Passing Judgment

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6/22/2014

Introduction

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus condemned hypocritical judgment. Many misinterpret this warning as a blanket condemnation of all judgment; yet, this fallacy is refuted by both the statement and its context (Matt. 7:1-6).

Judging Prophets by their Fruits

As Matthew Chapter Seven continues, Jesus spoke of the need for prayer and following the golden rule (vs. 7-12), contrasted the narrow and wide gates (vs. 13-14), and then warned against the danger of false prophets, saying “you will know them by their fruits” (vs. 15-20).

Judging Hearts by their Words

Later in His ministry, the Pharisees disputed with Jesus, accusing Him and His disciples of breaking the Sabbath (vs. 1-21), saying that He cast out devils by Beelzebul the ruler of the demons (vs. 22-30). Our Lord refuted these criticisms, stating that they had committed the ultimate transgression in rejecting the testimony of the Holy Spirit (vs. 30-32), and affirming that words reveal one’s character (vs. 33-37; cf. Luke 6:39-45).

Judging Soil by its Productivity

In the Parable of the Sower, Jesus compared the hearts of men to various type soils. Those whose hearts are hardened are like the wayside; those whose hearts are shallow are like the rocky places; those whose hearts are cluttered are like the thorny ground; those whose hearts are truly receptive are like the good soil. As we can judge different soils by its productivity, we can judge the hearts of men by their differing response to the Word of God (Matt. 13:1-9, 18-23).

Judging Times by its Signs

When the Pharisees and Sadducees came to Jesus, and testing Him, asking for a sign from heaven, our Lord responded by saying, “Do you know how to discern the appearance of the sky, but cannot discern the signs of the times?” In other words, He rebuked these religious leaders for their unwillingness to recognize the momentous events occurring before their very eyes (Matt. 16:1-4; cf. Luke 12:54-57). Witness this process at work among the disciples of John (Luke 7:18-23).
Conclusion

Having created man as a creature of choice, God has always expected us to exercise proper judgments. The Law of Moses said, “You shall do no injustice/wrong in judgment (Lev. 19:15, 35-37). The Gospel of Christ says, “Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment” (John 7:14-29, esp. vs. 24). Therefore, we can understand the will of God (Eph. 5:6-10, 15-17), and distinguishing between the things that differ (Phil. 1:8-11), identifying truth from error (1 John 4:1-6).