

BUILDING YOUR TEMPLE

“each one’s work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one’s work, of what sort it is.”

I Cor. 3:13 NKJV



Review

Three judgments are designed by God to bring each person who has ever lived before the Lord in order to provide a fair and just evaluation. These judgments are the final events in human history and determine the eternal future for every individual. The Judgment Seat of Christ (JSC) is our judgment (for believers, dead or alive, in the Age of Grace). Actually, the JSC is not a judgment in the sense of reviewing our sins because the believers' sins are completely forgiven. The JSC is an evaluation of our lives, including bringing to light the secret things that were good but hidden from public view. We will receive rewards based upon the degree the Holy Spirit was allowed to work our lives, creating Christ-like actions and desires. Believers have nothing to fear; this is a time when Christ rewards and praises us, not a time of shame or rejection.

INTRODUCTION

In Adult Studies 25 and 26, we learned our lives will be examined at the JSC for the things we have done, whether good or "of no value." The things of no value are not necessarily sinful, but can be everyday duties necessary for life on earth. The Lord asks us not to make those duties the sole object of our existence, since rewards in Heaven are based upon other things we do down here. Our rewards are based upon actions taken with motives, desires, and attitudes reflecting a transformed mind, a Christ-like mind.

The rewards a believer receives are of great eternal value, providing everything we have ever wanted or hoped. Thus, we will be at peace with God, have no fear, be filled with joy, be enabled to hold a position of great authority with true accomplishment, have real importance and worth, and, on top of all that, be praised by the Almighty God. There are, no doubt, many more rewards. God's rewards fill our deepest needs and provide the most treasured items: *eternal life, righteousness, glory, joy, authority to rule and reign, praise....* God gives us precisely what will provide satisfaction, contentment, and joy in every aspect of our

eternal lives. When we compare our rewards with the Beatitudes (Matt. 5:3-11), and those promised in Isaiah (Isa. 61:3), we see they are much the same; the difference is that we will receive our rewards in Heaven, while Kingdom believers get them on the earth. The Kingdom saints have their rewards reserved in Heaven, to be brought back with Christ when He returns (Rev. 22:12).

We often view Heaven, our eternal home, as the place where we will play harps, enjoy loved ones, meet biblical saints, and mostly importantly, be with the Lord. Since the Kingdom saints have work to do on earth (being priest to the unsaved world), it seems consistent to believe we will have duties in Heaven. These will not be burdensome or distasteful duties, but specially designed to fit our character and provide lasting pleasure. We know we will judge the world and angels (1 Cor. 6:2-3), but exactly what that means is unclear. Certainly there are angels reserved for judgment (2 Pt. 2:4), but even if we are involved with their judgment, it is a onetime event. There is a heavenly sphere of angelic beings, so perhaps we will be involved in judging them over the course of eternity; not judging for sin, but for assuring direction, counsel....

Judging the world is undefined, so we wonder what is meant. If this were a reference to judging in the First Resurrection or Great White Throne, those are completed in short time (compared to eternity), so what else will we do? Reigning with Him (2 Tim. 2:12) is an ongoing activity of high value and importance, but what or whom will we be reigning over? Is it possible He will start a new creation on earth, have us involved in far

away planets or galaxies, or reigning over angels? The mention of ages to come (Eph. 2:7) may imply there are new ages we know nothing about. Whatever He has planned, will, no doubt, excite each of us and create lasting joy.

We do know believers are rewarded differently—some more, some less—as each person's works are tried and rewarded (1 Cor. 3:14-15). We do not know if these rewards result in eternal differences between individuals. Since the twelve Apostles will sit on twelve thrones judging Israel (Lk. 22:30), there are distinct roles and lines of authority in the earthly Kingdom; the same likely applies in Heaven. If so, the more rewarded individuals in Heaven may be given higher rank or responsibility as leaders, judges.... At the present time, there are ranks among the heavenly hosts (regular angels, archangels, cherubim); will that continue with us serving as judges (1 Cor. 6:2-3)? Since no discord, jealousy, or strife exists now among the heavenly hosts, we can be certain God has assured that well-being will continue when we arrive. No matter where we are or what we are doing, we will be happy and fulfilled as God uses us for His glory.

When we think of the eternal perspective, there are compelling reasons to do things now in order to gain rewards in Heaven. Thus, the goals of this study are:

- to help you know what is expected by God in this life (so you are not in the dark),
- to help you know the basis of rewards in Heaven (so you can make preparations), and
- to prepare you for the ultimate inspection (a building inspection, which you can easily pass).

BIBLE TRUTH

The Scripture uses an analogy of the believer's life on earth represented by a temple. A temple in biblical times was the most sacred and valuable building possible. To God, the believer is the most valuable thing, said to be the temple of the indwelling Holy Spirit. **"Do you not know that you are the temple of God and *that* the**

Spirit of God dwells in you?" (1 Cor. 3:16; see I Cor. 6:19). The temple being discussed is a personal temple, relating to the spiritual nature of our lives here on earth.¹ The temple is spiritual; so, too, are the building materials use to construct it.

¹ At times, Paul indicates the entire body of believers is also a temple.

The Importance of the Foundation

The importance of the foundation for a temple in the first century (when Paul wrote) is important to understand. We are accustomed to thinking of a foundation as being made of continuous, reinforced concrete. However, a foundation for a temple in Paul's day was a series of huge stone blocks, buried to some degree in the ground, undergirding the structure to ensure a uniform and solid support. When using stone blocks for a simple rectangular structure, there would be four cornerstones (see diagram below). Other foundation stones were laid between the cornerstones. There was only one chief cornerstone, the most important of all the foundation stones. The chief cornerstone was the first stone laid, as such, it determined the location of the temple, its orientation, elevation....

Paul speaks by analogy, with the physical foundation of a temple representing the foundational truths of Jesus Christ. Each of us is a temple (our lives) built upon the foundation of Christ, **"...having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord"** (Eph. 2:20-21). The apostles and prophets Paul mentions are quite surely those mentioned later in Ephesians 4:11, that is, the apostles and prophets God raised up specifically for the work of the ministry and the edification of saints in the early Church (Eph. 4:11-12). These apostles and prophets helped establish the early church and are part of the foundation. For our temple, there is one foundation with one Chief Cornerstone, **"For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ"** (1 Cor. 3:11). The foundation is based upon Christ, and we build upon Him; but we need to know what building materials to use.

The believer's temple is built upon a sure, sound foundation. All buildings are totally dependent upon a firm and lasting foundation. The Apostle Paul was the master builder and laid the foundation for our temple, according to the grace given to Him by God,

"According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it" (1 Cor. 3:10). The foundation itself is the Lord Jesus Christ, **"For no other foundation can anyone lay that that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ"** (1 Cor. 3:11). Paul taught about Jesus Christ according to what God had revealed to him. That teaching is the foundation; there is no other. If the foundation is not sound, the building cannot last or function properly. If the foundation is weak, building a good temple on it is impossible; thus, God had to have it laid for us. By doing so, He assured to us the possibility of building a lasting and correctly functioning temple. We build our lives upon this foundation; no surer foundation exists. However, our building can be of any quality based upon our choices, even though the foundation is the best. We have no excuse for not knowing about Jesus Christ and are given every opportunity to live correctly (i.e., to construct a good temple).

Building Your Temple

Our temple has a foundation already laid; now we build upon it with various building materials. We build the superstructure, the part above the foundation. Our building will one day be tried by fire, at the Judgment Seat of Christ. Our salvation is not tried: that is secure; but what we have built is tried. **"Now if anyone builds on this foundation *with* gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, or what sort it is. If anyone's work which he has built on *it* endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire"** (1 Cor. 3:12-15). The foundation is sure; it will not be touched by fire. However, our temple (the part we build above the foundation) can go up in smoke, or survive the fire and endure forever. That which passes the "building inspection by fire" will have eternal value and is the basis for our rewards in Heaven. The Bible instructs us to

conduct our lives (build our temple) in a way that our work withstands the ultimate trial. We need to know for sure, from the Bible, what will survive God's testing by fire. The last thing we want to do is build with wood, hay, and straw (these have some value on earth, but not in Heaven).

We will build a model temple in this study, referring, of course, to a Christian's life (see diagram below). Adult Studies 25 and 26 taught our rewards in Heaven are for things like soul winning (1 Thes. 2:19); being faithful stewards (1 Cor. 4:1-5); enduring hardship (2 Tim. 2:11-12); living a transformed life (1 Thes. 4 & 5; 1 Cor. 4:11-16); and so forth. This is the exact information we need to know, so that we understand what will endure God's trial by fire. In general, the rewards we receive are

based upon the fruit of the Spirit in our lives. The actual things done are of little consequence; the degree the Spirit is able to work in a person's life is of consequence.

The Bible is full of examples of enduring building materials (stone blocks in the diagram below). We will look at several passages, but the Bible contains many more. Remember, we are commanded to follow Paul since he knew the *risen, heavenly Lord* (Gal. 1:12, 17), and that is Whom we are to follow today (2 Cor. 5:16). From Scripture, we see a transformed mind in action in passages such as 1 Cor. 4:9-17; 2 Cor. 6:3-10; and 1 Thes. 4 & 5. These are, however, only examples of many other passages. Listed below are some of the building stones (or precious metals) of enduring quality (verse number on the left).

Life Characteristics that are Enduring Stones and Precious Metals

1 Cor. 4:2-17

2. faithful
5. non-judgmental
6. model the truth
- 8-9. contentment even if made spectacles
11. suffer depravity with kindness
12. when reviled (abusive language), bless
12. when persecuted, be patient and endure
13. when slandered, speak softly/encourage

2 Cor. 6:3-11

3. non-offensive
4. examples through patience and suffering
5. endure wrong
6. purity, longsuffering, kindness, and love
- 8-9. true in adversity
10. sorrowful yet rejoicing, poor yet enriching others
11. open-hearted

The Bible teaches the important qualities of the Christian life are spiritual in nature, developed within us by the Holy Spirit. These are the stones/metals that will withstand the trial by fire and gain reward in Heaven. A

1 Thes. 4:1-18

1. walk to please God
2. following commands of the Lord
3. purity
- 6-7. do not defraud, holy
9. love one another
10. lead a quiet life, mind your own business, and do your own work

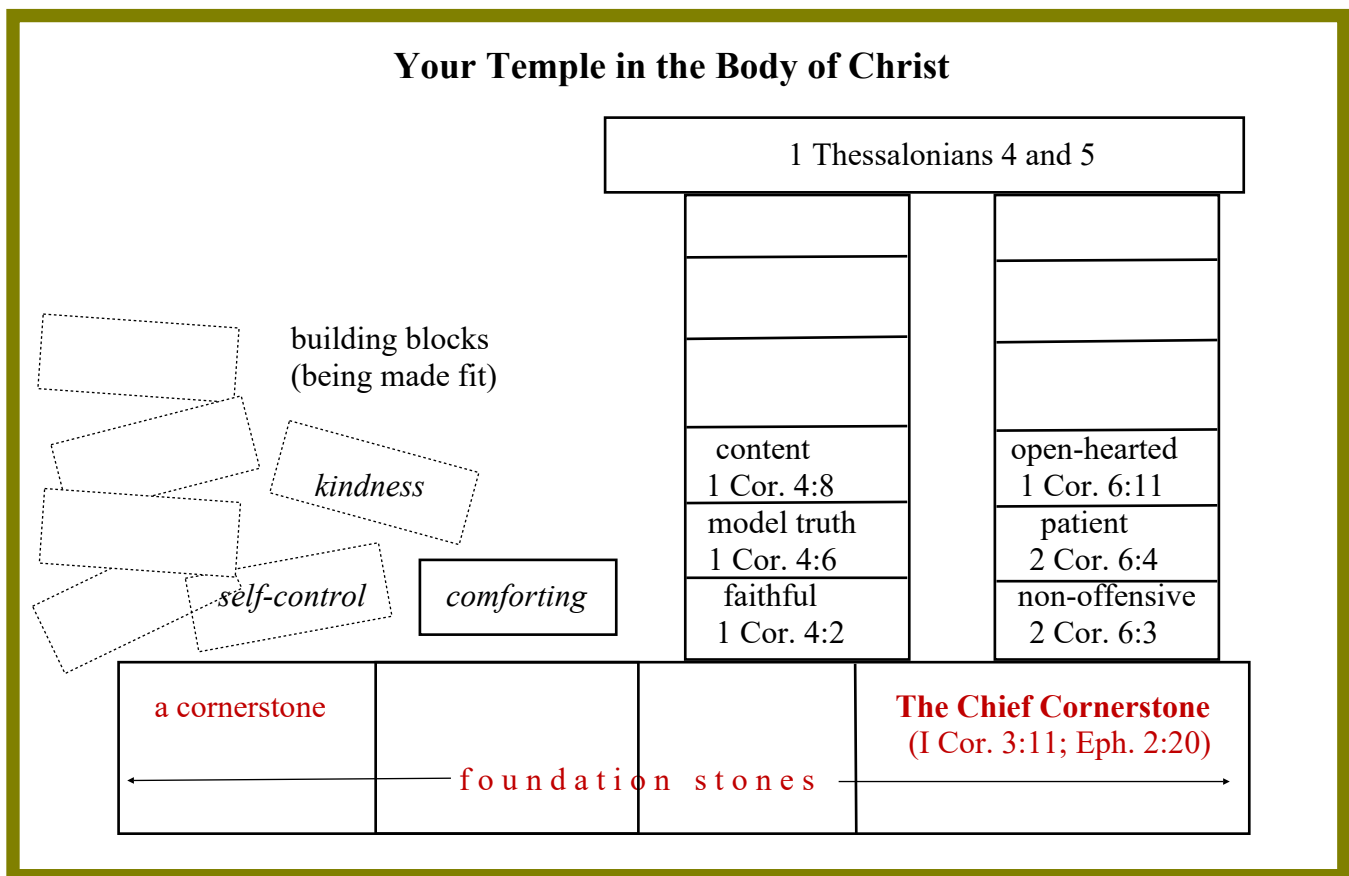
1 Thes. 5:8-19

8. faith, love, hope
11. edify and comfort each other
14. patience, comfort
14. uphold the weak, patient with all
15. render evil to no one, pursue good
- 16-18. rejoice, pray often, give thanks
19. allow the Spirit to work in your life

person will not be rewarded based upon following human rules of do's and don'ts. There is no reference to being rewarded for great leadership skills, command abilities, creativeness, conceptual insights, intelligence,

talents, or abilities. There is no hint of rewards for performing miracles, speaking in tongues, uttering prophecies, or healing people. Your educational degrees, status in life, rank in society ... mean nothing. What is rewarded, is what everyone can have, if he or she follows

Christ. Thus, we all can have a transformed mind that desires to bring Him glory (through praise, comforting others, telling others of Christ, being non-offensive, having an open-heart, modeling truth, and so on).



In the diagram above, one view of a temple is shown; a complete temple would continue all around. Notice there is only one Chief Cornerstone. Your personal temple should be constructed of building blocks that will not suffer loss at the JSC. Some building blocks from the lists above are shown in this temple. You can fill in the remaining blocks as a personal exercise. The lintel (big block on top) shows 1 Thessalonians 4 and 5, which is purely arbitrary; you can select whatever passages help you understand the topic best. On the left are building blocks not yet ready to be put into place; they are being made fit (being worked on to make them fit correctly). The blocks on the left are those areas of your life in which the Spirit is working, bringing you into conformance to Christ (transformation). The temple above would suggest this person understands and lives a life of faithfulness and is non-offensive; however, he or

she sees the need for the Lord's help with matters of comforting others and having self-control.

A blank temple is shown below, with room for you to place your ideas or to use in a class. When filled in, this temple *would be your idea life*, a life infused by God and lived as He desires. With an ideal life in view, you can now proceed to meet that goal, and, in the end, gain rewards.

We must be careful that we do not try to trick the Lord by doing things that seem good, but for which we have ulterior motives. Here are some tricky areas the Lord will sort out at the JSC.

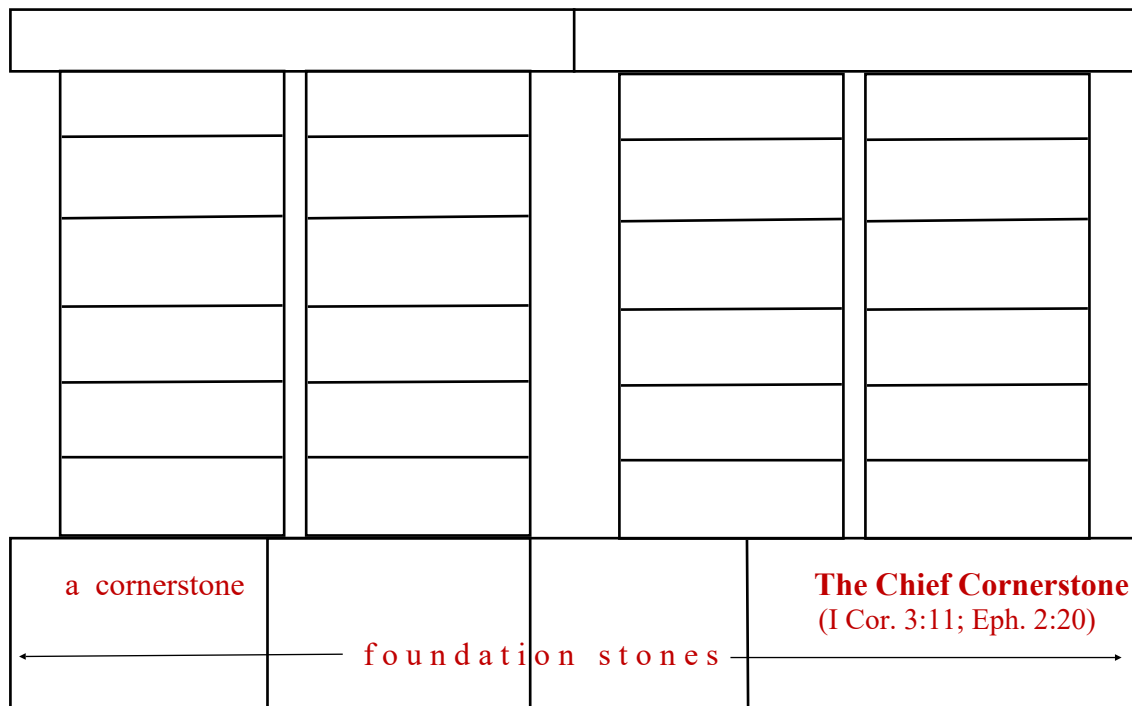
- Time wasted and used for selfish purposes, even if done with a good attitude. Such things are wood, hay, and stubble. Anyone exhibiting the fruit of the Spirit will

not be self-centered or absorbed with personal satisfaction.

- A person who is loving and kind, but never does anything, will gain few rewards. The Lord works within us for the purpose of our putting into practice what He teaches.

- It is the Spirit's work within us that enables us to do things that are pure gold at the JSC. However, doing things with the main goal of gaining reward may be self-defeating. The goal of doing things for the Lord is to bring Him glory, not to gain reward.

Your Desired Life--a Temple



SUMMARY

Our rewards in Heaven are based upon things we did with motives, desires, and attitudes based upon a Christ-like mind. Believers are rewarded differently, some more, some less, as each person's life is reviewed and rewarded. God compares a person's life to a temple. God laid the foundation for our temple; by doing so, He assured we could build a lasting and properly functioning life. The Chief Cornerstone of that foundation is Jesus Christ. We build our lives upon God's foundation; no surer foundation exists. However, our building can be of any quality, based upon our choices, even though the foundation is the best. Your personal temple should be constructed of building blocks that will

not suffer loss at the JSC. The Bible notes important building blocks (life characteristics) are spiritual in nature, developed within us by the Holy Spirit. Example building blocks are kindness, self-control, contentment, speaking the truth, witnessing, patience, being non-offensive, enduring hardship, being faithful stewards.... These are the stones and precious metal that will withstand the trial by fire and gain rewards in Heaven.

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