

THE BEREAN

"... examining the scriptures daily..." (Acts 17:11).

B. G. Echols, Editor

Telephone 423-6849

A Spiritual House

BY B. G. ECHOLS

None of us is so close to Christ that he cannot be nearer. Thus our daily effort is to continue to approach Him that His life will flow to us and we may become more like Him.

It is evident that a proper life-style on our part will take effort, a continuing coming to Christ by prayer and study. "Unto whom coming, a living stone, rejected indeed of men, but with God elect, precious, ye also, as living stones are built up a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 2:4, 5). Christ as the corner stone has life in Himself which He imparts to those built upon Him. All the stones become living stones forming a spiritual house.

Christ was rejected by the religious leaders. The Jews did not reject Him without examination. The trouble was He did not fit their prejudices. He didn't fit their plans. They wanted to build a different sort of building. Jesus knew that these words, taken from Psalm 118, were a forecast of His death and glory. "Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the Scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, The same was made the head of the corner; This was from the Lord, And it is marvelous in our eyes?" (Mt. 21:42). Jesus is indeed still

rejected of men. Everyone who hears the gospel of Christ and does not obey it is rejecting Christ.

God chose to build His church upon Jesus Christ despite what men thought. To God, Jesus is precious. Thus God chose Him to be the foundation of the church because of His excellence and sufficiency for that purpose. When we choose to follow Jesus, we choose to follow the One Who is elect and precious to God.

The richness of our status as Christians is pictured in two ways: a temple of God, and a priesthood. Note the picture is of a group in which members participate individually. The spiritual prosperity of any church is the individual faithfulness of the members as they take on themselves the character of Christ. Isolated stones do not make a house. There must be a building together. God is still adding stones to His temple. He is building His temple stone by stone, but we play a part. Every time someone is converted, he is built into this living temple as a living stone.

When we feel weak and helpless, and tossed by circumstances,

let us remember that Something firm is beneath us. Our security is in the foundation on which we live. True spiritual vision sees in this spiritual architecture a temple more glorious and more significant than any which hands can build or eyes can see. Many people are impressed with beautiful cathedrals and buildings. God's temple today is the most beautiful of structures, but it is not material. It is people bound together in faith and love. Happy and blessed are they who are built into the structure of God for they shall outlive the earth and outshine the stars.

United in Christ our high priest we become a kingdom of priests unto God (Heb. 4:14). The idea of all people being priests was shocking when Peter wrote. This was not spoken of a special class in the church, but of the whole body of believers. Peter doesn't put himself first. These early Christians, persecuted by emperors and hunted by petty officials, had a dignity and gladness which nothing could take away. We have the same! Rejoice! To Him be the glory (Rev. 1:6).

Our sacrifices are bloodless. Only spiritual sacrifices will be accepted. Our sacrifices involve our whole existence. They are primarily obedience and praise (Heb. 13:15, 16). The fact that as priests we can offer sacrifices is supreme

Seed For Thought

Is it possible for the church of the New Testament to exist today?

The idea prevails that it is not possible to be a Christian, just a member of the church that existed in New Testament times. Since many believe this is impossible, they think each one must look around and select the religious group that best suits them. As a result of these ideas, instead of deploring denominational division, they are thankful that it exists and that each person can decide what they want to be religiously. They see no other alternative. Is it possible for the church Jesus built to exist today? Sometimes illustrations help us see truth more clearly.

The Houston Chronicle, 11-14-95, page 8A, tells us that some old lotus seeds found in China were planted and from these seeds, calculated by radio carbon dating to be 1,288 years old, sprang a tiny green shoot. "The research, reported in the November issue of the American Journal of Botany, began in 1982, when Shen-Miller, plant physiologist at the University of California, obtained seven brown, oval-shaped lotus seeds, each about the size of a large marble, from the Beijing Institute of Botany." What did the ancient lotus seed produce? No one has trouble understanding it produced a lotus plant the same as existed many years ago.

In the first century, Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to guide those who wrote the New Testament, *John 16:13; 1 Corinthians 14:37*. They wrote living words that will endure, *John 6:63; Hebrews 4:12; Matthew 24:35*. These words were the "seed" of the kingdom, *Luke 8:11*. The word of the Lord brought the kingdom/church into existence and led to its spread throughout the world. If ancient lotus seed produces a modern lotus plant, why will not the ancient inspired word establish the church Jesus built whenever and wherever it is proclaimed without addition and without subtraction? Seed brings forth after its kind, *Genesis 1:11, 12*. We can be Christians just like they were in New Testament times. If we can, is it safe to be anything else?

Robert W. Goodman
6315 Crestside Dr.
Pasadena, TX 77505

Spiritual House

proof of Christ's amazing grace. Life as a Christian is not merely abstaining from evil. It is positive too. Sometimes it may be easier to avoid evil actions than it is to do positive good. Some have a religion that is pretty much only avoiding certain evils. What we offer to God is acceptable only through Jesus Christ. He brought us to God.