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## **Judgment and Pearl Casting**

Matthew 7:1-6

March 30, 2003

Peter Hiett

Matthew 7:1: *“Judge not, that you be not judged.”*

I got a call from the Stated Clerk of our Presbytery. He’s a great guy and needed to talk to me about several things. At the end he said, “Ah, Peter, I suppose I should pass this on . . . I got a call from a man in North Carolina who was disturbed because the Presbytery meeting is to be held at your church. His daughter had been to your church and heard you use a profanity in a sermon.”

He called from North Carolina!

We religious people love to judge. If you see life or holiness as a competition (like the scribes and Pharisees did), judgment can be very helpful, because the more fault you can find in others, the better you look in comparison. If God grades on a curve, you should be pretty excited when someone else gets a bad grade!

Judging helps us compete, and it’s a good way to get revenge. Just by telling you that story I can get revenge and pass judgment on the man from North Carolina as a culturally conditioned and biblically immature Pharisee. I can judge him for judging me, and use Scripture to justify a vengeful heart. (I picked that example because I don’t know who he is, and I don’t think he’ll hear this sermon.)

Competition, vengeance, and avoidance of pain.

Judgment is a great way to avoid pain, because why would I even *listen* to someone I’ve judged a Pharisee? Why would I even care? In war it really helps to judge a person as an evil enemy rather than as a dad or husband. It helps to judge them before you shoot them . . . then it’s much less painful.

Conflict in life is inevitable, but judgment helps you guard your own heart and avoid pain.

According to Paul Harvey, a young pastor was giving a sermon and asked the rhetorical question, “Has anyone lived in such a manner that he now has no enemies?” Immediately an old guy in the back shot his hand up in the air. A little shocked, the pastor stopped and said, “Well tell us, sir. How is it that you’ve lived in such a way that you have no enemies?” The old guy stood up and said, “I outlived all them SOB’s!”

Well, that works when the other people are dead. But it also works when all are alive. If you label all your enemies as SOB's, you may have to put up with some inconvenience, but you can guard your heart from pain. For why would you care what an SOB thinks of you anyway?

And now, if you're worried that this sermon will be convicting, you can guard your heart from any painful truth that might be spoken here by simply judging me as "profane" for using "profanity" or an "abbreviation of a profanity."

The Jews were certainly taught to judge profane things. A pig was a profane thing, and a dog was the most despised animal. Jews didn't think of Benji or Lassie when they thought of dogs. And a pig wasn't just sloppy, but unholy and demonic. To judge someone as a pig or dog was incredibly severe.

Well anyway . . . Matthew 7:1-6:

*"Judge not, that you be not judged. For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and the measure you give will be the measure you get. Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when there is the log in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye. Do not give dogs what is holy; and do not throw your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under foot and turn to attack you."*

Does Jesus ever confuse you? In a few more verses He says, "Beware of wolves in sheep's clothes," and He tells us how to know them, that is, discern them or judge them.

The word "judge" in Greek has a very large range of meaning and takes many different forms. Just this form, "krino," is translated not only as judge but condemn, separate, consider, determine, decide . . . even esteem. Most scholars would say the kind of judging He's talking about here is condemnation. "Condemn not that you may not be condemned." That's at least true, for "there is no condemnation in Christ Jesus." So if you're in Christ, you won't condemn. It's at least that, but maybe more . . .

In John 7, Jesus commands us to "judge with just judgment."

In Luke 7, Jesus tells a guy who answers a multiple choice question, "You have judged rightly"—esteemed correctly.

In Matthew 7: "Judge not if you don't want to be judged."

Has anybody ever *not* judged? Would anybody ever *want* to be judged?

When you pick a babysitter, you judge.

When you vote, you judge.

To live as a human being is to judge.  
 To say “I decided to follow Jesus” is to judge  
 (that is, to decide).

Soren Kierkegaard wrote, “Decision is the awakening to the eternal. . . . In the end, the archenemy of decision is cowardice. Cowardice is constantly at work to break off the good agreement of decision with eternity.” That is, a good decision, a good judgment, is a surrender to eternity. A good judgment is a surrender to Jesus.

Well, that’s a bit deep. But whatever the case, “The judgment you give is the judgment you get.” Gosh, would anybody ever *want* to be judged? — not condemned, but judged?

Psalm 7:8: David, the man after God’s own heart, cries out, “Judge me, O Lord.”

Psalm 67:4: “Let the nations be glad and sing, for you God judge the people with equity. . . .”

I have a friend who was accused of a terrible crime. I believe he was innocent, but I was scared spitless for him. It was his word against another’s, and a human judge had to decide. I *longed* for righteous judgment.

To an oppressed peasant in occupied Israel, the thought of God judging instead of some Roman must have been a thrilling idea.

If George Bush is a believer like he says he is, I bet he just *longs* to be judged by God. He might not say it that way, but I bet he prays along with David, “Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!”

In other words, “O God, everybody in Iraq is judging me, everybody in France is judging me, everybody in America is judging me, and, dear God, *I’m* judging me. And all those judgments don’t agree! Please — *you* judge me, that all my judgments would be your judgments, that all my decisions would be awakenings to the eternal — *your* decisions, *your* kingdom, *your* eternal decree.”

I bet Paul actually *longed* for the judgments of Jesus when he wrote in I Corinthians:

“But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by any human court. I do not even judge myself. I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted. It is the Lord who judges me.”

Do you hear Paul? “O Lord, I’m counting on you to judge me — sort me out.” Paul acknowledges something tremendously important. He says, “I’m not aware of anything against me, but I’m not thereby acquitted.” That is, “I’m blind to my own garbage.”

People say, “What are your weaknesses?” and I struggle. It’s not that I can’t name some, but I take it as a matter of faith that my biggest weaknesses are the ones I can’t see . . . like a big old *log* in my eye!

If you really had a log in your eye, it would hurt like *hell*! But you couldn’t see it. You’d be totally blind to it.

I have a wonderful friend who almost drank himself to death a few weeks ago. He’s wrecked his marriage and his business; abused his family and friends. I think he’s miserable. But his heart can’t see his addiction!

Psychologists say people develop defense mechanisms: neuroses, psychoses, personality disorders — all as a way of avoiding painful truth. I think they’re right; I just think we all have them — bad psycho-logy to hide from good theo-logy. They’re all mechanisms for avoiding the truth. And I AM *is* the truth.

Jesus is the truth.

He is a living and active Word that “cuts to the division of soul and spirit, joint and marrow, able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”

He is the truth about truth.

He is truth crucified by us, the painful truth regarding us.

When I hide from truth, I hide from Christ and Him crucified. I hide from life imprisoned in death and lies. And I *need* someone to judge me, for “the truth will set me free.”

I think the meanest thing you can do to an alcoholic is not judge their alcoholism but enable it. Perhaps the meanest thing you can do to a sinner you love is not judge their sin but enable it. Certainly one of the meanest things a parent can ever do to a child is never judge them, never correct them, never discipline them. The Lord disciplines them that He loves and will not leave their soul in hell.

In Stephen Lawhead’s novel Merlin, Myrddin has lived for years in a cave in the woods, insane with fear and guilt. Finally a visitor arrives. Myrddin describes it:

“Myrddin,” the voice was soft as a mother’s crooning to her babe, “you will be healed. But first we must cut out the disease that poisons your soul.”

“I am happy as I am,” I gasped. Breath came hard to me. The wind howled now, and cold rain fell in stinging sheets upon us.

Annwas Adeniawc reached out his bony hand and touched my arm. “No one is happy in hell, Myrddin. You have carried your burden long enough. It is time to lay it down.”

If judgment is cutting a lie from my soul, I think I *want* to be judged. Humility is surrendering your heart to a just judgment.

In The Chronicles of Narnia, Eustace does some terrible things and turns into a dragon. He tries to scratch off the scales but can't scratch deep enough. A great lion appears, and Eustace describes what happens:

“Then the lion said . . . You will have to let me undress you. I was afraid of his claws, I can tell you, but I was pretty nearly desperate now. So I just lay flat down on my back to let him do it.

“The very first tear he made was so deep that I thought it had gone right into my heart. And when he began pulling the skin off, it hurt worse than anything I've ever felt. The only thing that made me able to bear it was just the pleasure of feeling the stuff peel off. You know—if you've ever picked the scab of a sore place. It hurts like billy—oh but it is such fun to see it coming away.”

“Once I was so judged it hurt like nothing I've ever felt. But if it was pain, it was the most exquisite pain I've ever experienced.” If that's judgment, I'll scheme to avoid it, but I do want more, for I hate living in hell.

Let's put it this way: If I have a speck in my eye or a log in my eye, I want someone to take it out. But not just *anyone* . . .

Jesus said, “First take the log out of your own eye, then you can see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.” I want the speck out of my eye . . . that is, I *do* want to be judged. Well then, *how* do I want to be judged? And by whom? I want to be judged by . . .

1. Someone who really knows me, not from a distance, but someone who has lived in my skin.
2. Someone who knows my sin. I want someone who has had a log in their eye, not now, but in the past. According to Jesus, the *only* way to take a speck out of another's eye is to admit you have or did have a log in your own eye. He assumes everybody has or had a log in their eye.

In his book Church: Why Bother? Philip Yancey tells the story of the beginning of Alcoholics Anonymous. Bill Wilson had battled his alcoholism, staying sober for six months. One day in depression he walked into a bar thinking, “I need a drink.” Then it hit him: “No, I don't need a drink; I need another alcoholic.” That is, “I need a log eye.” Philip writes, “Church is a place I can say, unashamedly, ‘I don't need to sin. I need another sinner.’”

So I want to be judged by someone who knows me and knows my sin and doesn't *want* to judge me, because they feel my pain.

3. Someone who doesn't condemn me. They judge me because they want to set me free and make me dance and make me *live!* And if I were to die, they'd die with me.

4. I want to be judged by someone willing to die for me.

Very few perfectly match that criteria. Some come closer than the rest: my wife Susan; my mom and dad; Andrew, Alan, Mark, Bill, old friends, the guys in my Small Group. I need them to judge me, and to them I need to confess.

“In the confession of concrete sins,” writes Dietrich Bonhoeffer, “the old man dies a painful, shameful death before the eyes of a brother. Because this humiliation is so hard, we continually scheme to avoid it. Yet in the deep mental and physical pain of humiliation before a brother we experience our rescue and salvation.”

Next verse, Matthew 7:6: *“Don’t give dogs what is holy.”*

What *is* the holy thing?  
And who are the dogs?

Well, the deepest part of the temple was the Holy of Holies. *We* are the temple. And the sacrifices in the temple were holy. According to David in Psalm 51, “This is the sacrifice the Lord desires, a broken spirit and contrite heart.” That is, “truth in the inner man,” confession from the depths of our hearts. Perhaps the holy thing is logs and splinters removed from eyes and given to Jesus to be born on His cross.

In Psalm 22:16 David prophesies the death of Jesus saying, “The dogs surround me; they have pierced my hands and feet.” In Philippians Paul writes, “Look out for the dogs, evil doers, those who mutilate the flesh.” He’s talking about circumcision and scribes and Pharisees . . . religious people who trust their religiosity. These people don’t value your confession! Don’t given them what’s holy!

And “don’t cast your pearls before swine.” You know, a pearl begins as a pain in an oyster’s gut. It’s a speck lodged in the depth of an oyster. But God wraps around the speck a pearl, so that what was a painful speck in the gut of an oyster, when taken out and surrendered, is a pearl.

Two months ago in our Living Stone Service, Kate Eden saw a picture in worship, and then she shared it. She said:

I saw a huge oyster shell that was open; a piece of dirt then fell in. I then saw a drop of Jesus’ blood fall on that piece of dirt. A pearl began to form that got bigger and bigger and bigger. It ended up a huge, pure, white pearl with no sign of the dirt that had started the process.

I believe the Lord is speaking to us about forgiveness, calling us to be reconciled to him and to the people in our lives. My sense is he’s saying, “These irritations as you rub each other are how I transform you into my pure pearls. As you allow my blood to cover the dirt in your own heart, I use the irritations, the conflicts in your life, to mold you and transform you. Receive my forgiveness so you can forgive each other and reveal the treasure in you: Jesus, my Pearl of Great Price.”

In a few chapters Jesus says, “The kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, who on finding one pearl of great value went and sold all he had and bought it.” I believe the pearl merchant is Jesus, King of heaven, who sold all He had and surrendered His life to buy us—His Church—His Pearl.

Jesus is the Pearl Merchant, but He’s also the Pearl. For His Church is His body and His bride. The Pearl is Christ in us.

We are the “fulness of Him who fills all in all” —  
the people of God who surround the wound of the cross on which the Prince of Glory  
bears our surrendered shame, our surrendered logs and specks. Perhaps we are that pearl.

And Jesus says we have pearls. I think the pearls must be our surrendered sins—confessed sins—that are wrapped in the grace of God—Jesus Himself—the blood of the Lamb.

Have you ever seen a pearl like that? A confession? Not just a vague “I’m sorry” (that’s usually an evasion) but a real confession is a treasure.

- A child who throws herself across your lap sobbing, “I’m sorry, Dad!”
- A prodigal boy saying, “I’ve sinned and don’t deserve to be your son.”
- A tax collector beating his breast in the temple crying, “Have mercy on me a sinner!” Remember the Pharisee saw him and prayed, “God, thank you that I’m not like him” . . . that sorry man . . . that pearl.

“Don’t cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under foot and turn and attack you.” Be careful who you confess your sins to. Pigs can’t see treasure, and Pharisees don’t believe in pearls. All they see is mud and mollusks.

Remember where pearls are found: in mud and mollusks. We like them once they’re cleaned up and packaged in a seminar or book. But we don’t like mud and mollusks in church. Oysters often don’t feel welcome in church, nor do pearl hunters. To hunt for pearls is not easy, and it’s often painful and very messy. It requires “just judgments” and heartfelt confessions. Most of all, you have to believe there *is* a pearl when all you see is mud and oyster and no treasure.

A pearl is a very special kind of treasure. Jesus has been talking about “storing up treasure in heaven” by seeing with clear eyes (log-less eyes) treasure on earth. The New Jerusalem is built of treasure stored up from earth. It has twelve gates, and each gate is a single pearl.

Perhaps whenever you confess a sin in Jesus’ name, you make a pearl. And then the very place where there was once an embedded sin (a splinter or log) . . . that very place becomes a door to the eternal city. You’ve seen those pearls, and some of you have entered by those gates . . .

When Bobby Fisher shared his story of drug addiction and abuse, he confessed his sin and was an open door to the kingdom.

When Mike Tucker preached about his AIDS and former lifestyle and love of Jesus, you saw a pearl.

This Palm Sunday you'll meet another open door. Her name is Sandy.

Whenever I preach flesh and law, I'm a pig. But whenever I preach "amazing grace how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me" and *mean* it, I'm an open door. And it's Jesus in me, the gate in me. He is the gate in the pearl!

In Revelation 21 we read that "the gates of the city are never shut by day and there is no night there."

(The gates are always open. Are you always open?)

"Yet outside are the dogs." I guess they don't want to enter. Swine hear a confession and trample it like dirt. Yet they don't enter, they don't believe. Jesus said, "Don't cast your pearls before swine." Swine can't see pearls as treasure. So don't just confess your sins to anyone. Perhaps once they're cleaned up and polished you can share them with the whole church, but first you need to confess to someone who can judge you well, that is, discern the mud and the pearl . . .

1. Someone who knows you and lives in your skin.
2. Someone who knows your sin and feels your pain.
3. Someone who will not condemn.
4. Someone who's willing to die for you.

I need to confess to Susan a lot, and sometimes to Andrew and my Small Group, my mom and dad, Aram and Gary . . . but none of them match perfectly my criteria for confessor or judge. Yet they are living vessels for the One who does. They are His body and His temple. And I need to confess to *Him* — Jesus. The very few is one.

1. He knows me. He wrapped Himself in flesh, and He even lives in my skin.
2. He knows my sin — a "high priest tempted in every way as I am." Even more, on His cross He "became sin for me" (II Corinthians 5:21). He took my sin. He took the log from my eye and bore it all the way to hell. The log is my flesh, my self, my pride.
3. He does not condemn. He makes me His pearl.
4. He's not only *willing*; He *did* . . . He died for me.

He is the measure I want. He is my judgment. I am His treasure stored eternal in heaven. But now I'm being revealed in time. He's being revealed in me in time. He's making His pearl.

Many of you know this story, but I need to tell it again. It's the story of the sweetest pain I ever felt, the time I was judged with perfect judgment.



I was at a conference with Susan, and I was incredibly depressed. A huge, Native American, charismatic guy and a little, old, Roman Catholic lady asked if they could pray for me. To me they represented the spectrum of the Church.

I don't know what they said, but the moment they started to pray, I heard these words in my mind (I've never heard so clearly): "Peter, you don't love my Bride very much, do you?" And at that it was like God ripped a scab off my heart, and I began to weep. All at once pictures, images, and ideas flowed from the depth of my heart, and I realized I had gone into the ministry largely because I hated the Church and wanted to conquer the Church!

I was angry with the way the Church had judged my dad at 1st Presbyterian in Littleton, Colorado.

I was angry over the judgments of pastors in California, who had had affairs.

I was angry over Pharisees who would call across the country to judge one word in a sermon.

I was angry at the Church's bad judgments, and I had condemned her as mud, and I judged the Church for judging.

What a hypocrite! I was a Pharisee! I was serving out of a heart full of arrogance. And get this: I was totally blind to the log in my eye. I was blind, I could not see it, and I could not get it out. But *Jesus could!*

I wept for hours, and it felt like Jesus was weeping through me. So much pain . . . but pain being washed down a river of tears. When I opened my eyes, the hotel staff had set up chairs around me, preparing for the next meeting. Everyone was gone, and it felt like a tumor was gone. But it was no longer a tumor; it was a pearl.

Well, that was a unique and seminal event in my life. Yet God's doing that all the time through His people, when I confess my sins to them and believe God's judgment pronounced by them.

Jesus is the judgment of God for me.

Romans 2:16: "According to the Gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Jesus Christ." Jesus, full of grace and truth. Jesus is the Word of truth spoken in love from God the Father. Jesus wraps Himself around the wound with forgiveness and grace, making a pearl, and He washes away the mud revealing the treasure.

Jesus is the measure we get. Jesus is the decision of God toward us. When we decide for truth, we decide for Jesus. It's not really *our* decision . . . or *our* choice. It's the decision of God in us. It's the judgment of God in us. It's the choice of God in us. For we were chosen in Jesus before the foundation of the world. And so with "faith, hope, and love" I can say, "Dear God, according to the Gospel by Jesus Christ, judge me! Judge the *hell* out of me and make me your pearl!"

And Jesus said, “Now is the judgment of this world. Now is the ruler of this world cast out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth (crucified), I will draw all men to myself.”

Jesus is the measure I get . . .  
and He’s the measure I get to give.

For on the night He was betrayed, having given thanks, He took bread and broke it saying, “This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” In the same way, after supper He took the cup and said, “This is the cup of the New Covenant in my blood shed for the forgiveness of sins. As often as you drink of it, do it in remembrance of me.”

So we invite you to come to the table bringing your sin, bringing your heart, bringing your self.

In I Corinthians 11, Paul talks about the table as judgment. “If we judge ourselves truly, we shall not be judged. But when we are judged we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.”

Come to the table and receive the good and gracious judgment of God. He forgives us and then chastens us as His precious children.

“The measure you give is the measure you get.” I think that’s true for everybody, even God. And He just gave you a measure. What are you going to give Him?

Maybe you feel like a thief on the cross . . . “God, what am I going to give you, other than myself?” He has given you Jesus. If you confess your sins (your self), you are wrapped in Jesus. And then you give yourself in Jesus (the Pearl) back to God. “The measure you give is the measure you get.”

God gave Jesus and God gets Jesus.

### Further Reading

Therefore you have no excuse, O man, whoever you are, when you judge another; for in passing judgment upon him you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, are doing the very same things. We know that the judgment of God rightly falls upon those who do such things.

Romans 2:1-2

Let the assembly of the peoples be gathered about thee; and over it take thy seat on high. The LORD judges the peoples; judge me, O LORD, according to my righteousness and according to the integrity that is in me.

Psalm 7:7-8

Let the nations be glad and sing for joy, for thou dost judge the peoples with equity and guide the nations upon earth. [Selah]

Psalm 67:4

Search me, O God, and know my heart!  
Try me and know my thoughts!  
And see if there be any wicked way in me,  
and lead me in the way everlasting!

Psalm 139:23-24

“The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him. Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears my word and believes him who sent me, has eternal life; he does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life. Truly, truly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself, and has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of man. Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come forth, those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of judgment. I can do nothing on my own authority; as I hear, I judge; and my judgment is just, because I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me.”

John 5:22-30

Jesus said, “For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may become blind.”

John 9:39

“Now is the judgment of this world, now shall the ruler of this world be cast out; and I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself.”

John 12:31-32

This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required of stewards that they be found trustworthy. But with me it is a very small

thing that I should be judged by you or by any human court. I do not even judge myself. I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted. It is the Lord who judges me. Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then every man will receive his commendation from God.

1 Corinthians 4:1-5

But rather I wrote to you not to associate with any one who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or robber -- not even to eat with such a one. For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge? God judges those outside. "Drive out the wicked person from among you." When one of you has a grievance against a brother, does he dare go to law before the unrighteous instead of the saints? Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is to be judged by you, are you incompetent to try trivial cases? Do you not know that we are to judge angels? How much more, matters pertaining to this life!

1 Corinthians 5:11-6:3

For the time has come for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?

1 Peter 4:17

"Then the lion said – but I don't know if it spoke – You will have to let me undress you. I was afraid of his claws, I can tell you, but I was pretty nearly desperate now. So I just lay flat down on my back to let him do it. The very first tear he made was so deep that I thought it had gone right into my heart. And when he began pulling the skin off, it hurt worse than anything I've ever felt. The only thing that made me able to bear it was just the pleasure of feeling the stuff peel off. You know – if you've ever picked the scab of a sore place. It hurts like billy – oh but it *is* such fun to see it coming away."

C.S. Lewis, Voyage of the Dawn Treader

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it."

Matthew 13:45-46

And the twelve gates were twelve pearls, each of the gates made of a single pearl, and the street of the city was pure gold, transparent as glass. . . . "Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense, to repay every one for what he has done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end." Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates. Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and fornicators and murderers and idolaters, and every one who loves and practices falsehood.

Revelation 21:21, 22:12-15

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