

THE REVELATION OF RIGHTEOUS JUDGMENT SERIES

PART 17

"JUDGMENT AT THE HOUSE"

(continued)

I Peter 4:17...*"For the time is come that JUDGMENT MUST BEGIN AT THE HOUSE OF GOD..."*

II Thess. 2:7-8...*"For the mystery of lawlessness (that hidden principle of rebellion against constituted authority) is already at work in the world, [but it is] restrained only until he who restrains is taken out of the way. And then the lawless one (the anti-christ) will be revealed and the Lord Jesus will slay him with the breath of His mouth and bring him to an end by His appearing at His coming..."* (Amplified).

While imprisoned for his radical, and accused seditious beliefs, the persecuted Germanic leader of the Great Reformation, Martin Luther, penned these powerful words to a dignitary of the Roman Catholic church: "You may think that I am now powerless, for the Emperor can easily silence the cry of a poor monk like me. But, you should know that I would yet fulfill the duty which the love of Christ has placed on me. I have not the slightest fear of the power of hades, much less the pope and his cardinals". Most assuredly, his daring actions attested to this fact! By this time, he was totally beyond the fear of being deceived by them; and he was utterly fearless in his proclamation of truth! He was no longer afraid of what man could do to him, either in spirit or by deed! Yet, when the Lord revealed the deceptiveness of his own heart to him, he could not help but cry out in desperation of spirit, "I dread my own heart more than the pope and all his cardinals. For within me is the greater pope, even self"! What an eye-opening revelation! While it is true that there are "popes" of many descriptions...not only in Catholicism, but also in the ranks of Protestantism, as well...denominational "popes", fundamentalist "popes", pentecostal "popes", charismatic "popes", etc., etc., all moving under the same spirit, and all trying to lord over the lives of others, to "feed" their sense of power, or for the sake of personal gain...our chief concern should not be on these. There is one who dwells in our midst, who poses the greatest threat of delusion to us, and that is the old "pontiff" himself, ADAM! It is he who seeks to rule sovereignly in the temple, who desires to transform it into his own little "vatican"! It is he who demands unquestionable submission to his dictates, who claims to be the sole infallible authority in our earth, who masquerades as the "vicar" (substitute) of Christ! And you can believe that as often as we will allow him, he will exercise his "papal powers" over our lives, commenting on and controlling every aspect of our human existence! But the thing we must always remember is that it doesn't have to be this way! With the help of the Lord, we can manifest that same bold and courageous determination Luther displayed in resisting popery. We can refuse to bow our wills to the old man, and his so-called "wisdom"! We can reject his

laws and statutes, his decrees and commandments, his intrusive and distorted judgments! And we can exhibit the true spirit of Protestantism...not through some form of public demonstration (that is, by performing merely symbolic displays of outward self-denial to the satisfying of the flesh), and not by trying to reason things out with our natural minds (nailing, as it were, our own version of the "95 theses" to the door of Adam's house), but by personally acknowledging the Lord in all our ways, and leaning not to our own understanding! Now, that, dear friends, is a revolutionary idea worth considering! Stage a protest against that wicked old "Pontifex Maximus"...simply by submitting to the law of the Spirit, by yielding ourselves to God's will! (That kind of thinking will surely get you excommunicated from the old man's order)! There is one thing which we can guarantee you, however. While the "King of Babylon" will certainly hate you for doing it; and while "the great red dragon" will steadily spew out of his mouth a flood of bitter threats of persecution and inquisition against you; the Spirit of glory and of God shall rest upon you, as a result! He shall guide you by His Spirit, and preserve you blameless unto His coming! Well, Glory!

A HOUSE MADE OF THOUGHTS

In our last issue, we advanced mid-way into the third chapter of I Corinthians. For your reconsideration, we would briefly remind you of the premise upon which we have been building. Throughout our examination, we have focused on the contrast Paul made to the Corinthian church between the wisdom of men vs. the wisdom which is of God, and the process which God employs to liquidate that conflicting wisdom. This has been our all-important and prevailing theme (which runs especially through the first four chapters of Paul's letter); and, as we showed in Part 15 of our series, could not have been illustrated better than in the carnally corrupt city of Corinth. The entire structure of their culture and society was built on the sayings of their pagan poets, philosophers, and rhetoricians. There, human wisdom was deified. Needless to say, our brother was faced with quite a challenge, as he dealt with the believers assembled there. What powerful influences with which to contend! And what massive mountains of mental "garbage" through which to teach! Their minds were like open "landfills", heaped up and running over with the innumerable proverbs, adages, idioms, maxims, etc., handed down by the thinkers of their day. It would take a team of bulldozers to bury all that mess (but, alas, we discovered that God has a better idea)!

This invariably brought us to the apostle's stern admonition to them concerning their inclination to be men-followers. Twice he mentions it as an obstacle to their spiritual progress, a carnal concept carried over from their idolatrous past (later, in verses 1 & 2 of chapter 12, he had to caution them against making idols of the gifts of the Spirit, as well). To put it mildly, this tendency was just not in keeping with the mind of Christ! It places believers in the precarious position of accepting the words of men (even inspired words, but not necessarily applicable in every situation), over the direct and personal revelation of the Spirit for their lives. It puts them in jeopardy of living on yesterday's "manna", rather than being established in present truth. It serves as a distraction, and ultimately leaves them vulnerable to deception, by placing a mediator (or mediators) between God and themselves, other than Christ. And it causes them to slothfully rely upon the

discernment of others, rather than fully developing it in one's self. Beloved, this was never intended to be! The Lord desired for them to come to "the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ"; but this would only serve to stunt their growth, and make spiritual "dwarfs" of them! Then, to further illustrate his feelings on the matter, he borrowed an analogy from the world of agriculture: "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase" (verses 6-7). This he said, showing that God alone is ultimately responsible for the harvest produce. HE is the Lord of the harvest! Were it not for Him, the efforts of both sower and waterer would be futile. They would have labored in vain! Therefore, HE deserves ALL the recognition! Paul and Apollos just desired to be seen as nameless laborers, working toward a single, common goal.

How graphically this shows the carnality and folly of sectarianism, and of esteeming one above another. Listen carefully, fellow saints! While we may greatly admire the gifts of spiritual wisdom and knowledge which are operating in another brother or sister's life; while we may adhere to and apply their teachings to our lives with reverence and godly respect; and while we may even endorse the work into which God has called them through our prayerful and perhaps financial support (as we are directed by the Spirit); it will nevertheless be impossible for us to ever possess the mind of the Spirit as our constant and abiding state, as long as we segregate ourselves into privatized little circles. Be it known that the proud promotion of, and exclusive identification with individual men, ministries, or messages may be perceived as wisdom with men, but it is absolute foolishness with God. He has repeatedly said so in His Word! It does not advance the unity of the saints one iota; instead, it builds canyon walls between them, and isolates them from each other! Beloved, it's time that we "wise up" about this issue! This is one "mountain" the Lord has decreed to dissolve! IT'S COMING DOWN, WHETHER WE LIKE IT OR NOT!

Alright! Enough said about that. Now, as we resume our studies, we see Paul change his metaphor, but not his emphasis. He is progressively developing his thought, in order to establish a point. "For we are laborers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, YE ARE GOD'S BUILDING" (verse 9). The Amplified Bible renders this, "For we are fellow workmen (joint promoters, laborers together) with and for God; you are God's garden and vineyard and field under cultivation, you are GOD'S BUILDING". Here, his presentation shifts from agriculture to architecture; from growing to building. He is preparing to take his readers a step further in their spiritual understanding.

How shall we take this phrase, "ye are God's building"? We have dealt with the concept of the temple of God in Part 4 of this series. There, we established the fact that WE, in a corporate sense, are the chosen place of His rest. As you well know, the temple of God is not (now, or shall it be any time in the future) some natural edifice somewhere in the "holy land"; for "God dwelleth not in temples made with hands". Because He has advanced beyond the shadow, and on to the real substance (which was intended all along), the Spirit will never refer to a natural building as "the temple of God" again (men might; but the Spirit most emphatically will not)! Nay, each and every member of the body of Christ serves as a "lively stone" in this glorious temple of humanity; for we are

His holy habitation by the Spirit. Furthermore, we pointed out that as individuals, there is another sense in which our physical bodies are the temples of the Living God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in us. Within these earthen jars of clay, the Almighty has taken up residence. He is pleased to make His abode in us! This truth should be undisputed among believers, seeing that this view is used at various places in Scripture. But there is yet another angle we would bring out, which seems to be obvious from our text; and that is, we are His temple by way of mental structure. By this, we are referring to the constitutional structure of our thought lives; the building of belief systems and basic worldviews in our mentality. In just the same way that physically speaking, "we are what we eat", (that is, the way that the food we partake of is, through the processes of digestion and assimilation, transformed into cells of flesh and blood, thus becoming a part of our physical bodies), even so, from another very real and accurate perspective, WE ARE WHAT WE THINK. The thoughts, ideas, opinions, conceptions, beliefs, suggestions, and reasonings that we entertain, make us who we are. This view is confirmed in Scripture, where we read, "As he thinketh in his heart, SO IS HE" (Prov. 23:7). The thoughts we accept become absorbed into our internal make-up; they act as building- blocks in our psyche, and eventually comprise the framework of our mental state of being. Whether we are aware of it or not, the truth remains; every day, in many ways, we are building on this temple!

That this application may freely be adapted here is seen from Paul's words. "According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, WHICH IS CHRIST JESUS" (verses 10-11). In order to adequately answer some of the basic questions arising from this text, it is necessary that we take this approach. We ask you this: exactly how is it that Paul could be our wise masterbuilder? How did he lay the foundation for this building? Where did he lay it? And with what did he build? The answers to these should not be difficult. It should be obvious that he is not speaking of the temple in a literal sense, as if the temple were built of earthly materials. That would be silly. Neither was he speaking of it in a bodily, physical sense. That, too, would be ridiculous. And though it would be admissible to view it from a corporate sense, we would still need answers to explain these simple questions to the inquiring mind. It seems only logical, then, that he was speaking more specifically of that temple originally made from revelation truth, which temple we are. For, you see, it is in the hearts and minds of the believers that the building begins. He laid the foundation stones in those that heard him through teaching, by declaring the testimony of God, by introducing them to the life and teachings of the pattern Son, Jesus, by means of the Spirit of revelation (in other words, it was taught both from within and without). He pointed out to them that their hearts were deceitful above all things, desperately wicked...and they were helpless to do anything about it. Then, he unveiled the plan of salvation to them through his divinely-inspired exposition on the vicarious death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. Because of this (and this alone), all men everywhere could now be reconciled unto God! As these redemptive, thought-provoking words of absolute truth entered into their hearts, they melted down all previous notions of self-salvation (or salvation in any other); and they became the foundational principles for their lives! Hallelujah! You see, while the Greek poets and philosophers had been busy

building "parthenons" between the ears of their listeners, Paul was commissioned by the Spirit to prepare a place for the true and living God on those very sites. That meant the old had to go! As he spake, the Spirit of inspiration dissolved the old mentality (which was filled with folklore and superstitions about the nature of "the gods"), and at the same time, established the new, thereby transforming the lives of those men forever! As a result, he (along with all the rest of God's apostles and prophets; Eph. 2:20) initiated a building program that continues to this day; for we are God's building under construction!

THE FOUNDATION OF GOD STANDETH SURE

Now, the way the Authorized version gives verses 10-11 almost leaves the impression that there is no other foundation that can be laid---period. And as far as those of us who have been born from above are concerned, this is so. However, it requires little consideration to see that there are many other foundations available in the world today. Just in the area of great world-religions, there are several different ones from which to pick. But we are partial to Wuest's expanded translation of this verse, which we think comes closest to bringing out the original meaning from the Greek. It says, "...But let each one be taking heed how he builds upon it, for an alternative foundation no one is able to lay alongside of the one which is being laid, which foundation is a person, JESUS CHRIST". Ah, this captures the thought perfectly! While there may be other foundations in the world upon which to build, none can compare to this Foundation! They simply will not measure up! For while every other foundation is basically just another form or variation of the so-called "wisdom" of men (created from man's vain imagination, and laid out through the common means of educating with words which man's wisdom teaches), our Foundation is none other than the Wisdom of God personified, Jesus the Christ! There is absolutely no substitute!

Know of a surety that our Foundation is unlike any other. It is distinctive in its design, and unique in its establishment. It is not a man-made project, devised from the heart of man! You see, while Paul and others may have been responsible for laying out the foundational principles of the doctrine of Christ in a comprehensible order, necessity requires the Spirit of Christ to set them in the hearts. No man ever received the "solid Rock" of God's founding precepts through scholastic or academic means alone. It takes the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him to do that. As the Word of God sinks down into the ears of the listener, He causes those heaven-sent truths to be "fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth". He causes every precious stone to interlock one into another like the pieces of a divine puzzle, thus being supportive of the rest. They are totally without contradiction! In fact, because of the meticulous skill and craftsmanship of the "Master Stonecutter", no mortar is even required to hold it together (this, Plato, Socrates, and Aristotle were never able to do! Their teachings were made of brick [clay], and held together with slime [bitumen]; ref. Gen. 11:1-3)!

How we thank God for a strong foundation! And how grateful we are to those who were instrumental in establishing this foundation within us! Without it, only God knows where we would be today. The hope of humanity rests upon it! But precious as these revelatory

stones are, we must needs remember that the foundation was originally designed to be built upon. That was its designated purpose. Hence the word through the writer of Hebrews declares, "Therefore let us go on and get past the elementary stage in the teachings and doctrine of Christ (the Messiah), advancing steadily toward the completeness and perfection that belong to spiritual maturity. Let us not again be laying the foundation of repentance and abandonment of dead works (dead formalism) and of the faith [by which you turned] to God, with teachings about purifying, the laying on of hands, the resurrection from the dead, and eternal judgment and punishment. [These are all matters of which you should have been fully aware long, long ago]. If indeed God permits, we will now proceed to advanced teaching" (Heb. 6:1, Amplified). This shows us plainly that there is a building of God which is to be erected upon the foundational principles of the doctrine of Christ, yea, even the advanced teachings of the Spirit. This takes nothing away from the foundation; nor is it meant to replace the foundation; it only gives purpose to it. It is simply the safe and secure premise upon which all spiritual thought and revelation must rest.

Before we go further, let us look once more at this phrase, "let every man take heed how he build thereupon...". Now, many commentators are of the opinion that this exhortation is directed solely toward "Paul and Apollos"; that is, toward those who are actively employed in the ministry of the Word. But this is not accurate. While they are certainly included (and will most definitely have to answer for the doctrines they have taught), the caution given here is for EVERY man to take heed how he builds...and that, dear friends, involves us all! It places the burden of discernment squarely upon the shoulders of each individual; for IT IS ULTIMATELY EVERY MAN'S RESPONSIBILITY WHAT GOES INTO THE TEMPLE. Be it known that "Paul and Apollos" may be used at times to help with the building, by sharing those things with the body which are revealed to them by the Spirit. And know that they may be used at times to point out certain mindsets which would be potentially dangerous to our spiritual well-being. But we must always keep in mind that it is we who will finally give an account for the "building materials" we receive on the "construction site"! To use a bit of popular phraseology, we might say that this is where the "buck" stops! The brethren at Berea understood this; and so, while they received Paul's words with all readiness of mind, they still "searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so" (Acts 17:11). You see, while they had a great respect for Paul's office and ministry gift, they also knew that he was never ordained to do all their thinking for them. If human reasoning slipped in, and they blindly received it as divine revelation, they would have to give an account to God themselves. Therefore, they saw it as their responsibility to "compare spiritual things with spiritual", as the Spirit enabled them (I Cor. 2:13), to keep this from happening. Beloved, that this was not an act of insubordination is seen by the fact that it was recorded in Scripture as an act of true nobility! They were highly commended for their diligent work! As Paul wrote to Timothy, "Study to shew THYSELF approved unto God, A WORKMAN that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (II Tim. 2:15), we understand that it is not just Paul, and it is not just Apollos, but each and every one of us are called to be wise "workmen" in the construction of this great temple within ourselves, the temple of truth. WE must do all we can to "clear the lot", so to speak, that the building might rise without interference. WE must examine the material that is delivered to us, and determine

it's source. And through Spirit-led study, WE must ascertain whether what we receive is suitable for building (this studying is not just limited to "searching the scriptures", but also involves a deep pondering of the Spirit). As we acknowledge the Lord in all our ways, patiently waiting for the witness of His Spirit, we are each intimately involved in this glorious building process...for we are laborers together with God! That should excite us, dear friends...as well as cause us to see the seriousness of it all! We are actually preparing a habitation for the mighty God, Maker of heaven and earth! This is no small matter!

TWO CLASSIFICATIONS OF MATERIALS

It is with this in mind that we are given the very sobering admonition recorded in verses 12 and 13. It reads, "Now if any man build upon the foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, or stubble; every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is...". What we are basically being told here is that every man should pay close attention how he builds upon the foundation; for that which is constructed will surely be brought into judgment. God has a "day" reserved for it! However, in order to better understand the imagery, it is necessary for us to explain some of the symbolism embodied herein. It is vitally important that we hear what the Spirit is saying in all of this.

To begin with, we are given two general categories of building materials: 1) that which is of an abiding nature: "gold, silver, precious stones...", and 2) that which is of a more temporal nature: "wood, hay, or stubble". It could be said that the first three are refinables; the last three are consumables. Or, to put it in more practical terms, we might say that the first grouping comes from the mind of the Spirit, while the last group originates from the mind of the flesh.

While it is not our intention to make an exhaustive presentation on the meaning of these, we will, however, give you a brief idea of what they mean to us, as far as our study is concerned. First of all, gold is used in scripture as a sort of superlative term (that is to say, it expresses the highest form of a thing); and, among other things, is used quite often to describe God's Word, His wisdom, and His divine nature (Psa. 19:10; 119:72; Prov. 3:14). As the heavens are above the earth, we know that His thoughts and ways are high above our own (Isa. 55:8-9). They are not on the same level as ours, but are unquestionably superior to them in every way. Therefore, as it relates to our subject, gold speaks of those wise spiritual insights which transcend the realm of human reasoning; which illumine our paths, and enlighten us to His divine nature in us. It is revelation truth of the highest order. Silver, in Biblical typology, is generally symbolic of redemption. This is seen through it's various uses in the Tabernacle of Moses, and their associations with the redemptive truths that are in Christ (see Exodus, chapters 25, 26, 27, 36, 37, & 38). Like gold, it, too, is frequently associated with God's Word, and His wisdom (see Psa. 12:6; Prov. 2:4; this is why gold and silver are often mentioned together in Scripture). Therefore, silver refers to those heavenly thoughts and dealings which are of a redemptive quality...which continue to reveal to us the on-going work of redemption in

our spirits, souls, and bodies. And as we have been sharing through our past several issues of this series, precious stones in this sense speak of those blessed jewel-like truths which have been inspired by the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, which enable us to demonstrate the life of Christ to this world. As sparkling natural gem-stones, they have within them the ability to "capture", as it were, the light that shines through them, and express that light in a multitude of varying facets (hence, the title, "stones of fire". Ancients viewed diamonds, rubies, sapphires, emeralds, etc. as icy rocks with fire "frozen" within them). They possess the valuable potential of producing godly character in the life of the believer.

Wood, in contrast to gold, symbolizes humanity, or the human nature. This is seen by its typical usage in the Old Testament. (for example, Gen. 6:14; Exo. 25:10; 27:1; Jer. 5:14; Hag. 1:8). In our text, it is used in reference to thoughts and ideas which spring forth from the human nature in us. (These are thoughts which sometimes sound like good ideas; but are clearly not God ideas! There is a difference, you know)! They can pertain to thoughts and interpretations concerning the Scriptures (which eventually develop into major doctrines), or to life issues in general. But regardless if the subject is sacred or secular, it is nevertheless seen from man's perspective, and not God's. Hay, or grass (as some translations render it), is a type of mankind in general, the flesh, or that which endures but briefly. "For all flesh is as grass..." (I Peter 1:24. See also Psa. 37:2; 92:7; Isa. 40:7; 51:12). In this case, it speaks of fleshly thoughts upon which the old "beast" nature feeds; thoughts which, though not always seen this way, basically serve man's carnal cravings and appetites. They are generally of a fleeting, temporary nature, bringing only momentary satisfaction (though they do have more of a lasting influence on our behavior than we might realize). And stubble is another way of describing thoughts which are vain and totally unprofitable (Psa. 94:11; 119:113; Jer. 4:14); driven by the wind (Job 21:18; Psa. 83:13; Jer. 13:24). They are thoughts which serve no real purpose, except to make bricks for "Pharaoh" (type of Adam, Exo. 5:12), or to provide fuel for the fire (Isa. 5:24; 33:11; 47:14; Mal. 4:1).

This gives us a general picture of the types of thoughts delivered to the "construction site". And if we have been walking with the Lord for any length of time, we should all be quite familiar with them by now. With David, we should be able to say, "How precious also are Thy thoughts unto me, O God! How great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand..." (Psa. 139:17, 18). However, though it would seem that they would be easily differentiated, experience tells us that this is certainly not always the case! Oftentimes, thoughts and impressions which should be obvious to us are somehow disguised to our faculties of discernment, are accepted as valid, bonafide building supplies. Therefore, it is for this reason that we have this solemn assurance: "...Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed BY FIRE; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is..." (verse 13). The Amplified Bible words it thus: "The work of each one will become plainly, openly known (shown for what it is); for the day of Christ will disclose and declare it, because it will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test and critically appraise the character and worth of the work each person has done". And Phillips version

expresses it this way: "The day will show it plainly enough, for the day will arise in a blaze of fire...". This draws out the idea that regardless of the worker, and regardless of the workmanship, there is a time of testing appointed of the Father; and everything, in due season, will be critically appraised, according to it's worth! Thank God! This testing of materials is connected with fire; and the fire is directly associated with the rising of the sun (Son), the dawning of the day! Nothing, absolutely nothing, will bypass the test, once the day begins!

THE DAY SHALL DECLARE IT

Now, when we speak of "the day", to what are we referring? Someone would suggest, "the Day of the Lord". Alright, then; we will accept that. But what does "the Day of the Lord" mean? Someone else could say, "the seventh day of the week". Well, that depends on how you look at it. "One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind" (Rom. 14:5). No matter what your position may be on this (and this is not our issue, by the way), it should be apparent that that was not the meaning to be inferred from our text. Still another might say, "the Day of the Lord speaks of the seventh millennial 'day' from the beginning of God's creation; that 1,000-year period, when Christ shall subdue all His enemies under His feet". Well, that is certainly a reasonable answer, and worthy of consideration. Another might argue, "it is descriptive of the time in which we are presently living; which began immediately after the crucifixion". However one might look at it, there is still a broader sense, in which the Day of the Lord should be defined; and that is the way it is most commonly used in Scripture. This way shows that it is more than just a time period; more accurately, it should be viewed as an event. It is an event that incorporates past, present, as well as future. It transcends the realm of time!

Whenever the prophets of old employed the term, it was usually during a time when God's people were either being oppressed by their adversaries, or were about to be oppressed; when they were either in a state of rebellion, or at least had been, and were now in need of restoration. "The Day" was always associated with divine judgment--- which resulted in the preservation of the righteous, and the destruction of the wicked. One thing was for sure; it's outcome could never be assumed (Amos 5:19)! Therefore, whether His people were deserving of chastisement or defense, vilification or vindication, correction or protection; at whatever point the Lord came on the scene, revealed things for what they were, and set them in their rightful order, that was considered to be that Day.

Taking all this into account, we might say that prophetically speaking, the Day of the Lord is all of God's redemptive judgments combined throughout history---His judicial assessment of all things brought under consideration. When He came in judgment against Egypt (Jer. 46), it was considered "the Day of the Lord". When He came against ancient Babylon (Isa. 13:6-13), that, too, was "His Day". When He rose up against Edom, taking vengeance on that wicked nation (Isa. 34), "the Day" had surely dawned upon them. And when He walked among men in the days of His flesh, "the Day" was at hand. It was declared to be each one of these historical events; and yet, it is the culmination of them

all. It speaks of those special times when the Lord reaches beyond the veil, takes matters into His Own hands, and causes men to see things as He does! You see, whenever God's presence is manifest, it suddenly becomes His "Day"! All eyes are unflinchingly upon Him!

But what about "the fire"? What relationship does it have with "the Day"? Quite obviously, the fire represents God's judgment in action---the manifestation of His presence. It is the expression and demonstration of His energy force---the outraying of His Being. We read that our God is both "a Refiner's Fire" (Mal. 3:2), and "a Consuming Fire" (Heb. 12:29); refining those things that are of an abiding nature, but utterly consuming those which are not. The very essence of His Being tests the quality of things, revealing their true nature in the sight of men.

Now, having said that, perhaps we can work with the principle. It is an undeniable fact that we have been given a sure foundation---one which gives us assurance of our salvation. The teachings are in place; the truth is established in our hearts. But the fact remains that the building is still under construction! Speaking first in regard to the Body of Christ in general, and secondly, to individuals in particular, we understand that the Lord did not reveal everything there was to know about Him and His eternal purposes from the beginning, but has provided truth in stages. Throughout the history of the church, He has added "line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little, there a little", bringing us to the level of truth presently possessed by the saints. But we must not make the mistake of thinking we have it all; and neither should we try to figure things out for ourselves! That's when folks get themselves into trouble!

It almost goes without saying that while God has faithfully and progressively supplied materials for the building up of the church, some have chosen rather to build with "combustibles". Instead of waiting for the Lord to issue them a "building permit" ("and this shall we do, if God permit", Heb. 6:3), they have gone ahead, and built myths, fables, pagan philosophies, and humanly-devised programs upon the foundation. They have incorporated ideas from a variety of different sources, and used mountains of scriptures to support them. This is obvious from the vast multitudes of sects, cults, and denominations that are operating in the world today. Each one of them claim to have the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth; but havenothing to show for it!

We know of folks who have spent their entire lifetimes building on the doctrines of their spiritual predecessors. They have devoted themselves to working out all the details...writing complex commentaries and exhausting explanations for the positions they hold. They have labored tirelessly to convey the views of their particular group or denomination, and are skilled in the art of "defending the faith". What great "houses" they have built for themselves! But what a tremendous let-down they are in for! God has reserved a time, when He shall reveal the substances of their theological structures for what they truly are---full of wood, hay, or stubble! The Day shall declare it!

We look forward to the Day when He shall do this on the large scale---but we rejoice in the fact that He has already begun the work in the hearts of different individuals around

the world! Many of you who read these lines could testify that you were once blindly devoted to certain lines of religious reasoning, and "locked" into a particular point of view (the list could run on and on, were we to compile one). You were convinced of it's "rightness", and could not be persuaded otherwise (you know; because many tried)! But for reasons which you did not fully understand at the time, the Lord chose to "blow" upon it with His fiery Breath of inspiration, and destroy your former way of thinking. By "the blast of the Breath of His nostrils", He caused you to see the vanity and fallacy of it all; and allowed you to see through "new eyes"! Hallelujah! The truth, when divinely inspired, has the power to set us free!

Beloved, allow us to say that while you may be highly skilled at weaving thoughts together; while you may invest laboriously long hours tying them all in; and while you may be able to argue your point as well as anyone; God is just not interested in dwelling in a "grass hut"! In fact, He cannot dwell among materials which are easily ignited. The very nature of His Being keeps Him from doing so! Therefore, it matters not how impressive your structure is, or how ornate your trappings might be, if it is not built from the right stuff, God will bring it down around your feet! It's just as simple as that!

This brings us to a very familiar verse, which is commonly pulled out of context. "If any man defile the temple (the Amplified adds, "with false doctrines"), him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are" (verse 17). Usually, when this verse is quoted, the defilement of the temple is used to imply smoking, drinking, drug abuse, gluttony, etc.; things which violate the physical body. Now, don't mistake what we are saying. We don't want to leave the impression that we think that it's all right to do these things. There are obvious consequences for such. This passage serves as a principle. But if you recall, God's aim is to destroy the wisdom of the wise...or have we so soon forgotten? That this was Paul's main intention here should be clear from the fact that in the following lines, he unavoidably reminds us of this original theme: "Let no man deceive himself. If any man seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness. And again, the Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain" (verses 18-20). From the outset of Paul's letter to the Corinthians, the Spirit has been consistent with this concept. He never once breaks His train of thought, or changes the issue. But more often than not, when folks get to this verse, they suddenly have the tendency to deviate from the discourse, and start viewing the temple from a purely physical perspective. This is just not in keeping with the subject at hand.

Know this, dear reader, and you will understand a great truth. If we will but acknowledge the Lord in all our ways, He will provide everything we will ever need for the constructing of this temple. In His treasury, there are ample supplies of gold, silver, and precious stones, available for the asking (James 1:5). How rewarding this is, to build according to His designs! And how blessed it is to know that He takes pleasure in the "house" we have prepared for Him! But if we continue to build with the wisdom of men, after the traditions of men, after the rudiments of this world, and not after Christ, we shall surely suffer loss! You see, it's like this: we "defile" the temple, when we allow "the man

of sin" to sit there. And he sits there, as long as we continue to accept his thoughts on doctrinal issues, and the issues of life. Therefore, the Lord is obliged to make fools of us, that we might become wise; to destroy our so-called wisdom, that we might learn that only His thoughts, and His ways will contain His presence!

We could expound on this principle for a long time; and we could provide a number of relative illustrations. But we'll give you one more "for the road". On a personal note, how many times have we been presented with a situation, perhaps of an irritating nature, and being justified by a scriptural foundation, began to lay out the materials to build an argument? All the day long we have put it together; carefully rehearsing in our minds what we would say to the individual or individuals involved, if given the chance. Finally, when the opportunity did arise, and we were prepared to "give them a piece of our minds", so to speak, the Lord said from within, "Now, you be sweet to them"! "But, Lord..."! In that instant, our well-laid thoughts went up in smoke, as we restrained ourselves from speaking what we had previously deemed as just and deserving! What a wasted day! And what a worthless effort! Usually, after we have obeyed the Lord, and He has rendered those thoughts unprofitable and useless to us, He shows us a side of the situation we had not been aware of, or even considered. Our thoughts were based on misunderstandings or hearsay; on rumors or speculation; not on the truth of the matter! That becomes evident as we look back. Therefore, our words would have only added to the problem, had we spoken them!

The question we must ask ourselves in all honesty is this: are the thoughts we are entertaining throughout the course of the day from a divine source? Are they of a redemptive nature? Are they "precious stones" of spiritual revelation? Or are they of a lesser quality, unsuitable for the Lord's habitation? Just because they are interwoven with scriptural references does not insure that they have a heavenly origin! Therefore, let every man take heed how he builds! When the Lord comes in flaming fire, the fire which He is will be the test. Will our "temple" contain Him? Or will it be reduced to ashes? We shall surely know, if we go on to know the Lord! All questions shall be laid to rest!

When the Day dawns, and the Daystar arises in our hearts, He brings everything to light, and reveals it's true nature. That Day burns as an oven, Malachi says, consuming the wicked one, and his so-called wisdom like wood, hay, and stubble. But the Sun of righteousness arises with healing, salvation, and deliverance in His wings (Heb. "rays"). He causes us to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our blessed Lord! Therefore, rejoice, O ye saints of the Most High! For even if it seems that we have suffered great loss, it is ultimately for our gain! This is because the Lord never takes away anything, that He does not replace it with something better! The fire has a glorious purpose; it is entirely for our good! So, let each of us welcome Him, as David did, to "search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me (that is, thoughts or ways of that wicked one, the old "man of sin" within), and lead me in the way everlasting" (Psa. 139:23-24)! Come, O Lord, in flaming fire!

to be continued...

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c/o Terry & Tykie Crisp
672 Goodman Rd.
Dawson, GA USA 31742