

Sunday, February 9, 2014—The Judgment Seat of Christ—The JSC: I Corinthians 3, Setting the Context

Introduction/Review

- In our last study we concluded our exposition of the core Pauline texts where the JSC is specifically mentioned by considering II Corinthians 5:9-11. At the outset I would like to recap some of the key points from our last study.
- II Corinthians 5:9—“wherefore we labour” i.e., on the basis of all that has gone before. Why do we labor? So that whether we are “present” or “absent” we may be “accepted of him.” Notice that this verse is not speaking about being accepted “in him” but “of him.” We studied the word “accepted” and learned that it is also translated “well pleasing” in the Pauline Epistles. Believers are supposed to be laboring and following after thoughts, attitudes, and actions that are “acceptable” and “well pleasing” unto the Lord. Why?
- II Corinthians 5:10—the reason we labor to be “accepted of him” in verse 9 is because “we all must appear before the judgment seat of Christ,” in verse 10. The idea here is that every believer will be laid bare, disclosed, or made fully known. This will be a time when the totality of our life and service for Christ will be made manifest and thoroughly evaluated by Christ.
- Receive—why must we all appear before the JSC? So that “every one may receive the things done in his body.” In this context, the word “receive” means to collect compensation, wages, or proper reward for the things done in the body. The idea of receiving here in verse 11 harkens back to verse 9 where Paul tells the Corinthians to “labor” so as to be “accepted of him.”
- According to—the compensation we receive will be “according to” what we have done in our bodies. This applies to the good we have done as well as the bad. The body is the agent or instrument through which the doing takes place.
 - Ephesians 6:8—“. . . whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord. . .”
 - Colossians 3:25—“But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done. . .”
- Romans 12:1-2—this is why Paul beseeches believers to present their bodies a living sacrifice. Paul knows that believers will receive for the things done in their bodies and therefore exhorts us to prove what is good, acceptable, and perfect.
- Thus far we have observed the following four truths regarding the JSC. All believers will:
 - Stand before the JSC (Rom. 14:10)
 - Appear before the JSC (II Cor. 5:10)
 - Give account of themselves (Rom. 14:12)
 - Receive for the things done in the body (II Cor. 5:10)

I Corinthians 3: Setting the Context

- I Corinthians 3:9-15—is another Pauline text that describes what will occur at the JSC even though the term is not specifically mentioned. This passage gives us insight into how rewards will be determined at the JSC. Once again in order to understand the passage we need to spend some time understanding the context.
- I Corinthians 3:1-2—when Paul was in Corinth he spoke to the Corinthians as though they were spiritual babies. Paul says in verse two that he fed them with milk and not meat because they were not mature enough to eat/digest meat. Paul concludes verse two by noting that their spiritual condition had not changed, they were still carnal babes in Christ not yet capable of eating meat.
 - Hebrews 5:12-14—the Bible often uses milk versus meat to illustrate the issue of spiritual maturity.
- I Corinthians 3:3—why are they “yet carnal?” Paul considers the Corinthians carnal because there is envy, strife, and divisions among them. By following after these divisions Paul considers the Corinthians to be carnal i.e., spiritual babies and walking as men.
- I Corinthians 3:4—identifies the nature of the division among the believers in Corinth. The Corinthians were identifying themselves with and dividing from one another over which teacher they favored. The fact that some in Corinth favored and sought to follow Paul while others favored and attempt to follow Apollos was the source of the envying, strive, and division Paul mentioned in verse 3.
 - Acts 18:24—Apollos was “an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures.”
 - II Corinthians 10:10—Paul was not the best public speaker when compared to Apollos.
- I think it is safe to say, based upon the authority of these verses, that any time believers divide themselves into camps based upon the speaking abilities of various preachers and Bible teachers they are behaving in a carnal manner. Whether or not someone is teaching the truth of God’s word rightly divided is always the most important thing.
- I Corinthians 3:5—Paul and Apollos are nothing more than the ministers by whom the Corinthians believed. In other words, we all have someone that shared the gospel with us and through whose ministry we came to know the Lord.
 - I Corinthians 16:12—idicates that there was no problem between Paul and Apollos themselves. The problem was due to the immaturity and carnality of the Corinthians.
- I Corinthians 3:6-7—the increase always belongs to the Lord and not us. If we lead someone to Christ we maybe planting the seed or we maybe watering someone else’s seed. It is not for us to

know and it does not matter. What matters is that we are out sharing the gospel and participating in the planting and watering process.

- I Corinthians 3:8a—he that does the planting and he that does the watering are one. In other words, they involved in the exactly same process of endeavoring to have all men be saved. Both the plating and watering of seeds are necessary for there to be an increase.
- I Corinthians 3:8b—every person participating in the planting and watering process will be rewarded based upon the actual energy they expend. In other words, when rewards are handed out there is no discrimination based upon who a person is. For example, Paul’s reward will not be greater than one received by Apollos simply because Paul is the apostle to the Gentiles. Equal labor output result in equal pay.
- Once again we see here the dual concepts of labor/work and reward. This has been a common and reoccurring theme in our series on the JSC.
 - Ephesians 2:10
 - Philippians 2:12
 - II Corinthians 5:9-10
- Paul is now going to take up the subject in I Corinthians 3 of how rewards are going to be determined at the JSC.
- I Corinthians 3:9—given the context we have just studied, I take the first part of verse 9 to be a reference to Paul and Apollos. Paul describes himself and Apollos as being “labourers together with God.” This follows Paul’s statement in verse 8, “he that planteth (Paul in verse 6) and he that watereth (Apollos verse 6) are one.” The underlying Greek word translated “labourers together” is used many times in Paul’s Epistles when he described his fellow-laborers in the work of the ministry.
 - Romans 16:3—Pricilla and Aquila are described as Paul’s “helpers in Christ Jesus”
 - Romans 16:21—“Timotheous my workfellow. . .”
 - II Corinthians 8:23—“fellowhelper”
 - Philippians 4:3—“fellowlabourers”
 - Philemon 1—“fellowlabourer”
- The second part of the verse (“ye”) would be a reference to the Corinthians. The Greek word translated “husbandry” means a cultivated field or tillage. According to *Webster’s 1828 Dictionary* the English word “husbandry” means: “the business of a farmer, comprehending agriculture or tillage of the ground.” The Corinthian saints are the field into which Paul and Apollos had planted and watered.
- At the end of verse 9, Paul introduces a second example by referring to the Corinthians as God’s building or edifice. That this building represents the greater body of Christ of which the

Corinthians are a part seems apparent when one considers Ephesians 2:19-22. The Corinthians are part of the building that God seeks to inhabit through the Spirit i.e., the body of Christ.

- Therefore, given that the field and building are figures of the body of Christ it follows that Paul and Apollos were “labourers together” in Christ’s body.