universal response to a judging-type statement we need to look at what has been said and what is being said in the surrounding paragraphs. Jesus is in the middle of the so-called Sermon on the Mount. This discourse is directed to Israel and specifically to the believing remnant of Israel known as the Little Flock. Christ is calling unbelieving Israel to become members of the Little Flock and is preparing the Little Flock for the coming Tribulation. The goal is to bring Israel into the Millennial Kingdom in fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies.

The immediate context is that of the dipolar concepts of being rich and poor in the Tribulation. Those who are rich will not be able to gain entrance into the Kingdom because it shows that they pledged their allegiance to the Beast by taking his mark. Those who are poor are barely getting by because they cannot buy or sell. Those who put aside worldly desires and seek the Kingdom will gain the Kingdom and all the pleasures that have been denied them in the Tribulation (Matthew 6:33).

The verses immediately following 7:1 are about the hypocrites who say one thing but do the opposite. It seems obvious that these hypocrites are the Scribes and Pharisees (Matthew 15:7; 16:3; 22:18; 23:13—15, 25—29). The Scribes and Pharisees were the poster children of hypocrisy. They set themselves up as self-righteous examples and expected the people to follow them yet were guilty of skirting their own rules.

With these things in mind we can see that Jesus said this with the Pharisees in mind warning them that when they judge they will be judged with the same standard as they are judging. He is also pointing out that when the Pharisees judge they do so with the wrong standard—their own.

So Jesus is not condemning all judging, only hypocritical judging. John and Paul clearly say that we are qualified to judge if we do so in a godly manner. When we know what Scripture says then see someone act contrariwise then we can judge his actions. We are not qualified to judge the intent of the heart because God is the only one who knows what is in a man's heart.

John 7:23—24 ²³If a man on the sabbath day receive circumcision, that the law of Moses should not be broken; are ye angry at me, because I have made a man every whit whole on the sabbath day? ²⁴Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.

1 Corinthians 2:15 But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man.

Malachi 3:18 Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not.

Hypocrites (verses 2—5)

Verses 2—5 describe a hypocrite, specifically how the Scribes and Pharisees operate. It also warns the hypocrite that the same standard they use to judge others will be applied to them.

These hypocritical Pharisees were really good at nit-picking, as Matthew 23:24 puts it they “strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel.” This section of Matthew strips away their pretense to show the rest of the

Jewish nation who they really are in God's eyes. The admonition is to first examine themselves then take corrective action before judging others.

Dogs and Swine (verse 6)

This verse has a number of interpretations. Most understand this to mean that we are not to give out God's word to those who would not appreciate or denigrate it. John Versteegen (a mid-Acts Bible teacher) equates dogs with the Gentiles and swine with the Samaritans while Richard Jordan (also a mid-Acts Bible teacher) says they represent false prophets and false teachers (2 Peter 2:1). Both possible but I don't quite see those fitting into the context.

The idea of verse 6 is the giving over of something holy to an unholy use. When this happens the holy is made unholy or common. Judging from a godly standard is holy while judging from a self-righteous, human standard is unholy. If the judging is done correctly we will be able to discern right from wrong, righteousness from evil, believer from unbeliever. Jesus has been training the Little Flock to properly discern (or judge) these things for survival in the Tribulation. If they were to judge by unholy standards (making the correct use of judging into one of unholiness) then they would be looking at the rich man and coveting what he has. If they judge the rich man by Godly standards then they would look at the rich man with compassion, longing to reach out to that man to save him from God's wrath. This could be turned around to apply to how the rich man views the poor.

James 2: 1—6 ¹ My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons. ² For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; ³ And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool: ⁴ Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts? ⁵ Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him? ⁶ But ye have despised the poor. Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats?

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