

# The Day of Assessment

1 Corinthians 3.10-17; 2 Corinthians 5.9-10

By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as a wise builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should build with care. <sup>11</sup> For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. <sup>12</sup> If anyone builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, <sup>13</sup> their work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each person's work. <sup>14</sup> If what has been built survives, the builder will receive a reward. <sup>15</sup> If it is burned up, the builder will suffer loss but yet will be saved—even though only as one escaping through the flames.

<sup>16</sup> Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in your midst?

<sup>17</sup> If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy that person; for God's temple is sacred, and you together are that temple. (New International Version)

<sup>9</sup> So whether we are here in this body or away from this body, our goal is to please him. <sup>10</sup> For we must all stand before Christ to be judged. We will each receive whatever we deserve for the good or evil we have done in this earthly body.

<sup>11</sup> Because we understand our fearful responsibility to the Lord, we work hard to persuade others.

(New Living Translation)

My dad had a hand-made sign outside the door of his house:

***There will be a final exam. Will you be prepared?***

Like any important city in the Roman Empire, Corinth was filled with magnificent structures, especially temples. Corinth was a Greek city and therefore had both the influences of Greek culture and Roman power. Both the Greeks and the Romans worshipped a plethora of gods and goddesses and built magnificent structures to honor each one on sites that were both strategic and highly visible. Roman emperors built elaborate palaces across the empire and erected monuments to immortalize themselves, each trying to surpass their predecessors. Walking through a city like Corinth, everywhere you looked, you would see these extraordinary marble buildings. Two thousand years later, many still stand.

During the night of July 18, 64 AD, a fire began in Rome in a merchant shop located in the slums of a district south of the legendary Palatine Hill; it quickly spread through the dry, wooden structures that were home to more than a million people. For over six days the inferno raged out of control, consuming everything in its path. When it finally died out, 71% of the city had been destroyed. In the aftermath, the Roman emperor blamed Christians for the fire and ordered the executions of hundreds, among whom was the Apostle Paul who had earlier written to Timothy:

"For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time for my departure is near. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing." (2 Timothy 4.6-8 NIV)

Buildings, fire, judgment and award— all of these aspects come together in this passage written to the Christians in Corinth.

## **Everyone is building something.**

Much of Jesus' teaching dealt with our tendency to focus on our "here and now" lives while neglecting more important eternal concerns. He told of a wealthy man who had a successful business and was planning for expansion while looking forward to the enjoyment and leisure that his success had secured for him. Instead of affirming his hard work and success, Jesus said, "You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?" Then, as a warning to us, Jesus said, "This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich toward God" (Luke 12.20-21). Everyone is building something; the question is, "What are you building and what will it be worth on the Day of Assessment?"

### **No Other Foundation—**

The starting point of every building is its foundation. The quality of the foundation determines the integrity and durability of the structure. This was the emphasis of Jesus when he told the story of two builders: one "foolish" who built his dream house at the beach to enjoy seaside life, and the other "wise" who built further inland to utilize the unseen rock underground for his foundation. When storms battered both houses, the lack of a solid foundation caused the collapse of the seaside house, while the house that had its foundation on the rock stood firm. A wise builder, Jesus said, is the person "who hears my words and puts them into practice" (Matthew 7.24). In other words, we must build according to the blueprint of God's Word because code violations have catastrophic results. If I build anything that does not reflect the words, character, and will of Christ, in the end, it will be disastrous.

### **Building Materials—**

Another question we must ask is: What is the quality of my building? The Apostle Paul said: "Anyone who builds on that foundation may use a variety of materials—gold, silver, jewels, wood, hay, or straw. But on the judgment day, fire will reveal what kind of work each builder has done. The fire will show if a person's work has any value." Jesus urged us to not store up treasures on earth but in heaven. What am I doing that adds value to my earthly life? What am I doing that has eternal value in God's assessment? What am I doing that shows I am practicing the way of Christ? What I am doing that proves obedience to Christ's requirements for his followers? What will burn, what will endure? "Only what's done for Christ will last."

### **The Day of Assessment—**

There is a "Day" of appointed judgment, a designated time and place when every Christian will give an account for all that he or she has done as a follower of Christ. The Bible closes with these words of Jesus: "Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to each person according to what they have done" (Revelation 22.12). What will be your worth? The assessed value of your life will depend on what you have done as a follower of Christ. Jesus ended his ministry with two parables to illustrate these truths. In "The Parable of the Talents" he emphasized that we have each been given an entrusted task to complete for which we will give account and be rewarded accordingly (Matthew 25.14-30). In the second, he described how he will sit on his throne assessing what each person has done according to whether or not it has personal value to him: "I tell you the truth, when you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were doing it to me . . . when you refused to help the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were refusing to help me" (Matthew 25.31-46). Repeatedly, we are urged to do good works that count (Matthew 5.16; 1 Corinthians 15.58; Hebrews 10.24; James 2.14; Revelation 2.3). It matters what we do today, for we will account for it all in eternity. The rewards will be enormous, beyond imagination (1 Corinthians 2.9); the losses, incalculable and irremediable. We must make it our goal to please our Lord today so that we will hear him say in eternity, "Well done, faithful servant!"