

## THE GREATEST CHAPTERS IN THE BIBLE-12

### MATTHEW, CHAPTER 07

#### I. INTRODUCTION.

The scribes and Pharisees were guilty of exercising a false judgment about themselves, other people, and even the Lord. Their false righteousness helped to encourage this false judgment. This explains why our Lord closed this important sermon with a discussion of judgment. In it He discussed three different judgments.

#### II. OUR JUDGMENT OF OURSELVES (Mt. 7:1-5).

The first principle of judgment is that we begin with ourselves. Jesus did not forbid us to judge others, for careful discrimination is essential in the Christian life. Christian love is not blind (Phil. 1:9,10). The person who believes all that he hears, and accepts everyone who claims to be spiritual will experience confusion and great spiritual loss. But before we judge others, we must judge ourselves. There are several reasons for this.

##### A. We shall be judged (7:1).

The tense of the verb *judged* signifies a once-for-all final judgment. If we first judge ourselves, then we are preparing for that final judgment when we face God. The Pharisees “played God” as they condemned other people; but they never considered that God would one day judge them.

##### B. We are being judged (7:2).

The parallel passage in Lk. 6:37-38 is helpful here. Not only will God judge us at the end, but people are also judging us right now; and we receive from people exactly what we give. The kind of judgment, and the measure of judgment, comes right back to us. We reap what we have sown.

##### C. We must see clearly to help others (7:3-5).

1. The purpose of self-judgment is to prepare us to serve others. The Pharisees judged and criticized *others* to make themselves look good (Lk. 18:9-14). But Christians should judge *themselves* so that they can help others look good. There is a difference!
2. Let’s look at our Lord’s illustration of this point. Jesus chose the symbol of the eye because this is one of the most sensitive areas of the human body. The picture of a man with a two-by-four stuck in his eye, trying to remove a speck of dust from another man’s eye, is ridiculous indeed! If we do not honestly face up to our own sins, and confess them, we blind ourselves to ourselves; and then we cannot see clearly enough to help others. The Pharisees saw the sins of other people, but they would not look at their own sins.
3. In Mt. 6:22-23, Jesus used the illustration of the eye to teach us how to have a spiritual outlook on life. *We must not pass judgment on others’ motives.* We should examine their actions and attitudes, but we cannot judge their motives—for only God can see their hearts. It is possible for a person to do a good work with a bad motive. It is also possible to fail in a task and yet be very sincerely motivated. When we stand before Christ at the Judgment Seat, He will examine the secrets of the heart and reward us accordingly (Rom. 2:16; Col. 3:22-25).
4. Two extremes must be avoided in this matter of spiritual self-examination:
  - a. The first is the deception of a shallow examination. Sometimes we are so sure of ourselves that we fail to examine our hearts honestly and thoroughly. A quick glance into the mirror of the Word will never reveal the true situation (Jas. 1:22-25).
  - b. The second extreme is what I call a “perpetual autopsy.” Sometimes we get so wrapped up in self-examination that we become unbalanced. But we should not look only at ourselves, or we will become discouraged and defeated. We should look by faith to Jesus Christ and let Him forgive and restore us. Satan is the accuser (Rev. 12:10), and he enjoys it when we accuse and condemn ourselves!

### III. OUR JUDGMENT OF OTHERS (Mt. 7:6-20).

Christians must exercise discernment; for not everyone is a sheep. Some people are dogs or hogs, and some are wolves in sheep's clothing! We are the Lord's sheep, but this does not mean we should let People pull the wool over our eyes!

#### A. The reason we must judge (7:6).

As God's people, we are privileged to handle the "holy things" of the Lord. He has entrusted to us the precious truths of the Word of God (2Cor. 4:7), and we must regard them carefully. No dedicated priest would throw meat from the altar to a filthy dog, and only a fool would give pearls to a pig. While it is true that we must carry the Gospel "to every creature" (Mk. 16:15), it is also true that we must not cheapen the Gospel by a ministry that lacks discernment. Even Jesus refused to talk to Herod (Lk. 23:9), and Paul refused to argue with people who resisted the Word (Ac. 13:44-49).

#### B. The resources God gives us (7:7-11).

Why did our Lord discuss prayer at this point in His message? These verses seem to be an interruption, but they are not. You and I are human and fallible; we make mistakes. Only God can judge perfectly. Therefore, we must pray and seek His wisdom and direction. "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God" (Jas. 1:5).

#### C. The guiding principle (7:12).

1. This is the so-called "Golden Rule," one of the most misunderstood statements in the Bible. This statement is not the sum total of Christian truth, nor is it God's plan of redemption. We should no more build our theology on the Golden Rule than we should build our astronomy on "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star."
2. This great truth is a principle that ought to govern our attitudes toward others. It only applies to believers, and it must be practiced in every area of life. *The person who practices the Golden Rule refuses to say or do anything that would harm himself or others.* If our judging of others is not governed by this principle, we will become proud and critical, and our own spiritual character will degenerate.

#### D. The basis for judging (7:13-20).

Since there are false prophets in the world, we must be careful of deception. But the greatest danger is *self-deception*. The scribes and Pharisees had fooled themselves into believing that they were righteous and others were sinful. It is possible for people to know the right language, believe intellectually the right doctrines, obey the right rules, and still not be saved. Jesus used two pictures to help us judge ourselves and others.

##### 1. *The two ways* (7:13-14).

These are, of course, the way to heaven and the way to hell. The broad way is the easy way; it is the popular way. But we must not judge spiritual profession by statistics; the majority is not always right. The fact that "everybody does it" is no proof that what they are doing is right.

Quite the contrary is true: God's people have always been a remnant, a small minority in this world. The reason is not difficult to discover: The way of life is narrow, lonely, and costly. We can walk on the broad way and keep our "baggage" of sin and worldliness. But if we enter the narrow way, we must give up those things.

Here is the first test: *Did your profession of faith in Christ cost you anything?*

##### 2. *The two trees* (7:15-20).

These show that true faith in Christ changes the life and produces fruit for God's glory. Everything in nature reproduces after its kind, and this is also true in the spiritual realm. Good fruit comes from a good tree, but bad fruit comes from a bad tree. The tree that produces rotten fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. "Wherefore, by their fruits you shall know them" (7:20).

The second test is this: *Did my decision for Christ change my life?*

#### IV. GOD'S JUDGMENT OF US (Mt. 7:21-29).

- A. From picturing two ways and two trees, our Lord closed His message by picturing two builders and their houses:
  - 1. The two ways illustrate the *start* of the life of faith.
  - 2. The two trees illustrate the *growth* and results of the life of faith here and now.
  - 3. The two houses illustrate the *end* of this life of faith, when God shall call everything to judgment. The final test is: *What will God say?*
- B. How can we prepare for this judgment? *By doing God's will.* Obedience to His will is the test of true faith in Christ. The test is not words, not saying "Lord, Lord," and not obeying His commands. How easy it is to learn a religious vocabulary, and even memorize Bible verses and religious songs, and yet not obey God's will.
- C. We are to *hear* God's words and *do* them (see Jas. 1:22-25). We must not stop with only hearing (or studying) His words. Our hearing must result in doing. This is what it means to build on the rock foundation.
- E. The foundation in this parable is *obedience to God's Word*—obedience that is an evidence of true faith (Jas. 2:14ff). The two men in this story had much in common. Both had desires to build a house. Both built houses that looked good and sturdy, but when the judgment came (the storm), one of the houses collapsed. What was the difference? Not the mere external looks, to be sure. The difference was in the foundation: The successful builder "dug deep" (Lk. 6:48) and set his house on a solid foundation.
- F. The judgment illustrated here probably refers to the final judgment before God. Those who have trusted Christ, and have proved their faith by their obedience will have nothing to fear. Their house is founded on the Rock, and it will stand. But those who have professed to trust Christ, yet who have not obeyed God's will, will be condemned.
- G. Comparison and contrast:
  - 1. *The two ways* tell us to examine the cost of our profession. Have we paid a price to profess faith in Christ?
  - 2. *The two trees* tell us to investigate whether our lives have really changed. Are there godly fruits from our lives?
  - 3. And *the two houses* remind us that true faith in Christ will last, not only in the storms of life, but also in the final judgment.
- H. The congregation was astonished at this sermon. Why? Because Jesus spoke with divine authority. The scribes and Pharisees spoke "from authorities," always quoting the various rabbis and experts of the Law. Jesus needed no human teacher to add authority to His words; for He spoke as the Son of God. We cannot lightly dismiss this sermon, for it is God who gave it to us! We must either bow before Him and submit to His authority, or we will be condemned.

#### V. NEXT WEEK.

- A. John, Chapter 17
  - The Prayer of the Overcomer*
  - 1. We Share His Life (Jn. 17:1-5).
  - 2. We Know His Name (Jn. 17:6-12).
  - 3. We Have His Word (Jn. 17:13-19).
  - 4. We Share His Glory (Jn. 17:20-26).