

From Shechem to Bethel

Quietly, in many places and largely unseen, God is raising up a vessel which is truly His house. It consists not of single outstanding individuals, whether great in preaching or revival or anything else, but in humble men and women who have been welded into one by the cross. Shechem must become Bethel. God must deliver us from the whole principle of individualism. He must save us from wanting to be outstanding individual Christians, and somehow make us one in His house. For it is the house of God that is His witness in the earth. Everyone knows how difficult it is for Christians to live together! When by the grace of God it happens, and continues to happen, even hell takes notice.

But let us be careful. Is God's house a principle to be followed, or a life to be lived? Is it something to copy, or something to be? It would be easy, having seen the value of life together, to determine at all costs to apply the principles by which it should work. But this would not achieve the result. We must have the life of the Body, the

shared life of Christ that comes from Him as Head, before we can abide by its principles. They cannot just be learned.

Then how is this shared life attained? Our tent must be pitched, as we have seen already, between Ai and Bethel, between the heap and the house. On the one hand there is the house of God, the testimony to God's authority and rule in the earth. On the other hand there is the heap of ruins, the ruin of our hopes and our ambitions, our expectations and our self-esteem. Only if our back is to this are we facing that. This is both a geographical and a spiritual fact. Only if we have accepted God's judgement upon the old creation as final are we facing toward what is represented by Bethel. When our flesh, our natural strength, has been dealt with, then, and only then, do we fit into God's house naturally and without effort. We are as living stones, just the right size and shape for the place He has for us. Otherwise, however much we try to fit ourselves in, we just belong on the heap.



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