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1 Corinthians 3
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By Dan Maines

1 Corinthians 3

1 Corinthians 3:1-2

And I, brothers and sisters, could not speak to you as spiritual people, but only as fleshly, as to infants in Christ. I gave you milk to drink, not solid food, for you were not yet able to consume it. But even now you are not yet able.

† Paul rebukes the Corinthians for their immaturity, still living by fleshly divisions.

† They were in Christ but acting like infants, unable to handle

deeper truths.

† The Dead Sea Scrolls (1QH 5.23) use milk as a symbol of basic teaching, paralleling Paul's imagery.

1 Corinthians 3:3-4

For you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like ordinary people? For when one person says, "I am with Paul," and another, "I am with Apollos," are you not ordinary people?

† Division and jealousy are signs of fleshly living, not spiritual maturity.

† Their focus on personalities revealed their immaturity in Christ.

1 Corinthians 3:5-6

What then is Apollos? And what is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, even as the Lord gave opportunity to each one. I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth.

† Paul and Apollos were servants, not masters of the church.

† Growth belongs to God alone.

† Clement of Rome (1 Clement 42) likewise emphasized that ministers are servants under God's authority.

1 Corinthians 3:7-9

So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth. Now the one who plants and the one who waters are one, but each will receive his own reward according to his own labor. For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building.

† Ministers are united in service, each laboring under God's direction.

† The church is both God's field and His temple, belonging to

Him alone.

1 Corinthians 3:10-11

According to the grace of God which was given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building on it. But each person must be careful how he builds on it. For no one can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

† Paul laid the foundation of Christ in Corinth, and others built upon it.

† Christ alone is the foundation of the church.

† Origen (On First Principles 3.1) saw Christ as the only true cornerstone of all teaching.

1 Corinthians 3:12-13

Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, or straw, each one's work will become evident, for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each one's work.

† The quality of ministry will be tested by God's fire of judgment.

† The day refers to the AD 70 judgment, exposing the true nature of each work.

1 Corinthians 3:14-15

If anyone's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, but he himself will be saved, yet only so as through fire.

† Faithful labor brings reward, while careless work suffers loss.

† Salvation is secure, but fruitfulness will be tested.

1 Corinthians 3:16-17

Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone destroys the temple of

God, God will destroy that person, for the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are.

† The church is God's temple, His dwelling place in the Spirit.

† Those who divide and corrupt it bring judgment on themselves.

† Josephus (Wars 6.2.1) described the destruction of the physical temple, while Paul shows the spiritual temple is the church.

1 Corinthians 3:18-20

Take care that no one deceives himself. If anyone among you thinks that he is wise in this age, he must become foolish, so that he may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness in the sight of God. For it is written: "He is the one who catches the wise by their craftiness," and again, "The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are useless."

† Worldly wisdom is folly before God.

† True wisdom comes from humility and dependence on Christ.

† Paul quotes Job 5:13 and Psalm 94:11, showing God's disdain for prideful wisdom.

1 Corinthians 3:21-23

So then, no one is to be boasting in people. For all things belong to you, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come, all things belong to you, and you belong to Christ, and Christ belongs to God.

† All things belong to believers in Christ, so boasting in men is foolish.

† Christ is the unifying center, and in Him all things are ours.

How it applies to us today

† 1 Corinthians 3 reminds us that divisions and pride weaken the church, but Christ alone is the foundation.

† Leaders are servants, not masters, and their work will be tested by God.

† The church is God's temple, holy and indwelt by His Spirit.

† True wisdom is found not in the world but in Christ, who unites us and makes all things ours.

† This is the fulfilled perspective we proclaim at Fulfilled Prophecies †

Source Index

† Dead Sea Scrolls, 1QH 5.23 - milk as basic teaching

† Clement of Rome, 1 Clement 42 - ministers as servants under God

† Origen, On First Principles 3.1 - Christ as cornerstone

† Josephus, Wars 6.2.1 - destruction of the physical temple

† Job 5:13 and Psalm 94:11 - God catching the wise in their craftiness

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