

FAQ: The Judgment of the Believers' Works, Lesson 3

August 17, 2025

What is the "judgment of believers' works" and when does it occur?

The "judgment of believers' works" refers to an evaluation of the actions and ministries of Christians, rather than a judgment for salvation. It takes place at the "bema seat" of Christ. While the exact timing is debated (some believe it's immediately after death, others during the tribulation or at the end of time), the purpose is for believers to receive rewards for their faithful service, not punishment. It's emphasized that this judgment is for those who are already saved through faith in Jesus Christ.

What is the foundational principle of Christianity, and why is it so crucial?

The sole and unchangeable foundation of Christianity is Jesus Christ. This means that all doctrine, belief, and practice must be built upon the true teachings concerning Christ, as presented throughout the Bible. The New Testament, from the Gospels to Revelation, consistently centers on Christ's life, work, and coming return. This foundation is crucial because, without it, an individual's life, a church, or even a nation will ultimately fail to have lasting value or meaning.

Who is considered a "master builder" in the context of laying the Christian foundation?

The apostle Paul referred to himself as a "wise master builder" or "skillful master builder" (architecton). This means he was like an architect who drew up the plans and a general contractor who built the house. In the early church, apostles like Paul laid the foundational doctrines concerning Jesus Christ. Others, such as Apollos, then built upon this established foundation. While elders and teachers have a primary responsibility in this, the principle applies to all believers who contribute to furthering God's kingdom.

How does the concept of "building materials" apply to a Christian's life and service?

Christians build upon the foundation of Jesus Christ using various "materials": gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, and stubble. These materials represent the quality and eternal value of a believer's actions and service. Gold, silver, and precious stones signify acts of supreme sacrifice, godlike conduct, and total commitment to the Lord, which will have eternal value. Wood, hay, and stubble, while not inherently evil, are considered worthless in the eyes of Jesus at the judgment, signifying actions that lack eternal value or are performed with improper motives. All Christians, regardless of their "materials," are saved, but their rewards will differ.

What are the three main areas by which Christians will be judged at the bema seat?

Christians will be judged in three key areas:

1. **Motive:** God will reveal the hidden intentions and reasons behind a believer's actions. A deed that appears "gold-like" on the surface may be deemed "worthless" if the underlying motive was self-glorification rather than genuine devotion to God.
2. **Conduct:** This refers to the day-to-day actions and the way believers live their lives, both physically and within the church.
3. **Service/Ministry:** This evaluates a believer's use of their spiritual gifts to further God's kingdom. While natural abilities can be used, spiritual gifts are emphasized as the supreme way God desires service in His church.

What is the "test" that accompanies the judgment of believers' works?

At the judgment seat of Christ, after the "building" (representing a Christian's life and service) is complete, there will be an "inspection" or "test." This test is described as being "revealed by fire." The fire will burn up the "wood, hay, and stubble," demonstrating their worthlessness, while the "gold, silver, and precious stones" will endure, proving their eternal value. This process determines the rewards a believer will receive, without affecting their salvation.

What is the significance of the "chief cornerstone" in Christian teaching?

The "chief cornerstone" refers to Jesus Christ. This imagery, drawn from Old Testament prophecy (Isaiah 28:16) and quoted by Peter (1 Peter 2:6, Acts 4:10-11), emphasizes that Christ is the essential and indispensable foundation of the church and individual life. Though rejected by some "builders" (like the Jewish religious leaders), He has become the most vital part of God's spiritual structure. There is no salvation or lasting foundation in any other name or system.

How do different denominations and varying Christian walks relate to the concept of building materials?

The existence of different denominations and varying levels of commitment among Christians is seen through the lens of the "building materials." Just as there will be "gold churches," "silver churches," and "hay and stubble churches," individual Christians also walk with different levels of dedication. Some Christians live "lousy, crummy lives," while others are deeply committed and exhibit the Holy Spirit's presence. All are "saints" because they are building on the foundation of Jesus Christ, but their chosen "materials" (motives, conduct, service) will determine the value of their contribution and their rewards. Believers are encouraged to strive to be "gold saints" by using their lives to serve God with their very best.