

1 CORINTHIANS

3:11-23 | STUDY GUIDE

Temple

1 CORINTHIANS 3:11, "For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ." (ESV)

- Ultimately the authority is Jesus
 - The Corinthians are straying from the source
 - The foundation is already laid

1 CORINTHIANS 3:12-13, "Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw – each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done." (ESV)

- You may be able to fool earthly authorities, but you won't fool God
 - False prophets and teachers will be held accountable
 - It's not "how much" that's being tested, but rather what kind of work

1 CORINTHIANS 3:15, "If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire." (ESV)

- Catholic Interpretation = Purgatory
 - The idea that a person is tested after death
 - Precedent for suffering □ purification
- Protestant Interpretation ≠ Purgatory
 - Argument: purgatory contradicts or denies the work of Christ in us

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1 CORINTHIANS 3:16, “Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you?” (ESV)

- Physical temple is merely a metaphor
 - A word picture that holds more meaning than plain language
 - The temple = place where God’s glory dwells
 - Holy of Holies
 - Greek word “*ναός*” is specific also to “sanctuary” and not general temple grounds
 - Sacred and holy: “If anyone destroys God’s temple, God will destroy him. For God’s temple is holy, and you are that temple.” (1 Corinthians 3:17, ESV)

1 CORINTHIANS 3:18, “Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you thinks that he is wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise.” (ESV)

- Paul is once again addressed a cultural issue
 - Philosophy & Rhetoric
 - 1 Corinthians 3:19 = Job 5:13
 - 1 Corinthians 3:20 = Psalm 94:11
- The Corinthians have faulted Paul for substandard rhetoric
 - Paul counters that they’re wisdom is without foundation



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1 CORINTHIANS 3:21-23, "For all things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future—all are yours, and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's." (ESV)

- Freedom is ours, but so is Christian responsibility
- Corinth focused primarily on this life—on a heavenly existence now—Paul is pushing them to see the bigger picture

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES: Timothy Brookins, *Corinthian Wisdom, Stoic Philosophy, and the Ancient Economy*, Craig Keener, *1-2 Corinthians*, Bruce W. Winter, *After Paul Left Corinth*, N.T. Wright, *The New Testament in Its World*, Zondervan, *Archeological Study Bible*, Strong's Concordance