

Sunday January 24th 2010.

BOB x04. What are we building with: MERCY

READ: LUKE 16: 19 – 31 (esp 24) The Rich Man and Lazarus. (A NT Parable of the importance of showing mercy as we have been shown mercy by God).

2010 BOB: Building, Outreach, Belonging.

These 3 key aspects of following God and seeking to be ready for God to use us each day IN HIS WORK OF BUILDING the new heaven and earth and bringing in his Kingdom rule. God calls us to work together with him and one another (2C6:1).

During January we have been asking the question: What are we building with?

Building well (Psalm 127: 1,2) – principles we operate by: JUSTICE....last week, MERCY this week. READ Micah 6: 8 (p903)

Foundation of Jesus: 1 Corinthians 3: 11. (Cornerstone of this building here 1869)

Jesus declared that he would build his Church and the gates of hades (death) would not stand against it. (Matthew 16: 18). The foundation stone of the Church is believing faith in Jesus AND the foundation of all that God is doing goes back a lot further than the foundation of the Christian Church just 2,000 years ago.

Paul when he writes to the Ephesian Christians talks about a plan that was drawn and laid before the foundation of the World – before creation itself. (God's Master Plan/ Grand Design)

The building of this “new world”, this “New Jerusalem” is not happening in some far distant place it is happening on this earth and these heavens! Tom Wright in his book, *Surprised by Hope*” p224 says, **We live consciously between the resurrection of Jesus in the past and the making of God's new world in the future.**

* **What** we build with God in this world – he will redeem and build into the new heaven and earth. We are building with people and we are building relationships. (Someone has once said – if I plant a tree in this world it is not just for the next generation of children – I expect to see it in the new heaven and earth!) PAUSE. (This I think & hope is what *Rick Warren* in his course *Purpose Driven Life* means when he says that our purpose is to prepare for eternity – eternity begins now and we are investing here and now in the future heaven and earth. What we do in the now world is important for the future world. He is not escaping the reality of the now).

We are part of this Master plan if we opt in – if we repent (stop going our own way) and follow Jesus – Jesus is making everything new!

Like Abraham we are looking for a city whose builder and maker is God. (Hebrews 11: 10, 16; 12: 22; 13: 14. (This city is both the dwelling and community of the redeemed)

Like Zechariah we have been given a revelation of a kingdom-city without walls and surrounded by “fire” – metonym for the glory of God. (Jerusalem – where God lives in all his glory with the redeemed).

Jesus told his disciples when he rose and ascended that he went to prepare a place (topos – table, couch, room) for them in his *Father's house* (oikos – dwelling, temple, house of God). He said there were many abodes/ dwellings/ rooms (monai) in his Father's household. (John 14:2) Later he

lets John (who didn't understand) when he is older and imprisoned see something of what he means – a new heaven and earth, a new city, (with no temple because the lord God and the Lamb are the temple) descending – *now God's dwelling is with humanity. God's glory lights the new heaven and earth. Revelation 21, 22.*

I am struggling to share this revelation that God has given through history and that is recorded in the books of the Bible:

Jesus is building all this but he is not doing it on his own – we are building with him while on this earth. (This is here and now and not far away – escapism! I was desperately trying to think of a satisfactory comparison with what we do on earth to illustrate the principles. The only thing I can come up with is when you watch a programme and see a whole kit house transported and assembled in England – the wood is cut and the frame built somewhere like Germany/ Finland....what we are doing now matters and what we build with matters.

We must build with justice – and we must also build with mercy! We must show mercy now.

Remember the Parable of the *Rich man and Lazarus* that Jesus told to explain to people the responsibility we have to show mercy now. (We sing about the mercy of God that we have received – SOF 958 *Oh the mercy of God*...but we are therefore to show mercy – as we have received mercy from God).

Heleos – is the Greek NT word for mercy – mercy is the outward expression of compassion and pity. It is an attitude that results in action to help those in distress.

In Haiti during the last 11 days we have seen many acts of mercy. Haitians have shown mercy to one another – the poor have helped the poor, and also we have seen Dives helping Lazarus! The rich nations have shown mercy to the poorest nation of the western hemisphere. (The former French colony – rich “sugar” rulers over thrown by slaves at the end of the C18/ beginning C19 to become the first republic governed by those of African ancestry. America, UK and many more have sent rescuers and aid – in response to 200,000 deaths and innumerable injuries. We have given of the crumbs of our table to help feed the poor and distressed. This is building the Kingdom of God on earth – this is an answer to the prayers of the Haitians – *give us today our daily bread.*

We need to build with mercy as well as justice. Paul said to the Corinthians that he built the church with the gentleness and kindness of Jesus Christ. “Mercy” is a totally practical expression of pity and compassion – justice and mercy (the cement of love & peace which holds everything together *Eph 4:3*). Mercy holds the living stones together until they are built into a house in which God can live by his Spirit. As we share God's message of Salvation with words we must also share it with practical kindness and mercy. This is being done throughout the earth at the moment – and we must continue it here – in our relationships, through our projects, through our businesses. We are to build with justice and mercy – we are to walk humbly with God. (We are building with Jesus – a city, a whole new heaven and earth, a spiritual temple – in which God lives by his Spirit with human beings).