

Equipping of the Saints

ChatGPT Tabernacle and Royal Priesthood transcript

Take Care How You Build, Part 2

Introduction

As we begin to address building our temple of God, a dwelling place for God by the spirit let's begin thinking about what it means for the saints to be a royal priesthood.

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 - You are a temple of God, the Spirit of God dwells in you
- 1 Corinthians 6:19,20 - Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you
- John 2:18-21 - Jesus speaking about the temple of his body._
- Colossians 2:9 - in [Jesus] dwells all the fullness of the Godhead **bodily**;

• **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.*

v 10a Paul, A Skilled Master Builder laid the foundation

v 10b ...and another is building on it. ...,

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.

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.”

v 12 *Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw,*

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.

Each one's work will become evident

v 13a *each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it...*

Notice that **it's our work in building** on top of the foundation of Jesus that will come to light (ie. become visible).

"for the day will show it" does not refer to the Great and final Day of Judgement, but refers to our works being exposed to be seen by others. *"For nothing is hidden that will not become evident, nor anything secret that will not be known and come to light."* (Luke 8:17 (NASB)) and *"everything exposed by the light becomes visible—and everything that is illuminated becomes a light."* (Ephesians 5:13 (NIV))

v 13b *because it is to be revealed with fire, and **the fire itself will test** the quality of each man's work.*

So, what's the fire? The fire does the testing, specifically to show the "quality of each man's work." In Jesus' parable of the wise and foolish house builders the testing was done by rain, floods, and wind. The testing is the trials of everyday life. The storms of life, if you will.

So, why fire for testing? I believe Paul is using the testing of fire in keeping with his metaphorical building materials:

- Gold, silver, precious stones are refined (purified, made stronger) by fire.
- Wood, hay, & straw are consumed, burned up by fire.

And notice while Jesus' parable stressed the importance of building on a solid foundation to stand up to the trials of life, Paul adds another aspect given that we are building on a solid foundation: The materials we use in what we build determines whether we can withstand the heat or not. I like nineteenth century restoration author, Robert Milligan's assessment regarding trials by fire's effect on the heart, he said: "What melts wax hardens clay." So, the material we use in building on top of the foundation that is Jesus Christ makes a difference.

Perhaps the foundation is our salvation and the building materials we use in the building of our house is what we do with such a great salvation... And I think that distinction will help us in the next two verses.

Reward and Loss

v 14

If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward.

After testing, after the fire, **if anyone's work** he has built **remains**, he receives two things actually. He receive a reward, but he also has all the work he has built because it survived the fire... it remains.

So, what is the reward? I asked my research assistant, here's the AI's reply:

The New Testament mentions several types of rewards or "crowns" that believers might receive. Heavenly crowns are symbolic rewards given to believers for their faithfulness, perseverance, and service to God. These crowns represent various aspects of the Christian life and are a form of honor and recognition bestowed by God. There are five specific crowns mentioned in the Bible:

1. **The Crown of Righteousness**

- Reference: 2 Timothy 4:8
- Description: This crown is given to those who have longed for and eagerly anticipated the return of Jesus Christ. It is awarded to believers who live righteously, in obedience to God, and who remain faithful until the end. Paul, writing to Timothy, expresses confidence that this crown awaits him because he has "fought the good fight," "finished the race," and "kept the faith."
- Key Attribute: Eager anticipation of Christ's return and living a life of righteousness.

2. **The Crown of Life**

- Reference: James 1:12; Revelation 2:10
- Description: Often referred to as the "martyr's crown," the Crown of Life is given to those who endure trials, suffer persecution, and remain steadfast under testing, even to the point of death. It signifies victory over the trials of life and faithfulness in the face of severe challenges.
- Key Attribute: Endurance under trials and faithfulness unto death.

3. **The Crown of Glory**

- Reference: 1 Peter 5:4
- Description: This crown is specifically mentioned in the context of church leaders, such as pastors, elders, and those who shepherd God's people. It is awarded to those who faithfully care for and lead the flock, serving not out of obligation or for personal gain, but willingly and eagerly, as examples to the flock.
- Key Attribute: Faithful and selfless leadership in caring for God's people.

4. **The Incorruptible Crown (Imperishable Crown)**

- Reference: 1 Corinthians 9:24-27
- Description: Also known as the "Victor's Crown," this crown is given to those who exercise self-discipline and strive for spiritual mastery, much like an athlete training for a race. It symbolizes victory in the Christian life through self-control, discipline, and perseverance.
- Key Attribute: Self-discipline, perseverance, and victory over the desires of the flesh.

5. **The Crown of Rejoicing**

- Reference: 1 Thessalonians 2:19; Philippians 4:1
- Description: This is often referred to as the "soul-winner's crown" and is given to those who faithfully share the gospel and lead others to Christ. It represents the joy and fulfillment of seeing others come to faith through one's efforts and ministry.
- Key Attribute: Evangelism and leading others to Christ.

Significance of Heavenly Crowns

Symbolic Rewards: The crowns represent eternal rewards that acknowledge and honor the faithfulness and service of believers. They symbolize the various aspects of a Christian life lived in dedication to God. **Not for Self-Glory:** The crowns are not for the purpose of self-glory or personal pride. According to Revelation 4:10-11, believers are seen casting their crowns before the throne of God, which symbolizes the recognition that all glory and honor belong to Him. **Encouragement for Believers:** The promise of these crowns serves as an encouragement for believers to remain faithful, endure trials, live righteously, and fulfill their God-given calling.

Conclusion

Heavenly crowns are rewards promised to believers who live faithfully according to God's will. They represent different aspects of the Christian life, such as righteousness, perseverance, leadership, self-discipline, and evangelism. These crowns are a source of encouragement and motivation for believers to pursue a life that is pleasing to God, knowing that their efforts and faithfulness will be eternally rewarded.

v 15

If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

I don't know if you've thought about this verse much, but there is a dichotomy here, a contrast between *loss* & *saved*, opposing ideas. This man's work in building on the foundation is burned up. His work failed, couldn't take the heat. This doesn't appear to be addressing the person's salvation status. Since "he himself will be saved," it says.

The purpose of the fire is to test "the quality" of each man's work. The implication of work that is burned up is that it was poor quality work and the work is a loss (i.e. it doesn't remain). Whatever work the man did it doesn't exist anymore. We are specifically told here, though, that the man himself will be saved, with an important consequence: "yet so as through fire." So, does that mean possible injury? One can escape a fire and survive with horrible, painful bodily injury, but still be alive.

This should remind us again of the care we need to take when building our house on the foundation. Also, if we've made it as a Christian through being grounded on the Rock, our salvation should be secure. That was Jesus promise in the parable of the wise & foolish house builder.

This got me thinking if attributes listed in the Bible like wisdom, understanding, righteousness, etc. are referenced in metaphorical terms. And do the building material terms mentioned in this passage match up with positive and negative attributes found in the Bible? This in turn started a conversation with ChatGPT. And indeed they do match up well. The gold, silver, and precious stones with positive attributes and the hay, straw, and wood with the negative attributes. I would like to present some of that conversation after the lesson (and before concluding) tonight.

The point though is that identifying the positive attributes and utilizing them will enable us withstand the testing by fire and the identifying of our negative attributes can help us from being burned by eliminating them from our character.

You are the Temple

v 16,17

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.

And finally, this is reinforcement that we, indeed, should be working on building ourselves (ie souls) and our bodies into a temple of God, a place where He can dwell.

In the passage from Acts 7:48-50 where Stephen is addressing the Sanhedrin before he is stoned to death, he mentions God does not live in temples made with hands and then he quotes from Isaiah 66:1,2a. In the quote God asks a question that pertains to our lesson. However, the passage in Isaiah doesn't stop where Stephen did, I'd like to read it in Isaiah through the rest of verse two:

Isaiah 66:1,2 (NKJV)

Thus says the LORD:

“Heaven is My throne,

And earth is My footstool.

Where is the house that you will build Me?

And where is the place of My rest?

² For all those things My hand has made,

And all those things exist,”

Says the LORD.

“But on this one will I look:

On him who is poor and of a contrite spirit,

And who trembles at My word.

God is not interested in earthly ornate buildings that man has made. In this passage in Isaiah He tells us He is interested in the one (ie person) who is poor and of contrite spirit and who trembles at His word.

God is interested in our attributes, in our **qualities**. An attribute is a *quality* or *feature* regarded (or considered) a characteristic of someone (or something). Do you remember what the purpose of the testing by fire was? In the NASB it reads "the fire itself will test **the quality** of each man's work." The work being what actions we are doing to make ourselves into a temple of God. What qualities are we developing, what qualities are we utilizing, exercising in the building of our temple of God? What house would we build for Him?