

To Judge or Not To Judge

Has ***Thou shalt not judge*** become the man-made Eleventh Commandment in today's culture?

The question, "Is it right to judge?" is one that puzzles many sincere Christians. Careful and open-minded study of the Bible makes it clear that concerning vital matters, it is not only right but a duty to judge--the Scripture commands us to judge.

The Lord Jesus commanded, ***Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment***. (Jn. 7:24). He told Simon, ***You have rightly judged*** (Lk. 7:43) He asked the Pharisees, ***Yea, and why, even of yourselves do you not judge what is right?*** (Lk. 12:57).

After telling "my beloved" to flee from idolatry, Paul wrote ***I speak as to wise men; judge for yourselves what I say.*** (1 Cor. 10:15). Paul also declared, ***He that is spiritual judgeth all things...***(1 Cor. 2:15). Here Paul is telling the spiritual man to examine, convince & reprove the natural man (including his own) natural ways. It is our duty to judge those things that are worldly in actions or thoughts **vs** those things that are spiritual.

Misunderstood & Misused Scripture

The most quoted but most misinterpreted and misapplied Scripture is found in Matt.7:1 because people stop with "Judge not..." To know what Jesus is saying and to whom he is talking, the whole passage must be read: ***Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged: and with the same measure you use, it will be measured to you. And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, Let me remove the speck out of your eye; and look, a plank is in your own eye. Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck out of your brother's eye*** (Matt. 7: 1-5).

Read carefully. Notice that it is addressed to a ***Hypocrite!*** If we fall into that category, then it certainly applies. It is a solemn warning against hypocritical judgment. We should all examine ourselves and remove that (hypocritical) obstacle. The last statement says ***then you will see clearly to remove the speck out of your brother's eye.***

In other words, we need to search ourselves first and remove our own shortfalls or sin (the plank) so that there will be no inconsistency in obeying God's Word... **then** we are to judge and lovingly help the brother ***remove the speck*** in his eye. (Specks do hurt one's eye too)..Romans 2:1-3 is addressed to the religious hypocrite that condemned himself because he was guilty of the same things for which he condemned others.

A great peril of our day is not too much judging, but too little judging--either of spiritual

falsehoods and deception or actions. God wants His children to be like the noble Bereans who **...searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so. (Acts 17:11).**

Other matters to be judged

Non-believers -- Those who are non-believers, **God judges:** *But for those who are outside God judges (non-Christians). Therefore put away from yourselves yourselves that wicked person.* (I Cor. 5:13). Leave the pagans to God's judgment; but do not approve or affirm their sin.

Professed believers -- The immoral conduct of professed believers in our Lord **is** to be judged. I Corinthians 5 tells how immorality defiles the Church and then instructs the Church how to deal with it. He reminds the church in v 6 that a little leaven (here, evil influence) tolerated infects the whole Church. Simply put, discipline those who profess to be Christians.

Romans 1:21-32 tells of God's wrath on ungodliness and unrighteousness because, *although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful... Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man... and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.*

For this reason God gave them up to vile passions... The passage goes on to describe and name the vile passions and ends with *who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them* (Rom. 1: 32). We not only cannot do ungodly and perverted things, but also cannot approve of them.

False Prophets/Teachers - False Teaching

Beware of false prophets (Matt. 7:15) is the warning and command of Jesus. How could we "beware" and how could we know they are false prophets if we did not judge?

Immediately after Jesus tells us to beware of false prophets, he tells us *Ye shall know them by their fruits* (Matt. 7:16). In judging the "fruits," we must judge by God's Word, not by what appeals to human reasoning. Many things that seem acceptable to human judgment are wrong according to Scriptures.

And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness but rather reprove them (Eph. 5:11). *Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good* (Rom. 12: 9). *Prove all things; hold fast that which is good* (1 Thess. 5:21). It would be impossible to obey these injunctions of God's Word unless it is right to judge--using Scriptural guidelines.

The Apostle John wrote, *Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try [test, judge] the spirits*

whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone into the world (1 John 4:1). An example of false teaching and doctrine is denying Jesus as fully man and fully God. *For many deceivers have gone into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an anti-christ* (2 Jn.7-11). This tells us to judge between those who do and those who do not bring the true doctrine of Christ.

Shepherds (pastors, evangelists, leaders) are addressed throughout the Scriptures, and God holds them accountable not only for themselves but also for the people they have led astray. Jeremiah, especially chpt. 23, gives them awesome warnings.

As noted above in I John 4, Christians must test the spirits behind ministries, prophets and teachings, and we are told how. We are to know:

- * Is it scriptural (*Is. 8:20*)
- * Does it confess that Jesus is Lord (*1 Jn.4: 2-3*) and glorify Jesus--not man (*Jn. 15:26*)
- * Does it bear witness to the Holy Spirit within you (*1 Jn.2:20*)
- * What is their fruit--character & conduct in daily living (*Matt.7:15-16; Gal.5:22-23*)
- * Does it lead to God's freedom--not man's bondage (*Jn.8: 31-32; Rom. 8:15*)
- * Prophecy must meet these above requirements. It also has a special test: Does it come to pass? We must wait to see if it comes to pass (*Deut. 18: 22*). Even if it comes to pass, but leads people away from God's truth, and if it is unscriptural, it is false (*Deut. 13:1-3*)

There are two basic types of prophecy: un-conditional and conditional. Messianic prophecies are all unconditional as God spoke them. Some prophecies are conditional such as the one that God gave Solomon (and us): ***if** my people, which are called by My name, shall humble themselves and pray, and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways; **then** I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and heal their land* (II Chron. 7: 13-14).

Christians who earnestly seek God's will and obey His commandments by applying these tests, will not be led astray. If in doubt, keep in mind that *in a multitude of (Christian) counselors there is safety* (Prov. 24: 6). Remember: *To the Law and to the Testimony: if they speak not according to **this word**, (scripture) it is because there is no light in them* (Isaiah 8:20)

Two Elements in Judgment

The New Testament Greek word that is most often translated "judge" or "judgment" is *krino*. On the one hand, it means to distinguish, to decide, to determine, to think and to call in question. Other Greek words: *anakrino* (to scrutinize, investigate), *diakrino* (oppose, separate thoroughly), *dokimazo* (interpret, discover, prove) are used occasionally and often imply

discernment (which is expected of Christians)--*aisthesis* (discernment) is used once. God wants His children to judge (*krino*) as to whether preaching, teaching, writings and actions are true or false according to His Word. A wrong idea of what love is, a lack of knowledge and the lack of judgment often cause God's people to approve things that are wrong in God's sight.

We are also warned that being lukewarm causes God to vomit... *So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of My mouth* (Rev.3:16). Christians who are apathetic or won't speak out about scriptural truths are in danger of being spewed out of God's mouth. On the other hand, *krino* can mean to condemn, sentence and punish. This we are not to do. Thus, while we are to judge whether words or actions line up with Scripture, the Lord alone pronounces the final judgment, and the consequences (Matt. 25:31 -

46) *Scriptures are from the King James or New King James Bible*

-- Marty M. McKenney (2014)