



# **THE NEW SHOFAR**

**A chosen race...God's own people**

**A living temple to our God**

**May 10th**

**...a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of his own**

Echoing **Psalm 34**, Peter calls us to *come to Jesus* himself. Why? Because the Christ is the **living stone** on which our faith lives, and our faith community is built. Yes, he was rejected by the society in which he lived and ministered, but he was sent by God and remains *precious in God's eyes*. The imagery here is of great significance. The Hebrew people understood the notion of God having a dwelling place on earth. His terrestrial home was the Jerusalem Temple, a building erected from dead stones. That home proved to be unable to bring either the people of Israel or the peoples of the world to know, love and worship Yahweh as the One True God. And so he sent Jesus to be the *cornerstone* of a new kind of "building". This new Temple of God would be a living construction built on Jesus the Christ. It is living because Jesus, although he died on the cross and was buried, he rose and now lives.

Peter continues this imagery by encouraging believers to allow themselves to ***be built into a spiritual house***. This is no ordinary house made of lifeless stones but the true spiritual temple of God that has *living* bricks, with Christ himself the cornerstone on which this Temple is built. All believers make that house a home for God.

## **A house of God for all peoples**

There are some enormous changes from the original Hebrew understanding. Their house was a house for God that separated Israel off from everyone else. All were separated off within that building – gentiles from Jews, men from women, priests from the rest and only the High Priest able to enter the Holy of Holies - and then only once a year.

This new living, spiritual temple is called to be a home for everyone – people of every tribe and tongue, people and nation. It is to be a universal home for all. In Paul's own words...In this new living Temple *there is neither Jew nor Gentiles, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, all are one in Christ Jesus*. This is why this spiritual temple is a living home **for all**. It is built around Christ, the Saviour of all. Take Christ out and the whole building collapses.

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## **All Christians are called to become the living home of God in creation.**

There is so much in this powerful image. This is not our own house, a house we can shape and decorate according to our own preferences and traditions. It is God's House and what God wants must shape the design and every aspect of this spiritual's existence. It is a Home meant to facilitate what God is doing, the mission of God in creation. We share that same mission, collaborating with the saving ministry of God for the good of the whole world. When the home of God becomes a private club for the chosen, it is no longer living and no longer built on Christ. God no longer dwells there, and it will fall.

But there is more to this image than just being a house. Christians are also called to serve in God's house as *a holy priesthood*. This is now an image of great mobility, one of action, of doing. Christians are the living abode of God on earth and priests to serve God. It is in God's Temple, and as God's Temple God's Temple and they serve as *priests of God the Most High*. Herein is a biblical teaching lost in the passage of time. All disciples of Christ are priests anointed as priests in baptism. We are all priests serving God by responding to Christ's call to **(a)** offer spiritual sacrifices to God **(b)** to be acceptable to God - holy **(c)** and to live and celebrate in Christ through the Spirit.

The Church inherits the ministry of Israel, a people called to be a *royal priesthood*, a *people set apart for the service of God*. We are all called to stand before the Lord God as priests, offering our lives as living sacrifices and making Him known in the world.

*Spiritual* here does not mean fuzzy or unreal. It refers to the divine life and activity of the Holy Spirit *in and through us*. That is the key to all this Post-Easter living. In his ministry on earth, Jesus of Nazareth wandered around the Holy Land, preaching and teaching the Good news of God. He healed, raised the dead, welcomed the sinner and the outcast and then died on the cross. His ministry did not cease when he was raised and ascended to the Father. We are now the House-Temple-Base Camp in which God's Spirit dwells and the saving works of Christ continue in human history.

### **What does our baptismal priestly ministry look like?**

We cannot do better than go back to Jesus and Peter for an answer to this. Both of these men used the image from **Isaiah 42:6-7**... *I Yahweh have called you in righteousness; I will take hold of your hand. I will keep you and will make you to be (a) a covenant for the people and (b) a light for the Gentiles,<sup>7</sup> to (c) open eyes that are blind, to (d) free captives from prison and to (e) release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness*. If we want to assess our pre-Corona faith community and plan our post-Corona virus faith communities, then we could do no better than begin with this measure spanning both Testaments. Only with Christ as our cornerstone could this be even dreamed about.

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