



A Systematic Expository Study of the Word of God

Special Study:

UNCHRISTLIKE JUDGMENT FORBIDDEN

Matthew 7:1,2

“Judge not.” These gracious words of Jesus are often quoted casually and carelessly. When an evil-doer is confronted by a friend or neighbour, instead of showing any desire to change or repent, he glibly responds by saying, **“judge not.”** Many people, in their ignorance, use the words of Jesus to cover up their evil deeds and continue in the way that leads to destruction.

These words of our Lord have also been misunderstood and misapplied by some leaders and teachers in our modern society. They maintain that human nature resents correction and that no one ever changes his behaviour because we want him to change. They teach that correction in any form is useless and accomplishes nothing except to harden the sinner. They say that any form of judgment, even by the judges in the world is contrary to the teaching of Christ. They dream of a world where **“judge not”** will be absolutely and universally practised. They hope for a civilization where there will be liberty for all children and all people to do as they please without judging anyone.

The problem of such interpreters advocating absolute liberty without restraint is that they forget that God is the great Judge (Hebrews 12:23) and Christ is also the Judge of the living and the dead (Acts 10:40-42). They overlook the responsibility of Christians to judge between the brethren (1 Corinthians 6:1-5). What, then, is the meaning of the words of Jesus? How do we apply these words in our personal lives, in our individual families and among the brethren? We must consider everything Jesus said and did as well as the application of His words by His disciples in the early Church.

MISINTERPRETATION OF CHRIST’S WORDS ON JUDGMENT

Matthew 7:1; John 19:11,12; Luke 20:22-26; 23:1,2; John 2:18-22; 2 Corinthians 2:17; 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12; 2 Timothy 4:3-5; 2 Corinthians 11:3,4,11-13; 2 Peter 3:16,17; 1 Thessalonians 2:3-6; 2 Corinthians 4:1,2.

Satan quoted God’s Word to Jesus to persuade Him to please the flesh, to worship Satan and to sin against God. It is not enough to merely say the Word, we must know its context, meaning and proper application. As a general rule, any quotation of God’s Word which is intended to justify wrong-doing or cover up sin in any way is wrong and misleading.

The Pharisees also quoted the words of Christ but they used those words to accuse Him falsely and to excuse themselves. They deliberately put an interpretation that would suit their sinful purpose (Matthew 26:61; John 2:19-21; Matthew 27:62-64). As the Pharisees twisted and misapplied the words of Jesus when He was on earth, so many are deliberately misinterpreting and misapplying Christ’s words today. Such people delude themselves and deceive others.

Judges and magistrates are needed in the society. They are ordained of God and the words **“judge not”** do not apply to them (Romans 13:1-4). Each of us must also learn to judge and discern between good and evil so we can choose what is good and reject everything sinful and evil. We must judge and discern false prophets by their fruits, wolves in sheep’s clothing, dogs and swine who trample the truth under their feet and turn again to rend and hurt, religious men who compass land and sea to prevail on the ignorant wanting to make them two-fold more the children of hell than themselves. Leaders and teachers who have a charge to keep must judge and lift up the standard for the people (Isaiah 62:10). Jesus judged the Pharisees and warned His disciples of their error.

MODEL OF CHRIST’S WISDOM IN JUDGMENT

Matthew 7:1; 10:16; 7:15-20; 13:36-43; 23:13-33; Luke 16:14,15; John 3:18-20; 8:24,37-44; 9:39-41; 5:22-30; Matthew 16:6-12; 18:15-17.

The actions of Jesus give us a perfect interpretation of His words. It is said of the Pharisees, **“for they say, and do not”** (Matthew 23:2,3) but we cannot say that of Christ. His life interprets His words and His words explain His life. His life and His words do not contradict but they complement one another. He lived as He preached and He preached what He lived consistently before His disciples and the whole world. To understand the meaning of His message, simply observe the

demonstration in His life. As He has commanded us to keep or obey His words, He has also called us to follow His example (John 14:15; 13:15). Doing this, we cannot go astray because He always did what pleased the Father and none could convict Him of sin (John 8:28,29,46).

"Judge not" was His command and He neither judged nor condemned the common sinners or His disciples. He did not excuse the sins of any sinner but He was loving, gentle, gracious and ready to forgive. He led sinners to repentance and warned those who came to Him not to continue sinning without judging or condemning them (John 5:14; 8:11). He rebuked His disciples sharply when it was necessary (Matthew 16:22,23; Luke 9:51-56) but it was not to judge them in a tone of condemnation, it was to restore them to righteousness. He was never bitter or critical, in all His corrections and rebukes; His desire was to make them escape the judgment to come. He loved His disciples but condemned actions which could make them incur God's wrath or judgment. **"Judge not, condemn not"** Christ condemned sin in every form but He had compassion on the sinner. His love and compassion for sinners made Him to die for us; His hatred and condemnation of sin made Him to call all sinners to repentance in clear, unmistakable language. He judged and condemned the Pharisees, hardened sinners who were deceiving ignorant sinners (Matthew 23:33). This He did as **"the Judge of quick and dead"** (Acts 10:42) and **"the Watchman"** over the souls of those He came to save (Luke 19:10).

MANDATE IN CHRIST'S WORDS ON JUDGMENT

Matthew 7:1,2; Luke 6:37; John 7:24; Luke 12:57; Isaiah 65:5; Luke 18:11; 7:36-39; Matthew 12:1-7; Ezekiel 13:22; Romans 2:1,2; 14:1-4,10-13; 1 Corinthians 4:5.

In our personal relationship one with the other as brethren, our Lord has commanded us not to judge one another. We can admonish one another (Colossians 3:16), counsel and correct one another (Malachi 3:16), exhort and watch over one another (Hebrews 3:13), teach and edify one another (Romans 14:19), be concerned for one another (1 Corinthians 12:25), minister to one another (1 Peter 4:10), exhort and challenge one another (Hebrews 10:25) but we are not to judge, criticize or condemn one another.

Before and during the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ, the Pharisees called attention to themselves as the religious standard to follow. They thought that they were the true citizens of the kingdom of God. Throughout the Sermon on the Mount, our Lord corrected the error and self-deception of the Pharisees. They were fond of exalting themselves and despising others (Luke 18:9). They judged others with a 'holier-than-thou' attitude. They condemned others on minute, insignificant, unimportant things while they excused terrible, soul-threatening sins in themselves. They set aside the laws of God and established many ridiculous laws on non-essential, superficial things: **"Be not ye therefore like unto them. Judge not, that ye be not judged"** (Matthew 6:8; 7:1). Judging others on seemingly unimportant issues while we are guilty of great soul-damning sins shows that we are not motivated by real spiritual concern; neither are we seeking only the glory of God. Judging and condemning others for doing what we also do, even in greater measure reveals an inconsistent personality, a heart without principles. Judging others for great sins or minor faults without helping them, through patient instruction and personal influence and practical example, to have the grace for a higher life is unkind and unscriptural. Judge not, show them **"the highway"** to the heavenly city, **"the way of holiness"**. Let your life raise up a standard, saying, **"This is the way, walk ye in it"**

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