

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

1st Series

No. 332

November 2000

Contents

WHAT GOD IS BUILDING

OUR PART IN BUILDING

WHAT GOD IS BUILDING

Matthew 16: 13-18; Mark 15: 44-47; Ephesians 2: 19-22; 1 Peter 2: 1-6; 1 Kings 6: 2, 7, 14-19, 22

H.J. Undoubtedly the brethren can see the connection in these scriptures in relation to what God is building. I thought it might be profitable, even though we have no doubt gone over this subject many times, to be reminded again that God is a great builder, and in this present dispensation He is building what is going to be for His eternal pleasure and His eternal praise. These scriptures might bear on certain aspects of God's building. The Lord says in Matthew 16: "I will build my assembly", showing the way God has taken, that it is through Christ that everything in relation to His assembly is being built. The wonder of it is that God is using the material that is indicated in these scriptures. And that material is in us, dear brethren; it is the saints who are in mind in all these scriptures. It is not the kind of building material that men use in relation to their buildings. You do not find men building with the kind of material God builds with. That makes it very distinctive. God is working in the souls of men, developing what is going to be eternally for His pleasure, where He can tabernacle with men. I thought this might be something for us to speak over together.

L.McF. Without distracting from your thought, we had on Lord's Day the rib being built into the woman; that was the first time Jehovah built something or somebody. So that it was in His thoughts in purpose to have that vessel, the assembly. What we have before us now is an extension of all that, do you think?

H.J. I am glad you bring that up. It is interesting that there in Genesis it uses the word "built". He built the woman out of a rib; as though God took time and detail to develop and work it out, and it uses the word "built". It does not quite say the same about Adam, does it?

L.McF. She came out of the man. It is really the man over again in the woman.

H.J. That is what Adam says, “This time it is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; this shall be called Woman, because this was taken out of a man”, Gen 2: 23. You may say that is peculiar material to take a rib, and yet that is what it pleased God to do, to take a rib from Adam and use that to build the woman. It is peculiar material in the sense that He has taken up each of us, but He is going to use that material to build what is for Himself in the saints. I think Peter represents the kind of material here in this chapter.

L.McF. The Lord Jesus is now the Builder, the Son; “on this rock”. Think of the stability of the building. Now what is the rock? It is a question of who the Person is? Is that right?

H.J. I think that is very helpful because that is what is at issue here. “Who do men say that I the Son of man am?” And then He says, “But ye, who do ye say that I am?” That is the critical matter – who is this Man who is in their presence? It is the same today; all kinds of things are said everywhere about Jesus, but then the question is what is built into my soul about Him, what is built into your soul; what is built into the souls of all the brethren? It is some knowledge that God has given us concerning His beloved Son, is it not?

L.McF. So Peter had this by revelation. I thought with us we have to come to the Person to know who He is. Would that be right?

H.J. I think that is vital. “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God”. What a fine thing that is to confess, but it is based, as you say, on a revelation given him. Other persons would look on Jesus and just say He is the son of Joseph, He is the son of the carpenter, as if that is all they could see. Then there are some saying, Well, maybe He is John the Baptist come to life again, or one of the prophets. Those kinds of things are said all over Christendom.

C.F.D. The principle of mystery enters into this, does it not? I am thinking that the Lord says to him, “Thou art Peter” and Peter says, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God”. Well, that was really mystery up to this point; it was a fresh revelation coming into

Peter's soul and he gets a glimpse of Christ, I suppose, at this point as no one else had seen Him up until then. What do you say?

H.J. I think that is very helpful. The Lord identifies that this has been a revelation from His Father in the heavens. It might indicate, as you say, something that burst on his soul suddenly. They had observed the Lord, the things He had been doing here, and the things He had been teaching according to Matthew's gospel, and this is what the Father revealed to Peter: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God".

C.F.D. It appears that he was the only one who got this revelation; the others would come into it, I suppose.

H.J. Yes. The things that Peter says in various places in the gospels about the Lord are remarkable, are they not? We speak sometimes of Peter's failing and Peter's activities that were sometimes difficult to cope with, and how the Lord had to look at him when he denied Him, but it is wonderful to think of the things that he came to. In John 6 he says, "thou art the holy one of God". Those are things that we want to be established in ourselves. We have to do with the Christ, the Son of the living God, with the holy One of God. He is the One who is working in our souls in view of what He has in mind, that He is going to build His assembly. He has been doing that throughout this whole dispensation, He has been building His assembly. How has He been doing it? He has been taking up persons like ourselves and like Peter, and something has been revealed in our hearts and souls concerning Christ and His greatness, and all His work, all He has accomplished, and that is what is going to be built into the assembly, is it not?

L.McF. Do you not think that the gift of the Holy Spirit was essential if we were to have this knowledge?

H.J. Yes, indeed. I do not think we could get any impressions of the greatness of Christ apart from the Spirit. Peter did not have the Spirit here but he would soon have the Spirit. I suppose that is why the Lord says that this has been revealed from the Father. It is

something instructive that the Father had given him in the way of understanding and knowledge and revelation.

K.N.P. The material that you have been speaking about is not something that is seen by men. There was no evidence of a rock in Peter as far as men were concerned. I was thinking that in the house in Kings the stone was covered: there was no outward evidence of the stone. The substantial element of the building is not seen outwardly but it is there and it holds everything together, do you think?

H.J. That is very helpful. You go to business, people at the business do not see the rock character in your soul and mine; the children go to school, the children around do not see the rock character of what God has begun to form and build in the young people. It is a hidden thing, is it not?

K.N.P. It is hidden but it is something that we need to nurture. The Lord saw it in Peter, did He not, and He is able to say, "thou art Peter"; there was something there that the Lord is able to name. The question for each one of us is, is there something that can be named, something that can be seen as material that God can use in the building? It may not be outwardly seen but is there something in us that can be seen and recognised as God's handiwork. Appreciation of Christ, do you think, would enter into that?

H.J. That is very fine. I think it is appreciation of Christ that the Lord is really naming here, this rock-like character when you get something in your soul concerning the Lord Jesus. The Lord loves to name it. I do not suppose Peter was called this by the people around him. I think the Lord named him Peter. Later he is called Simon Peter, showing what he was as a man, known as Simon but there was also Peter there.

D.McF. I was thinking of "hades' gates shall not prevail against it"; the stability that you mentioned before is there.

H.J. I am glad that you bring that up because we have seen so much breakdown; you look around abroad at what there is in Christendom and you say it looks as though hades' gates have

prevailed. But the truth is that hades' gates will not prevail against this character of things that Christ is building. Even if some go away and get deflected, the Lord will see to it that that rock character of things is held for Him and eventually it will all be brought together, will it not? Just as Solomon finished the temple, the Lord will finish the whole thing eventually. We need to have confidence in that.

I thought these other scriptures would just fill out what we have here in Matthew. In Mark I was struck by what he says concerning the place where the Lord was buried. It says of Joseph that "he bought fine linen, and having taken him down, he swathed him in the fine linen, and laid him in a sepulchre which was cut out of rock". I was thinking that that might fit in with what we have had; it was cut out of rock. It is the place where the Lord was laid. The building of the assembly necessitated His death and His resurrection. Mark indicates that this place where He was laid was cut out of rock. In Matthew it says that Joseph cut it out of rock – I did not read that because that shows, you might say, the responsible side, that Joseph took up to cut it out of a rock – but here it is a more abstract view of the sepulchre that it was cut out of rock, as though it had been done by someone. We can say God did it: God has seen to it that everything necessary for the building of the assembly has been done and it is rock-like in character but it necessitated the death of Jesus and His rising again. The assembly could never be formed unless Jesus had died and shed His precious blood and been raised again and ascended into glory. It all required that down-stooping of Christ. I thought it was distinctive that the Scriptures say that the sepulchre was cut out of rock. Do you think I am making too much of that?

L.McF. No, by no means. David in the Psalms could speak of Jehovah as his rock, his fortress, and so on. It is good to come to a knowledge of that individually, do you think?

H.J. Yes. It is remarkable how many, particularly Old Testament, scriptures, speak that way of God, that He was the rock on which, you might, say, prophets in the Old Testament, and David and

Solomon, and others were building. They built their hopes in God, as solid rock in their souls? That is very good.

S.K. Is it right to say that a rock entails some type of formation; it does not happen by chance?

H.J. That is very fine. And who makes the rocks? Man cannot make a rock but God can. Man can make a building and make bricks and all those kinds of things, but not a rock. It is formed by God, is it not? You look at these great mountains that are around in various areas and say, Who could ever form these mountains? Man can make these big tall buildings but not a mountain and not a rock. We apply that to the saints. Who can make what God is doing in the saints? It requires divine workmanship, does it not, God Himself?

L.D.P. I was wondering as to the work of God in this man, Joseph of Arimathaea. He was a secret disciple but he emboldened himself. I was impressed by the fact that he himself took the body down; he did all of this. I wondered if that would be an indication of the solidness, the rock-like character of work in this man's soul?

H.J. I am sure that is right. It says here of him that he was an honourable councillor, who also himself was awaiting the kingdom of God. In Matthew it says he was a disciple and that is that rock-like character of things in him, is it not? So that he comes forward here when the other disciples are not available. It is wonderful to think of, that God has a work going on in persons that we may not be aware of and He can bring that to light at any time. How fine it is to see something like that come to light. Here is a man who emboldened himself; it took some boldness to go into Pilate's presence. Here it says he begged the body of Jesus, but another scripture says, he *demand*ed the body of the Jesus (see John 19: 38). That was a bold thing to do, but sometimes it requires that we are bold in our testimony, in our desire to protect what is of Christ. Here it is the body of Jesus.

P.C. It says "the sepulchre which was cut out of rock". Would you say that the sepulchre would be something derived from God? There is something from God and God provided for it.

H.J. That is why I read in Mark rather than Matthew because I thought it would indicate that it was cut out of rock, as if God had seen to it that it was done that way. Is that what you are thinking? As we said, in Matthew it says that Joseph cut it out of a rock but I thought that this indicated that God saw to it that it was cut out of rock. Because it is the death of Christ that is the rock-like foundation that is vital in relation to the building of the assembly for Christ and which will be God's tabernacle eternally.

P.C. I was also thinking of the fine linen. When He was born He was wrapped in swaddling clothes. There is fine distinction and difference there.

H.J. You tell us about that – fine linen. What do you think that means?

P.C. I would say that it is linen that was provided by God. He deserves the linen; it is His right to have the linen.

H.J. Yes, very good. This man, Joseph, saw to it, you might say, that he did not get ordinary linen but fine linen in which to swathe His body. It shows how he regarded the person of Christ and the care that he wanted to give to the body of the Lord Jesus. I think it is very fine what you bring up.

C.F.D. It says, "having taken him down". I wonder whether we have thought much about that. Here is the Lord suspended between earth and heaven on a cross and it says of Joseph – really he did it alone here, it does not say anybody helped him – "having taken him down". What a matter that is! I was just thinking of what entered into the handling of the body of Jesus because he must have handled the Lord in a very intimate way; he had to take the nails out, did he not?

H.J. Yes, very touching indeed, it is not? What a wonderful service this was. We never heard of him before: here he comes to light at the cross, and we do not hear of him again in the Scriptures. This is the only time we hear of him at the cross, but he was a disciple, no doubt meticulous in his care in taking the body down from the cross. And then as our brother pointed out, "he swathed

him". It shows that he just took time to wrap carefully the body of Jesus. It is beautiful to think about, is it not? I think it is an example for us. How do we handle the things of God? How do we take account of the preciousness of Jesus and all He has done in going into death? It is something we want to handle carefully, wrap it carefully. You hardly know what words to use in a meeting like this in speaking over these precious things.

K.N.P. His appreciation for Christ was such that nothing was any effort; "having taken him down". You might say it is easy to say but it was not any effort for him because of his appreciation of who the Person was. Do you think that would help us? You spoke earlier of our appreciation of Christ being that rock, and I wondered if that is what we see here even in Joseph; we see the appreciation of Christ in a man to whom nothing is any effort. It does not say how much linen he bought but he went and bought enough to swathe Him, not just enough to get by, but his appreciation of Christ is so great he would do anything, would he not? It might link with Mary in Bethany; she poured all that ointment out – she poured it all out – her appreciation of Christ was so great, there was nothing could stop it

H.J. That is very good. It says there it was very costly.

K.N.P. I understand that they were discussing 'formation' in Vancouver yesterday. They spoke about Nicodemus and I thought that might link with this. Nicodemus was one who was formed as a result of his contact with Christ and he came to appreciate Him. He too was involved in the burial.

H.J. According to John he was along with Joseph in this matter.

K.N.P. I thought it might link with what we are having; that is why I mentioned it.

H.J. Yes, I am glad to know that. We want to take account of one another in that light, to think of the formation that is going on. There is formation going on in the brethren, brothers and sisters alike, and it is rock-like in character. It is based on what we learn and understand and appreciate of Christ.

L.McF. It says in Isaiah 53, “men appointed his grave with the wicked, but he was with the rich in his death” (v 9). It says of this man that he was a rich man; a divine reserve, do you think?

H.J. I think that is fine. You might say, how is this scripture in Isaiah going to be carried out? This is the way in which it was carried out, “with the rich in His death”. Every prophetic word is carried out. God sees to it because His word is not going to return unfulfilled.

C.F.D. Behind this is the motivation of love. You might say, where is love in this, you do not see love spoken of here, not in the four letters, but the whole thing is permeated with love and attachment to Christ and this brother is going to see that the matter is handled according to the will of God. That should come into the Lord’s Supper on Lord’s Day; it is when we use our hands on the loaf, “this is my body, Matt 26: 26. That is the principle we have here.

H.J. Yes, it is very fine to bring that in. So we want to see that the things we handle are very precious. Peter speaks of the preciousness of things in the chapter we read and the things of God are very precious and we want to handle them in that way, do we not?

C.F.D. We get that in the teaching from the Lord in resurrection, do we not, “Handle me and see, for a spirit has not flesh and bones as ye see me having”, Luke 24: 39? That is an invitation and it means that, if I am to work that out; I have to get near to Christ.

H.J. I am sure you are right. Admiration for Christ and appreciation of Christ are vital, are they not? He is God’s Man, Son of the living God, but then He is the delight of the Father. He is the delight of God, and God is desirous that He becomes our delight. We admire Him more than anyone else, more than anything else. I think what you say is very helpful – you do not see the word ‘love’ here but it is behind all these movements. The chapter ends with these two sisters – Mary of Magdala and Mary the mother of James

saw where He was put. They saw it because of love for Christ; they stayed there to watch everything.

S.G. What do you think of Mary; she washed the Lord's feet and wiped them with her hair, expressing love?

H.J. Just marvellous love. You say, Why did she not have something else to use? Perhaps she did not have anything else but she had her own hair, and she could use that which was normally for her glory for Christ's glory, for His refreshment, which is a wonderful thing.

I thought the scripture in Ephesians brings out the truth of the matter in Paul's ministry so distinctively that it might help to fill out the subject. Paul speaking to these gentile believers in Ephesus says, "So then ye are no longer strangers and foreigners". The gentiles had been strangers and foreigners to the hope that God had given His people – "but ye are fellow-citizens of the saints, and of the household of God, being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets". Those are outstanding phrases that Paul brings in, are they not? We can consider ourselves in that way, fellow-citizens of the saints. Even the youngest believer can consider himself in that way, fellow-citizen of the saints. These are not the saints that the churches canonize; these are the people of God with whom we have to do. They are the saints and we are fellow-citizens with them, every one of us. That is a great thing for young people to get into their souls, that there is an equality in that sense among all the people of God. I may be young or I may be old but there is a certain 'fellow-ness', is there not? Paul delights to use that word, fellow-heirs, fellow-citizens, joint-heirs and so on.

L.McF. "Jesus Christ himself being the corner-stone". He gives character to this building. The corner-stone gives character to the building, who the Person is – on this Rock – who He is. So that there is no other.

H.J. The whole foundation of Christianity is Jesus Christ. That is why I thought we should read this scripture. If you look from the corner, the corner-stone gives character to that side of the building

and if you look down this side it gives character to this side of the building; if you look up the corner-stone gives character to what is going up – I am just talking about a normal building. What you say is helpful. Everything rests on Jesus Christ in relation to the building that God is doing.

R.N.P. I was wondering if, when you look at a corner, it would give definition to a wall. Do you think the Lord Jesus would give definition to our lives?

H.J. I think that is helpful. The word ‘definition’ is very fine. That becomes a challenge to us – does the Lord really give definition to what I do day by day? As you get up in the morning the first thing would be to think about God in prayer, would it not? That is definition, as you say. That is the way the Lord rose; He was praying sometimes all night, of course, but He was listening for a word in the morning Himself. His ear was open to hear God’s word. He said at one point that He never said anything that the Father had not give Him to say (see John 12: 50). That gives definition to my life, does it not?

D.McF. I wondered about the thought of “in whom all the building fitted together increases to a holy temple in the Lord”. Could you help us as to that, the building continues being built to a holy temple?

H.J. I suppose Paul has in mind that everything that God is doing is gradually increasing. He would be thinking of the saints in Ephesus, and Corinth, and Philippi and gradually it is increasing; he has a universal outlook here, do you not think? Of course we have the advantage now of looking back through the dispensation and seeing how things have increased. You say, Oh, everything has decreased, everything is falling apart. No, not from God’s standpoint – It has been increasing all along, in every generation there has been an increase, there has been more work, there have been more disciples, there has been more formation in persons and gradually it is increasing. What a day it will be when the Lord comes and the whole thing is brought together, the whole church; all those asleep,

which is by far the majority, I suppose, of the assembly, asleep through Jesus, but they will all be brought out of their graves. We will all be there together rallied around Him. It is fitted together: that is another beautiful thing. It helps us in times of departure in which we have been involved. We have seen persons depart, we have seen things break down, but God in His wondrous skill will fit the whole matter together. Whatever is rock-like in the saints is all going to fit together, and according to what we read in Kings He is doing that work, you might say, in a private way in each of us so that you do not hear the hammer and the chisels, and the other tools. What is going on in your soul no one exactly takes account of; God is working it out. What He is working out in me He is working out privately and He will fit it all together.

C.F.D. So that lying behind this is the activity of the Spirit of God, is it not? The building fitted together – we are all fitting together in a sense spiritually because of the work of the Spirit. You might say we know Christ as His brethren, but the Spirit is involved in these details of how things are working out and fitting together. We see that operating at the time of the Lord's Supper, do we not?

H.J. That is very fine. I suppose we see it more distinctively than at any time, and it is the Spirit's work, as you say. Paul brings in reference to the Spirit very distinctively, does he not? "For through him we have both access by one Spirit to the Father", and then the building becomes "a habitation of God in the Spirit". You say, How is God who is infinite and so great going to dwell in anything that has been made? He said that to Solomon, did He not? You are building a temple for Me, but I am so great, how can you build a habitation for Me? Well, that was a challenge to Solomon. But God is going to dwell in His final finished building in the Spirit because the Spirit dwells in the assembly, dwells in His people. You say, That is beyond me. Well certainly it is beyond all of us – how great it is anyway!

P.C. I wonder if 1 Corinthians 12: 12 would relate to the habitation of God in the Spirit: "For even as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of the body, being many, are

one body, so also is the Christ. For also in the power of one Spirit we have all been baptised into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bondmen or free, and have all been given to drink of one Spirit”?

H.J. Yes. He is viewing the assembly as the body there; here he is viewing it as a house or a habitation, but it is the same vessel. We are all brought into it. I think it is a very fine scripture to bring forward because we need to see that we have been brought into this great entity that God is forming in the power of the Spirit. By one Spirit, as it says there; it is not by several different spirits, it is all one Spirit, the Holy Spirit of God that has been working in the souls of believers like ourselves and bringing this about so that there is oneness in relation to the body.

C.F.D. I was thinking of what goes through. We are very much occupied, and rightly so too, with the return of the Lord and the rapture and the Lord presenting the assembly to Himself, but this oneness, the work of the Spirit of God, does that go through to eternity, so that that principle of oneness is eternal in character? Help us a bit.

H.J. Yes. I think you have answered the question by asking it. That is what the Lord said in John 17, “that they may be one as we” (v 11). That is the great purpose of God that there is oneness, not only unity – that is one aspect of oneness, but oneness is beyond that; it is that there is complete identity in spirit, soul and in every way. And that is what the assembly will be. You and I will think exactly alike in the day to come; our spirits, our souls, will all be united fully.

K.N.P. Do we see it working out? Two brothers have the same scripture; that is thinking one thing, thinking the same thing. That is it working out, is it not? But it will be so with everything in the coming day, we will all think one thing, think the same thing. You were speaking about the building fitted together; everything is fitted to the corner-stone. The corner-stone does not just cover two walls

in this building; everything is fitted to the corner-stone – every brick, every piece of stone, every one is fitted into Christ.

H.J. That is very helpful indeed. “Christ is everything, and in all”.

L.D.P. Is it not wonderful to see that persons of all generations will be fitted; not just this generation but also all generations, going back to when the Lord was here?

H.J. Yes, I think it is lovely to keep that in our minds all the time. But then you think of the diverse nationalities that will be involved. There will be no diversity in that day; they will all be one. All the different languages – we have brethren in France speaking French and brethren in Germany speaking German at the present time – that will all be done away with, it will all be fitted together. But then as you say, in every one of the generations. You go back and read some of the church history and wonder at some of the things persons went through. But that is all going to be fitted together, is it not, from every generation? It is beautiful to think of that.

L.McF. I was thinking of the uniqueness of the building where all the stones are living, composed of living stones. There is nothing else like that, is there?

H.J. That is why I read in Peter. I thought we should get Peter’s thoughts about this. “To whom coming, a living stone”, that is Christ, “cast away indeed as worthless by men, but with God chosen, precious, yourselves also, as living stones, are being build up a spiritual house”. There is no other building like that. There is no building that men have made with living stones; there is no such thing, they are all dead stones. God is making His building, as Peter says, with living stones.

L.McF. That is you and I.

H.J. Yes it is.

G.A. In John 14 it says, “Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe on God, believe also on me. In my Father’s house there are many abodes; were it not so, I had told you: for I go to prepare you a place; and if I go and shall prepare you a place, I am coming again

and shall receive you to myself" (vv 1-3). Is the Father's house a future thought or can we apply it now to the present?

H.J. I suppose it is future in what the Lord has in mind to bring us into; but I think there is a sense in which we can enjoy the Father's house now, I suppose on the Lord's Day particularly. Mr Dadd has brought that up what we have on Lord's Day at the Lord's Supper. We have some impression that we can enter into a sphere of things where God is all in all and praise there. And it is what His house will be, the Father's house, is that not right? Revelation speaks, of course, of the tabernacle of God with men; that is another aspect of what God will have for His dwelling in the day to come. It is remarkable that it uses the word 'tabernacle' there but I suppose it is a permanent tabernacle in that setting.

C.F.D. Tabernacle or dwelling is that God is with men – He shall be their God and they shall be His people (see Rev 21: 3). It is interesting that what you have been speaking about in these scriptures in its finality goes through into eternity. So you have the thought of dwelling, these things all coming together, the work will be finished, the house will be complete, not a thing missing and it all goes through intact into eternity and continues throughout the eternal day. Is that saying too much?

H.J. That is excellent. That is beautiful for us to keep in our souls all the time, is it not, that we have part in a system of things that will be eternal; and according to these scriptures it is a building. You say, Where will it be? God alone knows where it will be but you get some description in Revelation where you quoted. And according to Peter it is a spiritual house, "built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ". That is, you might say, one of the great objectives in God forming this vessel for Himself and building a house, that there is an answer to Himself, a holy response that is related to the spiritual sacrifices offered to God. Is that all right?

C.F.D. Yes, it is. What God is going to present, the assembly of God in the coming day, will be absolutely complete. It is not

complete yet. God is still adding to His building. This great idea of building that has come into the reading is something for us to get hold of and be concerned as to how we are fitting into the building ourselves.

H.J. Yes, that is very good. So it brings back upon us our responsibility to, you might say, work along with God in what He is seeking to do.

C.F.D. “Let each see how he builds”, 1 Cor 3: 10.

H.J. This is remarkable language that Peter uses. He speaks about precious things and particularly Christ. He says, “To you therefore who believe is the preciousness”. You find that when you talk to people about things in Christianity they are not precious to them at all, just an ordinary thing. But it is for us who believe that Christ is so precious, it is to us who believe that the assembly is precious, to us who believe that what God is doing in the saints is very precious.

K.N.P. I wondered if that would link with what we were saying at the beginning as to an appreciation for Christ, because in verse 4 it says, “To whom coming, a living stone, cast away indeed as worthless by men, but with God chosen, precious, yourselves also”. It is almost an association with the preciousness that is seen in Christ as living stones; there is something there, is there not, that is of Christ Himself? And do you think that is what the building is made of?

H.J. I think so. I suppose Peter is bringing all of us into it; he was brought into it by Christ saying, “Thou art Peter”, but now he is bringing all of us into it, all the persons who are living stones like himself.

K.N.P. There is no degradation in quality of the stone; the corner-stone is the standard and all the other stones fitted round about are the same quality because they are of the same One, are they not?

H.J. Yes, that is very fine – all of the same.

L.McF. So this present time is a time of being fitted in. We all know something about discipline; I think that is ultimately in the mind of the Lord for that we might fit just right.

H.J. It is very helpful to bring that in. That is how the stones are formed, is it not, often through discipline. Not only in that way but that is one way by which many of us have been formed, that God has put us through certain trials and discipline and brought about formation as a result. I thought that was maybe what is in mind in Kings where the hammers and so on are not heard. It is something going on privately, you might say. You know we used to have care meetings where there was a bit of hammering sometimes when persons got at one another, but that should not be in the assembly, all the hammering ought to be in private really. I thought the wood here in Kings and the gold are very distinctive.

L.D.P. I was thinking of David selecting five smooth stones – they spoke of discipline. I wonder whether that would indicate that there was some formation there, all the roughness is worn off.

H.J. That is very good. Who makes it smooth anyway? God used the water or the elements to make those stones smooth. If David had wanted to make them smooth he would have had to do an awful lot of grinding and sanding to make them smooth, and they probably would not have become smooth anyway, because only God can make smooth rocks. I just thought of Kings and the remarkable way that it speaks of Solomon building. You say, How can he do all this? But over and over again it says he did it, he built and he made and he formed, and so on. Undoubtedly he had hundreds of men working on this building, superintendents and so on, but that is not the way the scripture puts it. I thought it linked on with the Lord saying, “I will build”. Solomon built this temple, did he not? And then the materials I thought were very beautiful to see, the wood that went into it and how it was carved and all those things. That is what is going on in the saints; God is working those things out and the beauty of what is developing in the hearts and souls of God’s people is what is going to form this building and make it so majestic.

L.McF. The wisdom of God is involved in the structure as seen in Solomon, do you think?

H.J. Yes, that is very good. What a wise man he was! He had a pattern – God has a pattern for what He is doing – David had given Solomon the pattern of the house and David had it by the Spirit, a very remarkable thing. It is a huge building according to verse 2 that we read. What a grand, magnificent place God will have to dwell in when it is all brought together! There will be a place for the Ark, a place for Christ, and the whole thing will be overlaid with gold. What do you think that speaks of?

L.McF. What is divine – gold?

C.F.D. That is over the wood. Say something about that.

H.J. I think what our brother says is so important for us, that God is going to put, you might say, the divine character of things on all His work, is He not? All the divine attributes that have come out in such light and glory at the present time, all His attributes of righteousness, and kindness, and compassion and His love, all that is going to be covering everything in relation to this building, everything that has come out in divine light concerning God Himself covering everything. Is it all right to speak of it that way? And all these carvings; as it says here, “colocynths and half-open flowers” all carved into the wood, the gold would just follow the relief of all that carving. So that in the saints, what God has worked out and developed and carved out in the lives and histories of all His people will all be covered over with the divine glory that has come out in God Himself. Think of the martyrs and what they went through, that will go right on into the building. We will know something of those martyrs. I suppose we will talk to them, converse with them over what they went through, and over it all will be divine glory connected with what they suffered and what was carved in their souls through their sufferings. Is that all right?

C.F.D. I think it is, because nothing is lost. We may speak about the history of things and what the martyrs went through; nothing will be lost. It will all be gathered up and all will be part of the house,

and all part of the underlying glory. What will be uppermost will be the gold, which is Christ, but underneath it all will be all that has come out of Christ in the saints.

H.J. Yes, that is very beautiful. I just read a few days ago about a man who died on the battlefield in Vietnam; he died saying, 'Jesus shed His blood for me'. You know that is going to be fitted in, it is all going to be fitted into the house in the day to come, every element of God's work. You might say, what carving has gone on!

C.F.D. That carving is going on today. You are getting carved and I am too, and it all has in view the final product. So what Christ will present to Himself is finality, perfection of finality and the work of that is going on now, is it not?

H.J. Yes. So we even have half-open flowers among us, do we not? It is a wonderful thing to think of that. There is beauty in every flower. Even a half-open rose, you look at it and say, How beautiful the thing is, before it actually springs open.

L.McF. A half-open flower is what is youthful. God is going to have that freshness and vitality in His house.

H.J. Yes. It speaks of the living creatures in Revelation. I have often thought of that as youthful and vibrant and living.

New York

8 July 2000

Key to Initials

G.Ashby, New York; P.Chin, Wheaton; C.F.Dadd, Plainfield; S.Gibbs, New York; H.Jensen, Los Angeles; S.Khan, New York; D.McFarlane, New York; L.McFarlane, New York; K.N.Pye, New York; R.N.Pye, New York; L.D.Phillips, New York

OUR PART IN BUILDING

Henry Jensen

1 Corinthians 3: 9-16; Ezra 6: 14,15; Nehemiah 3: 1-3, 7, 8, 15, 19, 20; Ephesians 4: 7-10, 15, 16

I thought we might speak briefly, dear brethren, about our part as believers, as saints, in this matter of building. We have spoken about what God is doing and how Christ is building His assembly on the rock of which He spoke in Matthew 16. God's side is very wonderful and He will see that the building is completed. Whatever I do, God is going to carry through His thoughts and they will be carried through in perfection and for His own praise and glory. And as we sang, He will have a dwelling place where His love can be at rest (Hymn 83) – a wonderful thing to think of. But then there is our part in relation to the building. That is what these scriptures, I believe, bring in, that we have a responsibility too. Paul lays that upon the Corinthians in this chapter. He says, "let each see how he builds upon it", each one. That does not leave out anybody. Young and old must see how we build on this foundation that Paul says he has laid as a wise architect. And he tells us just what we had in the reading that the foundation is none other than Jesus Christ. How are we building on that foundation, the Lord Jesus? How am I developing and building in my own soul? What am I putting into this building by what I do on a daily basis or on a weekly basis or on a yearly basis? That becomes the test of responsibility for me and for you, for each one. Paul says, "For we are God's fellow-workmen; ye are God's husbandry, God's building". Is that not beautiful? Think of the company he was writing to. He was writing to the Corinthians; not a company of Ephesians exactly but a company where there was a lot of difficulty in the meeting, a lot of things that needed correction in the company of the Corinthians, and yet he could say that they are God's husbandry, God's building. That is God's viewpoint of His people. Whatever the difficulties may be, whatever may yet need to be corrected in our histories or in our activities and links together as brethren, God can view us as His husbandry, His building. How

beautiful that is! Because He is going to have the final product worked out according to His own mind, according to His own great thoughts. You may say, I do not get along with that brother because his personality is not so easy to get along with. God will work that out. It takes time sometimes but God just smooths the stone in me, as our brother referred to earlier. Our brother referred to those five smooth stones of David's that he picked out of a brook. God did the smoothing. It takes time to smooth things out in some of us. Sometimes it takes longer with other than with some, but He is going to smooth it all out, work it all out, in His time. In the meantime He says, that is my husbandry, my building – how fine that is.

But the next test is, "let each see how he builds upon it". What are we putting into it? So Paul names some things, some kinds of material that might be put on this foundation. He says, "gold, silver, precious stones, wood, grass, straw". We need to analyse what we are putting into this building. What am I doing daily, weekly, yearly in relation to this building? Have we put in gold, silver and so on? I suppose the gold and silver and the precious stones would be very delightful things to put in, would they not? Any impression you have of the wondrous redemptive work of Jesus in your soul, bring it in because that is related to the silver. We have already been speaking about the gold, which is divine majesty and glory and greatness and divine love, all that is divine. Bring that in, develop it in your own soul in your links with the Holy Spirit. And bring that into the building, building on the foundation in your own soul, and then building in the local company. Undoubtedly Paul has in mind in what he is saying here the building that was going on in Corinth in the local company because he is speaking collectively to them as God's building. So each one needs to be bringing in what is of the divine nature. The gold would speak of that I believe and then the precious stones. We had that thought of what is precious in Peter today. So there are things that relate to the precious character of divine things, the precious character of the ministry, the precious character of the Holy Scriptures and the precious character of what God is developing among His people. We can bring that into the

building, can we not, and make it of value to one another? These other things I would not think are so valuable, the grass and the straw. They may be the things that can be burnt up. We want to be careful we do not bring in things that can be burnt up and will be consumed and finished with. I thought this scripture would remind us of our responsibility in relation to what God is doing in our localities. We have a responsibility as a part of God's building to be also fellow-workmen in this building process.

I read in Ezra and Nehemiah because I thought they indicate how the saints of the prior dispensation were involved in building what was for God in days of recovery. In Ezra they are working on the house and it took some time for this house to be rebuilt. If you read this section in Ezra the work has stopped for a while. They had been frightened by what was going on around them in opposition. And then these two prophets, Haggai and Zechariah, got a word from God that the building should go on. God wants the building to go on. Whatever happens around, whatever opposition comes up, God is desirous that the building goes on. So He uses these two men, Haggai and Zechariah, in a prophetic way to stimulate the people to get back into the work. Then it says here in the verses we read, "And the elders of the Jews built", how fine that is that they built. It does not say exactly what material they used, or what tools they had, it does not say any of those things, it just says they built – how fine that is. "And they prospered through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah". They are two very fine prophets for us to read because you can see how God spoke through those prophets to these persons in Ezra's time in order to get back into the work even though it was a day of small things. That is what Zechariah says in his prophecy, "Who hath despised the day of small things?" Zech 4: 10. That is what had happened, those who were opposing the building there in Jerusalem were despising the day of small things. God says, Who has despised it? As though He is challenging that. So through the prophecies of these two the building went on and it was finished. How fine that is that it was finished, completed.

Then I read in Nehemiah because it is beautiful how these persons in building the wall worked together. Here they are building around Jerusalem. It was some years after Ezra's time that Nehemiah became so concerned and exercised about what had developed for God in Jerusalem and how things were in ruins there even though the house had been built. When he got there he was able through his great concern for things to get persons working again. And here they are in this chapter 3 working side by side. That is what I thought was so impressive, that Eliashib the high priest is one who gets started with his brethren and they build the sheep-gate. How important that sheep-gate would be in Jerusalem. Then the fish-gate is built and so on. We read about all these different gates; what they would mean, I suppose, has a great spiritual significance in each case. The sheep-gate would be to bring the sheep in, would it not? We want to bring the sheep in if we can, bring them in to what God is doing. But what I was thinking of more than anything was how they were working together. One worked a certain part of the wall, built a certain part of the wall to a certain point, and then there is another brother working there at the next part of the wall; "next to them", it says. "Next to them built the men of Jericho". And then it says, "And the fish-gate did the sons of Senaah build: they laid its beams, and set up its door, its locks and its bars". A lot of detail is involved in setting up these things and they were doing the work. God's side is one thing but here it is actual, literal working out of things together as they work side-by-side building this wall. Then it says about these persons in verse 7, "And next to them repaired Melatiah the Gibeonite". Remarkable persons are brought in here, a Gibeonite working on the wall. It is like ourselves, somebody who has come into the assembly in an unusual way, or you might say an unusual person. Most of us are that, you know, kind of unusual persons to be included in the assembly and a Gibeonite would be that. There he is working side by side with the high priest and the priests and the others, on this wall. And that is what it is in the assembly; we are working side by side in relation to building up what is for God. It says of some of them that they were goldsmiths, and a perfumer; Hananiah of the

perfumers. These are persons who have a distinctive ability, a distinctive trade and they just set it aside for the time being and build along with the others. I suppose these goldsmiths would be experts in working out the details of gold. Well, that was not really needed in the wall; they would need that when the wall was built, and they would go back to that service of working as goldsmiths. But here whatever their profession was, however skilled they may have been in a natural way, they are working on the wall that relates to the encompassing of Jerusalem and you might say it is a wall of separation. How much that has been developed in these days of recovery since Mr Darby's time, in relation to the ministry that has come to us. And how many have been involved in it? How wonderful that is! But then it is our responsibility to see that our piece is built side by side with our brethren. In one place here it says they built over against their own house (v 10). Well, it is often the case that you do more building in relation to your own house or your own household than any other place because that is where the brethren seek to maintain separation in relation to their circumstances, in their homes and households and that is what the wall of separation has in view. I thought these things would encourage us as we are working together in local companies like Corinth, like New York, like Los Angeles; we are working side by side building up what is for God.

I read verse 19, "And next to him repaired Ezer the son of Jeshua, the ruler of Mizpah, a second piece". He took a second piece. He had built one already, one piece of the wall, but he has the energy and the strength to go on and do a second piece. There are several of them in this section who built a second piece of the wall. How fine that is, that you can build a second piece; add to what you have already done in the local company, build another piece that is for the good of the saints. And then it says of Baruch the son of Zabbai that he earnestly repaired another piece. Is that not a fine commendation, earnestly repaired? How much we need to be involved earnestly in the things of God, give our devotion earnestly

to what is being developed for the heart of Christ in our local companies.

I thought in Ephesians that this was the crowning touch in what Paul says about building and our responsibility in it. Where I first read he says, "But to each one of us has been given grace according to the measure of the gift of the Christ". I think that is very encouraging. Some of us say, Well, I do not have much ability, I do not have much gift, I am not much, just a little peg here that goes into the building, but Paul says, "each one of us has been given grace", each one. That is the young people too; each one has been given grace. You say you do not have much, not, but you have been given grace. Who has given it? It is the gift of Christ. Whatever grace there is in relation to your development and whatever grace there is in relation to your knowledge of divine things, it has been given you as a gift from Christ; that is what it says here, "according to the measure of the gift of the Christ". And the Lord delights to give us the greatest measure that we can sustain; the greatest measure that you can take on the Lord delights to give it to you. And so he says, "Wherefore he says, Having ascended up on high, he has led captivity captive, and has given gifts to men". That is beautiful! You often think about that as persons who are very talented and gifted in relation to the work of the ministry, but here it is more in relation to everyone, every one has received grace, every one has a gift in that sense that can be used in the assembly. That is what Paul is getting at. So that finally, where we read in the last part of the chapter, he speaks about the whole body, fitted together, and connected by every joint of supply. That is you and me, dear brethren, is it not, every joint of supply? You say, I am just a little peg, just a little joint, but every joint of supply is connected together in the body. That is what our brother referred to in Corinthians; the body is working. It speaks about the eye and the ear and the hand, all the parts of the body working together (see 1 Cor 12). Take your own human body, it all works together and toward one thing and that is the self-building up. That is what he is saying here in relation to every one of us, we have been given grace as a gift from Christ that

is to work out as connected together, and he says, “according to the working in its measure of each one part, works for itself the increase of the body to its self-building up in love”. Is that not fine? Whatever your measure is, it says, “according to the measure”. You say, I do not have much of a measure; yes, but you have some measure. Whatever that measure is it can be working together with others and supplying something as a joint of supply. You think of our joints in our body: they supply something for the rest of the body. And that is what we can do, each one of us, because of the grace that has been given to us; work along together, side by side in relation to the building up of what is for Christ. Here it is in view of the self-building up in love of the assembly. Is that not fine – self-building up in love? So everything that we do let it be done in love, beloved brethren. Love for one another, love for Christ, love for the things of God and that I think is the most important way that the building goes on and we can take our responsibility in it. May the Lord bless the word. For His Name’s sake.

NEW YORK

8 July 2000