TEACHING AND LISTENING TO GOD'S WORD

Rev. Robert C. Lewis • Sheep in the Word Ministries • Glendale Baptist Church • Houston, Texas • 2007

REWARDS FOR TEACHING
1 Corinthians 3:9c–15

Rewarded for Teaching God's Word at the Judgment Seat of Christ

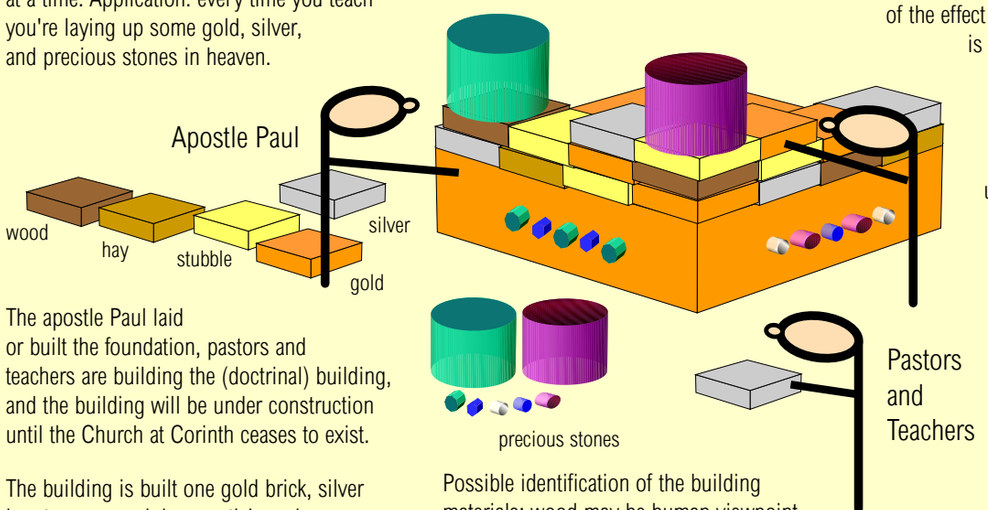
Pastors and teachers who build with gold, silver, and precious stones are probably rewarded with heavenly gold, silver, and precious stones (cf. Rev 3:18). This is why Jesus calls eternal rewards "treasure in heaven" (Matt 19:21; Luke 12:33).

The quality of your work (building = teaching) will be tested at the Judgment Seat of Christ. There will be loss of treasure in heaven (gold, silver and precious stones) if your works (building = teaching) burn up. Application: you wasted your time on earth and you will be poorer toward God in the next life.

These heavenly rewards make teachers rich toward God. They're laying up treasure in heaven one gold brick or silver ingot at a time. Application: every time you teach you're laying up some gold, silver, and precious stones in heaven.

This doctrinal building is weak and will partially be burnt up because it's a mixture of organic and inorganic building materials: wood (wattle, beams, paneling, doors), hay (walls, roofs), stubble (unbaked mud bricks), gold, silver, and precious stones. In other words, this doctrinal building is a composite of truth, human viewpoint, legalism, and false doctrine—everything taught by every pastor and teacher who teaches in the Church at Corinth.

The best building materials were large ashlars, fired bricks, and field stones. Buildings were not made with gold, silver, and precious stones, but these expensive materials were used to adorn the homes of the rich (gilding, moldings). It seems that gold, silver, and precious stones in this passage are metonymy of the effect in which the reward received is put for the building materials used; that is, the future rewards for quality Bible teaching are put for the quality building materials used such as hewn limestone ashlars, baked clay bricks, and field stones. If you teach gold (the most valuable doctrines) you will be rewarded with gold (the most valuable rewards). Wood, hay, and stubble were normal but less valuable building materials and no metonymy is intended here.



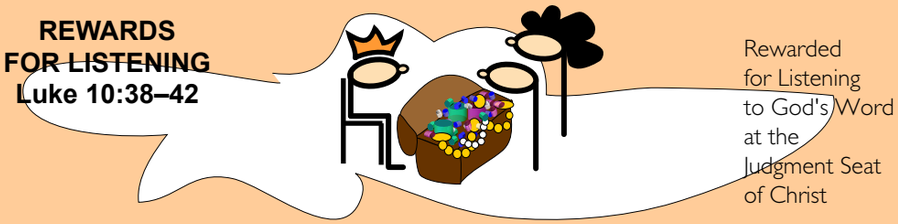
The apostle Paul laid or built the foundation, pastors and teachers are building the (doctrinal) building, and the building will be under construction until the Church at Corinth ceases to exist.

The building is built one gold brick, silver ingot, gem, pearl, beam, stick, and mud brick at a time.

The building materials are gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, and stubble (what pastors and teachers build on the gold foundation with; that is, what they teach). Notice that these building materials are listed in descending value and have a wide range of value, from nearly worthless stubble to pure gold.

Possible identification of the building materials: wood may be human viewpoint (more value than hay or stubble but not good enough), hay may be legalism (worse than human viewpoint but better than false doctrine), and stubble may be false doctrine (worse than human viewpoint or legalism); gold may be the meat of the Word (the most valuable doctrines), silver may be the milk of the Word (necessary and good but not nearly as valuable as the meat; e.g., gold is usually 50 to 100 times more valuable than silver), precious stones may be all the different kinds of spiritual food between milk and meat (grains, nuts, fruits, vegetables).

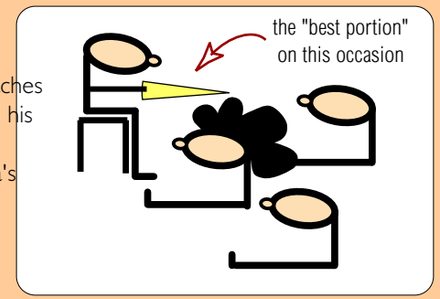
REWARDS FOR LISTENING
Luke 10:38–42



Rewarded for Listening to God's Word at the Judgment Seat of Christ

The size, value, and importance of your portion will be determined by Jesus at the different judgments of the righteous and will be based on your spiritual worth (cf. John 5:22; 2 Cor 5:10; Rev 3:4).

Christians who listen to gold, silver, and precious stones being taught are probably rewarded with heavenly gold, silver, and precious stones. This will be a part of their treasure in heaven.



Jesus Teaches Mary and his Disciples in Martha's Home

Small portions of your inheritance accumulate throughout your lifetime and at the end of your life the sum total of all the small portions you earned is your total portion of Jesus' inheritance.

If gold is taught (= pastors and teachers build with gold), the reward for listening to gold is probably heavenly gold; the reward for listening to silver is probably heavenly silver; and the reward for listening to precious stones is probably precious stones.

Every time you listen to the Word you're rewarded with more heavenly silver, precious stones, and gold. The way to increase the value of your heavenly treasure the most is to listen to a lot of gold. The more gold a teacher teaches, the more gold his listeners receive. Application: you will be rich toward God if you listen to a lot of gold; but, you will be poor toward God if you listen to a lot of wood, hay, and stubble—because they are spiritually worthless. Remember: greater rewards are given for listening to God's Word than for service. Listening to the Word is choosing "the best [positive adjective used as a superlative] portion" of Jesus' inheritance (Luke 10:42).

LESSONS FOR LIVING

1) The most important thing in life is listening to the Word of God (cf. Deut 8:3; Psa 138:2).
2) Eating, drinking, sleeping, and shelter are necessary but the most necessary of all these is listening to Bible teaching.
3) Order or structure your life around this principle: The most important thing in life is Bible teaching. The availability of Bible teaching should influence where you live, go to church, work, and how many hours and days you work.
4) Bible teaching is more important than service because hearing God's Word produces faith (Rom 10:17), the fruit of the Spirit, spiritual maturity, christlikeness, and godliness. Service (do good works) is an expression of your love and maturity.
5) Better rewards are earned by listening to the Word than by doing good works and serving God. Martha received a prophet's reward for showing hospitality to a Prophet (Matt 10:41–42), but her reward or portion was smaller and of lesser value.
6) If Bible doctrine is not the most important thing in your life, you've settled for a smaller portion of the inheritance Jesus received from his Father ("heir of all things" Heb 1:2; "co-heirs" Rom 8:17; Col 3:24; "heirs of the Kingdom" James 2:5).
7) Teachers earn big rewards for teaching God's Word and the saints earn big rewards for listening to God's Word.
8) The richest people in the next life will be those who spent a lot of time in this life listening to God's Word.
9) We can earn small portions of our inheritance every day as opportunities to do good works and listen to the Word arise.