

Equipping of the Saints

ChatGPT Tabernacle and Royal Priesthood transcript

Take Care How You Build

Introduction

I'm telling you, and I don't know that I should be, but I am: Preparing a sermon is an adventure. You may remember I mentioned, a time or two ago, that my lessons usually don't really develop, not that I'm not constantly thinking, reading, and researching, about what I want to present, but usually they don't really start developing until the Friday before my lesson is due. I don't know why. I suppose, honestly speaking I could spend more time on them, but a lot of time I just can't come up with the structure and layout of the lesson until crunch time. I tried to remedy that this past four weeks and got off to a great start I thought, but somehow I got stymied again and all of a sudden I'm in crunch time... it's Friday before it's due and I don't have a completed lesson and on top of that I'm just not satisfied or happy with what I got. I struggled all day Friday, the anxiety building up... I went to bed (early for me) with no lesson and no prospect of one! I was exhausted. I slept about two to three hours and woke with a thought for a lesson I had before we branched to "Unio Mystica," the mysterious union and the lessons expanding on the idea of the saints being a holy temple and dwelling place for God by the Spirit. So, I got up and over the next two or three hours worked out a rough draft Saturday morning of what will be the final lesson in our Equipping the Saints series. The lesson is entitled: "Take Care How You Build."

We've been talking about equipping the saints, "for the work of service," taken from...

Our Basis scripture of: Ephesians 4:11-13; 2:17-22 *The underlying support and foundation for our study*

Ephesians 4:11-13 (NKJV, ESV, NASB, NIV)

*And [Jesus] Himself gave some as apostles, some as prophets, some as evangelists, and some as [shepherds (ESV)] and teachers, ¹² [to equip] the saints for the work of [service (NASB)], for [building up (ESV)] the body of Christ, ¹³ [until (ESV)] we all [attain (ESV)] to **the unity of the faith** and of **the knowledge of the Son of God**, to [become mature (NIV)], to the [whole measure (NIV)] of the fullness of Christ;*

And Ephesians 2:19-22 (ESV)

*So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but **you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,** ²⁰ **built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone,** ²¹ *in whom* **the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord.** ²² *In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.**

We looked at that we, the saints, are a Holy Temple

And in the construction metaphor that Paul uses we came to the conclusion that **what** we need to build on top of the Rock, Cornerstone and Foundation that is Jesus Christ is a Holy temple.

Without going into any detail that was covered in previous lessons I'd like to read the key passages regarding the saints being a holy temple of God.

1 Corinthians 3:16 (NASB)

Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?

1 Corinthians 6:19,20 (NKJV)

*Or do you not know that **your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you**, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?²⁰ For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.*

We saw Jesus is the 1st reference of the body being a temple

In John 2:18-21 (ESV), we read this:

*So the Jews said to him, "What sign do you show us for doing these things?"¹⁹ Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."²⁰ The Jews then said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?"²¹ But he was speaking about **the temple of his body**.*

Colossians 2:9 (NKJV)

*For in [Jesus] dwells all the fullness of the Godhead **bodily**;*

Since we Christians are the temple of God, we have a responsibility to care for & respect that temple, Paul gives us a warning in...

1 Corinthians 3:17 (NASB)

If any man destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him, for the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are.

So, What's involved in building

On top of the foundation that is Jesus Christ, **a holy temple, a dwelling place for God?**

Paul says to the Corinthians in...

1 Corinthians 3:10-17 (NASB)

According to the grace of God which was given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building on it. But each man must be careful how he builds on it.¹¹ For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.¹² Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw,¹³ each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work.¹⁴ If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward.¹⁵ If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

¹⁶ Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? ¹⁷ If any man destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him, for the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are.

Some thoughts before we study this passage

- We already have an idea for what to build on top of the foundation that we got from Ephesians 2:19-22, we grow into a holy temple in the Lord and **are being built** together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.
- Commentaries on this passage don't make that connection. They are looking at a general building one might do to improved themselves, their lives. I asked my research assistant, ChatGPT, "In 1 Corinthians 3:10-17, what's the meaning of the gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw building materials, are they used metaphorically?" Here is a summary of the AI's answer:
 - The Apostle Paul uses the imagery of building materials metaphorically to convey spiritual truths.
 - Paul describes a foundation, that he identifies as Jesus Christ, upon which believers build **their spiritual lives**.
 - Gold, silver, precious stones - represent **valuable, enduring, and quality works** in the life of a believer. They symbolize the righteous acts, faithful service, and spiritual maturity that are built upon the foundation of Christ. These are works that can **withstand trials** and are of **eternal value**.
 - Wood, hay, straw - represent **superficial, temporary, or inferior works**. They symbolize actions or efforts that are not rooted in strong faith or done with impure motives. These works are **easily consumed by fire, representing judgment**.
 - Paul is emphasizing the importance of **building a life** on the foundation of Christ with works that have eternal value. The "fire" in the passage represents God's judgment or testing, which reveals the true nature of each person's works.
 - ChatGPT's conclusion: The materials are used metaphorically to encourage believers to focus on **building their lives** with works of eternal significance—those that align with God's will and reflect true faith in Christ. The passage calls for self-examination of one's motives and actions in the light of God's ultimate judgment.

Not a bad assessment. Notice, though, the focus is **building their lives** vs **building a holy temple for God**. And we still have the same dilemma we faced before we stumbled across the Ephesians passages of our "equipping the saints" lessons. We are left to our own understanding of what constitutes righteous acts, faithful service, and spiritual maturity that we can build upon the foundation.

When the object to build upon the foundation is a holy temple, a dwelling place for God, suggested by Ephesians, now we have some direction that is not based on our own understanding. Now we can look at passages where God gave the Israelites in the old testament a template, a pattern to build His tabernacle and warned them not to deviate from His plan. And on top of that we have a new testament interpretation of that very pattern of the construction of the tabernacle that we may inspect for our learning.

And Paul even makes the connection of what to build in this very passage, in 1 Corinthians 3:10-17, by finishing the discussion by informing the Corinthians that the reason they should take care how they build and what materials to use is because they are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in [them], "¹⁷ If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple."

That said, let's look at the passage, it will help to keep this passage available to reference as we talk about it.

Paul, A Skilled Master Builder

v 10

According to the grace of God which was given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation,...

The Greek word translated "*Master Builder*" here is: *Architekton*. What english word do you think that corresponds to?... Yep, Architect.

Doug Hamilton, preacher at the Junction City church of Christ in Junction City Kansas says this about the use of the word *Architekton*: "Today, architects [are] professionals who draw up the plans for a structure. In the first-century, they were the ones who laid the foundation of the structure. In ancient Corinth, there were many of the great structures for which the foundations are still in place today. Additionally," he says, "once a foundation was firmly placed, then a regular builder would begin his structure. He might use a variety of materials such as gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay and straw. If it [was] a lesser foundation, then the lesser materials would be used. If a greater foundation [was] laid, then it would have the pricier structure placed upon it. The key was to live up to the foundation."

And that's we see here...

Someone else is building on it

v 10b

...and another is building on it. ...

I find this idea surprising. One would think that God would be very particular about who could build on the foundation (like: apostles or prophets, someone inspired from God). But, it appears that once Paul laid the foundation, that is Jesus Christ, he expected someone else to build on it. It's as if God provides a firm foundation founded on Jesus and He wants to see what we will build on it. It's open to the body of believers to build on the foundation and even expected for each of the saints to build on it.

I liken it to God's interaction with Adam in...

Genesis 2:19,20 (NASB), it says

Out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the sky, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called a living creature, that was its name. ²⁰ The man gave names to all the cattle, and to the birds of the sky, and to every beast of the field,...

Maybe God wants to see what we will build on His foundation.

Let each one take care how he builds

v 10c

...But each man must be careful how he builds on it.

Moses was also warned, in Exodus 25:40 and it's emphasized in Hebrews 8:5, when God instructed him to build a tabernacle for Him.

Hebrews 8:4,5 (NASB) *See, Exodus 25:40*

*Now if [Jesus] were on earth, He would not be a priest at all, since there are those who offer the gifts according to the Law; ⁵ who serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things, **just as Moses was warned by God** when he was about to erect the tabernacle; for, "SEE," He says, "THAT YOU MAKE all things ACCORDING TO THE PATTERN WHICH WAS SHOWN YOU ON THE MOUNTAIN."*

The writer of Hebrews tells us that the Mosaic tabernacle was **a copy and shadow** of heavenly things. And Moses was warned to be careful even in making a copy of the spiritual tabernacle.

That said, the warning is there: **take care how you build**. Building a holy temple, a dwelling place for God is a serious matter not to be taken lightly.

No one can lay a foundation other than Jesus Christ

v 11

For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

The foundation is set, there is no other foundation given other than Jesus Christ. We are not at liberty to alter the foundation.

Doesn't this remind you of the wise and foolish house builders?

Matthew 7:24-27 (NASB)

"Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock. ²⁵ And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock. ²⁶ Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. ²⁷ The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell—and great was its fall."

An interesting point here is, it seems that the building material in this parable is the words of Jesus. And our working with the material is our acting on the words of Jesus.

Another point, the audience in this passage is the Corinthian church, not outsiders who might choose another foundation. The saints are being told the foundation is Jesus, but we are at liberty to carefully build our house on it.

Now if anyone builds on the foundation with

v 12

Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw,

gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw

Did you expect that list of building materials? I didn't.

All of these materials except hay are mentioned in the Bible, often metaphorically or in descriptions of common building materials of the time according to my research assistance, ChatGPT. Straw was used in the making of bricks. And gold, silver, precious stones, and wood (specifically Acacia wood) were used in the construction of the tabernacle.

A summary of the materials mentioned in relation to the Tabernacle:

- Gold: Used extensively for the Ark of the Covenant, the mercy seat, the lampstand, and various other items.
- Silver: Used for items like the bases of the Tabernacle's frames and other details.
- Precious Stones: Used for the breastplate of the high priest, with twelve stones representing the twelve tribes of Israel.
- Wood: Specifically, acacia wood was used for the construction of the Ark, the table, and other parts of the Tabernacle.

So, what is this list of materials? Is it representative of the characteristics that the saints need to build their temple? If so, what could those characteristics be? The fruit of the Spirit? Or is it just a list of things that are refined by fire or burned up in fire relating to the test of fire mentioned next in the text?

Certainly, understanding how God had the tabernacle made and for what purposes and function He made it will help us construct our temple for Him. One would think the discussion of the Tabernacle in Hebrews would be useful for our understanding. Understanding our role in the temple is necessary. Peter tells us that we are **a royal priesthood**. So, we are priests. We should endeavor to learn what the role and responsibilities of God's priests are. Jesus is our high priest in the order of Melchizedek. Now, all of a sudden, that piece of information is more than a trivial Bible quiz question! More than just a mental exercise in typology. Now it's directly relates to how we should construct our temple and dwelling place for God and what our role and activities are once our temple is constructed and functioning. Our temples are not just adornment, a pretty palace, they're places to dwell & work. God has temple work for us to do as His priests.

We will break here. Tonight we will continue with part 2 where we'll talk about:

- Each man's work will become evident,
Because it will be revealed by fire
- If any man's work remains he will receive a reward,
If any man's work is burned up he will suffer loss
But he, himself, we be saved
- You are a temple of God, And a warning to anyone who destroys the temple of God