

Righteous Judgment

Key Verse: “*Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.*”
—John 7:24

Selected Scripture:
John 7:1-24

BY OUTWARD APPEARANCES, Jesus’ ministry seemed to be in serious jeopardy. Many of his followers had abandoned him after he told them they needed to eat his flesh and drink his blood if they were to have eternal life. (John 6:53-58,66) As today’s lesson begins, we learn

additionally that the Jewish leaders in Judea were seeking to kill him. (John 7:1) As the Feast of Booths approached, however, Jesus faced the threat before him of returning to Jerusalem according to Jewish Law.—Deut. 16:16

The Lord’s brethren urged him to leave Galilee and go to Judea for the feast and give a demonstration of his powers for all to see. (John 7:3-5) Jesus’ response no doubt surprised them, for he told them to go to Jerusalem without him. His absence caused a great debate among the crowds as to what kind of man he was, while the Jewish leaders sought his whereabouts. As all of this was going on, Jesus secretly came to Jerusalem.—vss. 8-13

In the middle of the feast, Jesus appeared in the Temple and began to teach. The people were amazed, saying, “How is it that this man has learning, when he has never studied?” Jesus answered, “My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me. ... Has not Moses given you the law? Yet none of you keeps the law. Why do you seek to kill me?”—vss. 15-19, *English Standard Version*

The Master then turned their attention to the matter of judging righteously. “Jesus answered them, I did one work, and you all are astounded. Now Moses established circumcision among you—though it did not originate with Moses but with the previous patriarchs—and you circumcise a person even on the Sabbath day. If, to avoid breaking the Law of Moses, a person undergoes circumcision on the Sabbath day, have you any cause to be angry with (indignant with, bitter against) Me for making a man’s whole body well on the Sabbath? Be honest in your judgment and do not decide at a glance (superficially and by appearances); but judge fairly and righteously.”—vss. 21-24, *Amplified Bible*

The question arises, what is “righteous judgment” spoken of in our Key Verse? We answer that a righteous judgment is an equitable or right decision. However, as fallen human beings we cannot read the heart, so how can we render a right decision? The Apostle Paul provides this sobering answer concerning judging at the present time: “Judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come.” (I Cor. 4:5) Thus, we should not attempt to render positive and final judgment toward anyone at the present time, especially if our judgment is disposed to be rendered in the form of criticism. If faithful to our vow of consecration, we will be given the opportunity and have the wisdom necessary in the next age to assist in the work of judging the world “in righteousness.”—Acts 17:31

The Apostle James speaks of our present responsibility concerning judgment. “Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up. Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge. There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy.”—James 4:10-12 ■