

Lesson #25

The Builder Warrior

The concept of the builder warrior can be seen multiple times in the scriptures. In the previous lesson we identified five enemies that oppose the five foundational principles. As we build upon these foundations and put them into practice, we can expect resistance from these and other enemies. In this lesson we will look at several examples and see that building and battling go hand in hand.

Builder Warriors in Nehemiah

One of the best examples of a builder warriors is seen in the book of Nehemiah. He was born in Babylon during the time of captivity and became the cupbearer for the Babylonian king, Artaxerxes. A previous king named Nebuchadnezzar had conquered Jerusalem, broke down its walls, destroyed the temple of the Lord, and carried many people away as captives to live in Babylon. This captivity would last seventy years, but the love for Jerusalem and the temple of God remained in the hearts of the Jews.

Nehemiah was heart broken over the state of Jerusalem and asked for permission to return to there and rebuild the city of his fathers. He had prayed to God for favor in the eyes of Artaxerxes and the king granted his request. Nehemiah was commissioned by Artaxerxes to return to Jerusalem and rebuild it (see Nehemiah, Chapters 1 & 2).

The rebuilding of Jerusalem was making progress, but when the enemies who were occupying the land saw that the Jews were rebuilding, they were furious. They mocked them, conspired to attack them and sought to create confusion (see Neh 4:1-4). Upon learning of their conspiracy Nehemiah instructed the builders to also be warriors.

¹⁷ Those who built on the wall, and those who carried burdens, loaded themselves so that with one hand they worked at construction, and with the other held a weapon.

¹⁸ Every one of the builders had his sword girded at his side as he built. And the one who sounded the trumpet was beside me.

— Nehemiah 4:17-18 (NKJV)

The enemies opposed the work of building because they knew that rebuilding Jerusalem meant that the people of God would again become strong and subdue any who resisted them. It was the very act of building that precipitated warfare and required them to be builders and warriors at the same time. Like Nehemiah and those with him, we too must be warriors if our work of building is to make progress.

Other Builder Warriors

King David was also a builder warrior. Though he is known as a mighty warrior, he carried a vision to build a house for God, a dwelling place for God's presence.

² Then David the king stood up upon his feet, and said ... As for me, I had in mine heart to build an house of rest for the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and for the footstool of our God, and had made ready for the building: 1 Chronicles 28:2 (KJV)

We also see the builder warrior mantle on the Apostle Paul. The man Paul, who wrote to the Ephesians about our warfare with principalities and powers, is the same man who referred to himself as a wise master builder when he wrote to the Corinthians referring to them as “God’s building” (see Eph 6 and 1 Cor 3).

Of course Jesus is the ultimate builder warrior. He said, “...I will build my church...” and addressed the warfare that would accompany this work when he said “...and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it (Matt 16:18). In the scriptures, the gates of a city represent its rulers. Therefore, Jesus was describing the warfare with demonic powers that would result from the building of the Church.

Occupying Builders

Jesus also gave us the parable of stewardship in which a Nobleman instructed his servants to *occupy*, or *do business*, until he returned. Since the command in the parable is in the context of stewardship (the Nobleman provided the money and those he gave it to were his servants), the business they were to be concerned with was his business. Applied to us, this is a command to build God’s business, it is not simply advice on how to pass the time and avoid boredom. Therefore, it is correct for us to think of the term *occupy* in a military context, as in an occupying army.

As an army of occupying builders, we must expect conflict. Contrary to popular belief, Jesus stated very clearly that He did not come to bring peace. He said, "Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword" (Matt 10:34). He wanted His disciples to know that following him would cause divisions, even among those closest to us - unless of course they too follow Jesus. Yes, the ultimate result will be peace, as we have pointed out early in this study. But the process of building the church, a church that is preparing to rule and reign with Jesus in His kingdom, is a process that precipitates war.

Two Types of Builders

Jesus said, “Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.” Then He went on to tell a parable of two types of builders, one who heard the word and did it, and another who heard the word but did *not* do it (see Matt 7:21-27). This is essentially a parable about following instructions. The building built according to the words of Jesus was built on the rock and stood during the storm. But the building built by the man who did not obey Jesus’ words, was built on shifting sand and the storm brought it down.

Not all building projects that are labeled “Church” are pleasing to God, even though they may be impressive and skillfully constructed. The builders at the Tower of Babel were very skilled and what they were building was very impressive. But it was not according to God’s plan and so he decentralized them and frustrated their work. God’s building plan is often very different than man’s.

Paul referred to himself as a wise master builder who had laid the foundation upon which others could build. He then issued a warning: “But let each one take heed how he builds on it.” (see 1 Cor 3:10). Here again we see that building is not the issue, the issue is building correctly. There are plenty of people who are building churches, but the question is whether or not they are building according to God’s plan. Therefore, there are only two types of builders: 1) those who build according to God’s plan and 2) those who build according to other plans.

Unity with Diversity

Man tends to see building as getting everyone together in one place, saying the same thing, or following the same leader. This is often referred to as unity. But this is not unity, it is uniformity. In Ephesians, we are exhorted to preserve, not simply unity, but the unity *of the Spirit* (see Eph 4:3). Unity of the Spirit happens when people are in a real relationship with Jesus, are being led by the Holy Spirit, and are focused on His vision. This creates unity with diversity, not uniformity. It creates a choir with harmony, instead of a group of people all singing the melody, an orchestra instead of a section of trumpets.

Where uniformity is substituted for unity, it is easy to become lazy and dull of hearing and just go with the flow of what everyone else is doing. Where this happens, it opens the door for the religious spirit. As we have seen, religion is a principality that causes dead works based on routine instead of faith that comes from hearing the word. This is why religion is the enemy of the first foundational principle: Repentance from Dead Works and Faith Toward God. Though everyone who is led by the Spirit will be headed in the same general direction, each person must maintain an active relationship with God to walk avoid dead works and fulfill their destiny.

What is God's Plan?

The obvious question we must ask at this point is this: "Is there a biblical church building model we can look at, or is our work it completely based on being led by the Spirit?" The short answer is "both." The Bible provides examples that can serve as a general model, but such model cannot replace the work of the Holy Spirit in our daily lives. In the next lesson we will address this issue.