

Sunday, February 23, 2014—The Judgment Seat of Christ—The JSC: I Corinthians 3, The Trial By Fire

### Introduction/Review

- In our last study we considered Paul's work as the wise masterbuilder in laying the foundation for the body of Christ. The foundation Paul laid was, "according to the grace of God" that was given unto him in verse 10.
  - Galatians 1:6-9, 11-12—recall that the "grace of Christ" and the "gospel of Christ" are used interchangeably in verses 6 and 7. This gospel of the grace of Christ was given to Paul by the direct revelation of Jesus Christ in verse 12.
- Paul was not building upon anyone else's foundation rather he was laying a new one. A new dispensation was ushered in through the salvation and revelation committed to the Apostle Paul. Paul used the message of the grace of Christ which he received from Christ to lay the foundation for an entirely new building as a "wise masterbuilder."
- Verse 10 ends with a warning to "every man" to "take heed." The English word "heed" carries the following meanings according to *Webster's 1828 Dictionary*: To mind; to regard with care; to take notice of; to attend to; to observe. 1) caution; care; watch for danger; notice; circumspection; **usually preceded by take**. The basic meaning of the expression "take heed" means to proceed with caution or care i.e., to beware of.
- What are we supposed to be taking heed of? How we build upon the foundation laid by Paul. The expression "take heed" is in the present tense which means that each individual believer is to be continually and carefully watching how he or she builds upon the foundation laid by Paul. It seems apparent that Paul's main focus in this verse is on one's doctrine and how they build upon the doctrinal foundation that he laid.
- Verse 11 makes it clear that there is no other foundation for the church of this dispensation than the one Paul laid which is Jesus Christ.
- 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)
    - Every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor (I Cor. 3:8)

### I Corinthians 3:12

- Paul is now going to begin addressing the various ways one can build upon the foundation. Before proceeding any further it is important to point out that Paul is addressing believers who

had already believed and trusted in the foundational truth of Paul's gospel. Paul already called the saints in Corinth "God's building" at the end of verse 9. It is not possible for unbelievers to built upon the foundation of Christ they must first trust the work of Christ on their behalf before they can enter the building trade.

- *Now if any man build upon the foundation*—the expression "if any man" comes from a Greek word meaning whoever or whatever. Since this statement is in the present tense "build upon" the "if" at the beginning is not designed to cast doubt upon the supposition. In other words, this verse assumes that every man will build upon the foundation as an actual fact. In the context, this statement follows from Paul's warning at the end of verse 10 that "every man take heed" how he builds upon the foundation laid by Paul.
- Just as it is true that unbelievers CANNOT build upon the foundation of Christ until they have trusted Christ it is equally true that believers ACTIVELY ARE building upon the foundation thus the warning to TAKE HEED how it is done.
- Paul identifies six types of building materials or manners in which one can build: gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble.

### **I Corinthians 3:13**

- *Every man's work shall be made manifest*—that fact that "every man's work" will be considered proves the validity of our comments on the previous verse. Every man's work in building upon the foundation will be made manifest.
  - Ephesians 2:10—remember that as believers we were created in Christ Jesus unto good works.
- The expression "shall be made" is in the future tense indicating that this manifestation of the believers work will take place at some time in the future.
- So in the future at the JSC every man's work will "be made manifest." Please recall from a previous study in this series that according to the *Webster's 1828 Dictionary* the English word "manifest" means: "plain, open, clearly visible to the eye or obvious to the understanding; apparent; not obscure or difficult to be seen or understood."
- II Corinthians 5:10-11—we already know that "we must all appear before" the JSC. Recall that the Greek word translated "appear" in verse 10 is elsewhere translated "manifest" like in verse 11. We have already studied that at the JSC 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.
- I Corinthians 3:13—in this verse it is a man's work that is made manifest i.e., plain, open, and clearly visible to the eye. Since Paul is using the imagery of building upon the foundation in this

context, let us consider the illustration of a house. From the outside a house can look wonderful and grand. However, further inspection can MANIFEST problems that are not detectible upon first glance, or even a second glance. This is why people order inspections when they buy a home. They want to make sure there are no unseen problems that would threaten the integrity of the home. The fact that a believer's work will "be manifest" indicates that it is not just the outward appearance of the structure that gets disclosed, for that is readily apparent to the eye, but the unseen and hidden aspects of the work as well.

- The examination at the JSC is NOT based on an external judgment or outward observation, but rather on a test that determines the inner character and motivation of one's work.
- *For the day shall declare it*—once again the future aspect of this day is made plain by the expression "shall declare." The English word "declare" simply means to make clear, according to *Webster's 1828 Dictionary*. So there is an appointed day in the future when every man's work will be made manifest, declared, and made clear. Based upon our previous studies when do, we know that believers will be made known and fully disclosed? At the JSC. I believe "the day" portion of this verse is speaking of is in relation to the JSC which we also know is a future event.
- *Because it shall be revealed by fire*—what is the "it" in this part of the verse that is being manifest and declared? A man's work from the first part of the verse. Note that a man's work will be manifest and declared because it shall be revealed (future tense) by fire.
- The English word "revealed" means, "disclosed; discovered; made known; laid open," according to *Webster's 1828 Dictionary*. So how exactly is a man's work going to be manifest, declared, and revealed? By fire.
- *And the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is*—a man's work is going to be tested by fire to see what it reveals or to determine its "sort." The English word "sort" carries many meanings one of which is derivative, signifying that which is thrown out, separated or selected.
- At the JSC a man's work is going to be sorted (suitable, befitting—*Webster's 1828*). The implication is clear, the fire will manifest, declare, reveal, and sort by consuming and destroying those aspects of a believers work that inferior and unacceptable while those that are acceptable will abide i.e., survive the trial by fire. The entire purpose of the trial by fire is to determine that which is destructible from that which is indestructible.
- Taken with verse 12 the implication is clear. The gold, silver, and precious stones are indestructible materials whereas the wood, hay, and stubble are destructible. The indestructible sort indicates those things done in the believer's life under the power and influence of the Holy Spirit. In contrast, the destructible sort indicates work that men produced of their own wisdom and effort i.e., the works of the flesh.
- Jeremiah 17:9—we need to be careful about how we build upon Paul's foundation since our hearts can be so early deceived as to the nature of our own motives.

- Paul is revealing the fact that the examination at the JSC is to determine that which was done by Christ through the individual and that which the individual did in his own strength; that which was done for the glory of God and that which was done for the glory of the flesh. It cannot be determined by outward observation into which SORT a man's work falls, so that work must be subjected to the trial by fire in order that its true character may be proved.
- Ephesians 2:10—it's all about allowing ourselves to be the workmanship of Christ and allowing his life to be made manifest in our mortal flesh (II Cor. 4:10-11).
- Galatians 5:18—the Spirit of God leads men to follow sound doctrine.
- In our next study we will consider the results of this trial by fire.