

THE KIND OF JUDGMENT GOD WILL EXERCISE ACCORDING TO MATTHEW

1. John preached repentance and deeds as all-important for spiritual preparation for the Messiah's coming, not pretended fleshly ties to Abraham. The judgment, while involving all of Israel, will examine each one individually (3:1-12). The Messiah Himself would be personally responsible to execute summary judgment.
2. Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount, underlined the inner purity of heart, the kind of motivated person that seeks God's will and man's good above personal interest. Only this kind of person will have God's approval. (Cf. 5:3-10, 21ff., 27ff., 44-48.) The rigor by which men deal with others will be the measure of severity or clemency by which they themselves are to be judged (5:7; 6:12, 14f.; 7:1-5). Men will be judged on the basis of what they do with JESUS' words (7:21-27). All are judged by their deeds and attitudes (7:15-23). Jesus Himself will decide the fate of all (7:22). God will not judge men merely by the standards of the most pious theologians of the day, the scribes and Pharisees (5:21), but against the standard of perfection itself (5:48)!
3. In the dialogue with the Gadarene demons, they demand to know if Jesus is come to punish them "before the time" of the final judgment (8:29). This suggests without stating it that Jesus Himself is the final Judge by whom these dark spirits must be judged and sentenced. How much more would mankind be judged by Him? "Before the time," however, means that the demons, and evil in general, are yet free to do their worst, even if drastically curbed for awhile and in limited ways. (The demons are cast out of the poor sufferers.)
4. God desires to exercise a judgment tempered with mercy, not merely the rigid, heartless censorship practiced by the Pharisees (Matt. 9:9-13, especially v. 13; 12:7).
5. God will save the man who endures to the end (10:22).
6. God will not destroy in hell those who, however frightened by persecutors and death, give their testimony boldly and confess Jesus before men (10:26-33).
7. God will judge sinners on the basis of their attitude toward His Holy Spirit (12:31f.), on the basis of the character of their heart as this is seen in their words, (12:33-37), and on their opportunities to know the truth (12:38-42), and on the basis of the practical emptiness of their sterile lives (12:43-45).
8. For the emphases on judgment in the Sermon in Parables (Matt. 13), see Note at the end.

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

9. God judges men's ideas on the basis of their origin, not upon their acceptability to "current scholarship" (15:13). If their ideas did not originate in the truth of God, they will be eradicated in judgment.
10. God cannot tolerate any rivals to Jesus His Son, not even the greatest Law-givers and Prophets of Old Testament religion (17:5, 5). Men must see "Jesus only" (17:8).
11. Greatness in the Kingdom of God is measured by God's concern for the least, the last and the lost (18:10-14). Anything that causes these to be lost must be eliminated on the penalty of eternal destruction (18:8, 9). God will use the same rigor of judgment with which men treat one another (18:23-35).
12. The lesson of the barren fig tree cursed (21:18-22) is that God eliminates useless, unfruitful creatures, with a suddenness and severity that may surprise the observer, but with undoubted justice, because of the richness of opportunities to produce what, by their nature, they should be expected to produce.
13. The severe condemnations of Pharisaism and Jerusalem (23:1-39) teach that God's judgment condemns making religion a burden (23:1-4), "proud humility" (23:5-12), partisan zeal (23:13-15), the art of evasion (23:16-22), loss of the sense of moral proportions (23:23, 24), external purity in contrast to inner pollution (23:25-28), abuse of God's messengers (23:29-36), rejection of Love's appeals (23:37-39). They are without excuse, because they know God's will and do not do it (Cf. v. 3).
14. The great Eschatological Discourse deals with judgment upon Israel, then upon the world (Chapters 24, 25). The bases of judgment mentioned are readiness, faithfulness, usefulness, faithfulness to Jesus.

NOTE that all the major discourses recorded by Matthew proceed to a climax in judgment:

- a. The Sermon on the Mount ends on the parable of judgment against the house built on the sand foundation (7:24-27).
- b. The Sermon on the Apostolic Mission rises to a climax from fear of human persecutors to concern for not being acknowledged by Jesus in the presence of God the Father (10:26-33). The result of God's judgment will be determined by the positions taken during this life (10:34-39).
- c. The Sermon on John the Baptist, "Shall We Look For Another Christ?" emphasizes the theme of judgment upon the

THE KIND OF JUDGMENT GOD WILL EXERCISE

- most favored cities where Jesus had bestowed His richest favors of blessing, healing and teaching. Judgment, says Jesus, will be in proportion to the light against which we have sinned (11:20-24). The very choice to hide certain truth from "the wise and understanding" while revealing them "to babes," is itself a judgment in which Jesus fully concurs (11:25ff.).
- d. The Sermon on the Kingdom of Heaven, told in truth-hiding parables, is itself a masterpiece of judgment executed upon those who had no desire for truth (13:10-17). The parable of the Sower emphasizes the grounds of the difference in reactions to truth and consequent judgment upon individuals (13:1-9, 18-23). The parable of the Weeds underscores the certainty of judgment, despite what appears to be unnecessary delay in its coming. It explains also the impossibility to pronounce premature judgments on our part (13:24-30, 36-43). The parables of the Yeast and the Mustard Seed pronounce God's judgment upon the progress of the Kingdom, despite man's opinions to the contrary (13:31-33). The parables of the Hidden Treasure and the Precious Pearl express God's judgment of the value of the Kingdom: it is worth all it costs the individual who acquires it (13:44-46). The story of the Dragnet repeats the message of the final, inexorable division of the world's people (13:47-50).
 - e. The Sermon on Personal Relations in the Kingdom thunders judgment without mercy against the unmerciful, by means of the parable of the Two Debtors (18:23-35).
 - f. The Sermon on the Sins of the Religious (Matt. 23), while itself almost entirely a thundering denunciation of a multitude of sins, rises to its dramatic climax in the words: "You serpents, you brood of vipers, how are you to escape being sentenced to hell? Therefore I send you prophets and wise men and scribes, some of whom you will kill and crucify, and some you will scourge in your synagogues and persecute from town to town, that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed on earth. . . . Truly, I say to you, all this will come upon this generation" (23:33-36).
 - g. The Sermon on the End of the World (24, 25) underlines again and again not only the fall of everything not in God's plans, but also the necessity for immediate, personal preparation.