

Finishing Well

Lesson #35 Background: Valley of Achor October 5, 2022

The Bible mentions Jerusalem over 800 times. All the Biblical prophets spoke of the walls and gates of Jerusalem in connection to God's faithfulness.

The ten gates that Nehemiah rebuilt can be grouped into four categories.

You proceed counterclockwise from the northeast corner. The circumference of the walls was approximately two and one-half miles, encompassing approximately 220 acres.

First 3 gates = PRIORITY gates - Sheep, Fish and Old Gates.

- All the other gates cannot be effectively restored until these three are in place.

Next 2 gates = PURIFYING gates - Valley and Dung Gates.

- These gates test our character and purify us to be able to outwork the purpose of God for our lives revealed in the following gates.

Next 3 gates = POWER gates - Fountain, Water and Horse Gate.

- These gates come after purification. We receive an empowering to do a specific work for God in His strength and the power of the Holy Spirit.

Last 2 gates = PROPHETIC gates - East and Inspection Gates.

- They speak of Jesus' return and of the final judgment.
- These should continually be in our vision and compel us to be faithful and diligent in seeing the other gates restored in our lives.

Word "built" meaning "rebuilt" is used 6 times in Nehemiah 3.

George Morrison: "This restoration needed NO new material. In the debris of the ruined masonry lay ALL the material required. It is not by inventing clever new things that we take away our (or the church's) reproach, but by going back to the old truths of God's Word.

They lie like stones in the dust, waiting for someone with a burden to recover and use them."

- Repair is used 35 times = make strong and firm.
- Nehemiah wasn't interested in a "quick fix," a white-washed wall that would soon crumble.
- Locks and bars are mentioned 5 times. Locks refer to the sockets into which the bars were fitted, thus making it difficult for anyone outside the gate to open it.
- Our work needs to be protected from the enemy.
- II John 1:8 Look to yourselves, that we do not lose those things we worked for, but that we may receive a full reward.
- Rev. 3:11 Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.

The Gospel of the Gates of Jerusalem

The order and position of each gate is very specific. [not a coincidence]

Each gate speaks of a different experience and spiritual truth that must be applied in our Christian life. The order of the gates is a clear order of our growth in the faith.

- Named 1000 years before the Lamb came.
- Give the perfect portrait of true salvation in Christ who is the author and finisher of our eternal salvation.
- They portray the sequence from His sacrifice to the gathering of His people in heaven.
- The journey begins and ends at the Sheep Gate. [Neh. 3:1, 32] We come full circle.
- Everything begins and ends with Jesus' death on the cross.
- Apart from Him and His sacrifice, we would have nothing eternal and satisfying.

Rev. 1:8 I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.

Rev. 22:12-13 Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.

Luke 24:7 Jesus on the Road to Emmaus: all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning Me.

- Therefore, we should also look for Him in the study of the gates

Sheep Gate - Where the Journey with Jesus begins

1. Located on the northeast wall; north of the Temple Mount > 1st gate to be restored
2. The only gate that was consecrated [set apart as holy]

- Used for the holy purpose of bringing in the sacrifices for the Temple.

1st Prophetic Message: Cry of this gate: Jesus is the sacrifice foretold by the prophets.

- "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." John 1:29

Fish Gate: If you are a closet Christian, your Fish Gate needs repaired.

If your salvation experience is real, then the realization of how God has rescued you from hell itself, redeemed your unworthy soul and added you to the family of God, will compel you to witness to others.

You are My witnesses! My Ambassadors! God's Call To Transform & Protect The Marketplace!

Old Gate: Jeshanah Gate = TRUTH = Logos = the written Word of God

It is not by inventing clever new things that we take away our reproach, but by going back to the old truths of God's Word.

They lie like stones in the dust, waiting for someone with a burden to recover & use them

Jer. 6:16 Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls.

Broad Wall: After the old gate, we learned the importance of building a broad wall.

Notice there is a long distance between the old gate and the valley gate. It's as though the Lord allows a 'honeymoon' period where He teaches you and His presence is strong in your life. We should learn to walk with Him and trust Him in everything.

If we don't work on establishing a strong relationship with Him, we will not be able to stand and react obediently when the Valley Gate arrives.

Tower of the Ovens [Furnaces] precedes the "Refining Process"

Tower of the Ovens: The heat and pressure of the Christian life with various trials and tribulations will surely come.

It's VITAL for every Christian to KNOW: *Hard times WILL come.*

John 16:33 These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace.

In this world you will have tribulation, but take courage, I have overcome the world.

The Bible references 7 great valleys: Siddim, Eschol, Kidron, Elah, Achor, Gehenna and Jezreel.

Keathley: One sad truth of reality in a fallen world is that we can be riding high on the cloud of some great spiritual success and the very next moment find ourselves in a valley of spiritual failure and despair. One moment we can be standing victoriously on Mt. Carmel like Elijah and the next shriveled up under a juniper tree or hiding in a cave in deep despair complaining to God: I Kings 19:10 And he said, I have been very jealous for the LORD God of hosts: for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away.

➤ The distance between a great victory followed by a great defeat is only one step.

Consider: When the children of Israel entered the Promised Land, three conspicuous and outstanding enemies stood in their way. They foreshadowed the same 3 enemies we face.

1. Jericho a picture of the world in the center of the land; impregnable fortress
2. Ai a picture of the flesh
3. Gibeonites a picture of Satan an alliance of people; deceit & lies

Joshua's strategy: Take Jericho first to break the backbone of the land.

Move north to Ai and then south to the Gibeonites.

God had told Joshua: Every place the sole of your foot shall tread [darak = do warfare] upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses. [Joshua 1:3]

Their inheritance was comprised of 300,000 square miles, but they only occupied 30,000 sq. mi.

Key Point: The Promised Land is a type of a born-again Christian entering the abundant life and partaking of the spiritual blessings we have in Christ Jesus. [John 10:10]

Eph. 1:3: Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.

Key Point: None of the spiritual blessings are immediately in our possession.

McGee: There are battles to be fought and victories to be won. Ephesians closes with the clanking of armor and the sound of battle with a call: Put on the whole armor of God.

As born-again believers, we have a 3 fold enemy whose purpose is to rob us of our possessions. How many am I claiming and enjoying as God intended? Many of us live as spiritual paupers.

Joshua 1-6 tells of some great victories under the leadership of Joshua.

Josh. 1:3 Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses.

Joshua 1:5 There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.

Joshua 1:8-9 This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.

Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.

Promises

No man shall be able to stand before you

I will be with you. I will not leave you nor forsake you.

You shall cause this people to inherit the land

Expectations

Be strong and very courageous

Be careful to do according to all the law

Do not turn from it to the right or left

The Israelites have been completely victorious in crossing the Jordan, entering the land, dealing with God at Gilgal and at Jericho.

BUT, in Joshua 7 the children of Israel are in full retreat and Joshua is on his face in the dirt before God and filled with dismay.

Redpath: Joshua had counted on unbroken victory in the land. There would be no more defeat.

It appeared that either God had deserted them or else God was unable to cope with the powerful enemy in the land of Canaan. Israel was now in desperate peril. Obviously, their strength and resource in themselves were quite inadequate to defeat the armies of Canaan.

➤ They had only established a bridgehead in the land.

➤ Now it seemed as if they well might be flung right back into the Jordan River.

Consider: Unbroken victory for His people was certainly God's purpose.

The only battle the children of Israel lost in taking the Promised Land was the battle of Ai, a type of the flesh. The defeat came from within.

Key Point: Defeat in the Promised Land might occur, but it need not.

Redpath: A life of unbroken victory over sin is the purpose of God for every child of His redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ. However, God does not make it impossible for His children to sin. He always makes it possible for them NOT to sin.

➤ Defeat may happen, but it need not.

Andrew Bonar: Let us be as watchful after the victory as before the battle.

Consider: Because one soldier did not heed this warning, Israel's next challenge in Canaan turned out to be a humiliating defeat.

Joshua gave the soldiers 4 instructions to obey after the victory at Jericho.

1. Devote The Entire City To God

Joshua 6:17-19 And the city shall be accursed, even it, and all that are therein, to the LORD: only Rahab the harlot shall live, she and all that are with her in the house, because she hid the messengers that we sent. ¹⁸ And ye, in any wise keep yourselves from the accursed thing, lest ye make yourselves accursed, when ye take of the accursed thing, and make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it. [make the camp of Israel liable to destruction and bring trouble] ¹⁹ But all the silver, and gold, and vessels of brass and iron, are consecrated unto the LORD: they shall come into the treasury of the LORD.

- Jericho was presented to God as the firstfruits of the victories to come.

Note: The soldiers usually shared the spoils of war. [Deut. 20:14] BUT not at Jericho.

- 1st Victory In The Land - in their inheritance > All glory & praise to God
- Everything belonged to the LORD and was put in His treasury. [Deut. 13:16; I Kings 7:51]
- Achan's disobedience of this command resulted in Israel's defeat and humiliation at Ai.
- It also resulted in the death of Achan, his family and his possessions.

2. Rescue Rahab and her family

3. Destroy The People

Jericho had been placed under the ban > haram = to ban, devote, or destroy utterly.

- Refers to the exclusion of an object from use or abuse by man along with its irreversible surrender to God.
- Devote it to the service of God or put it under a ban for utter destruction.

For something to be under the ban meant one of two things.

1. Every living thing was to be completely destroyed.

This has been called barbaric and primitive and nothing less than the murder of innocent lives.

The Divine Law of War: Deut. 20:10-18

God made a distinction between attacking cities that were far off [v. 10-15] and cities in the land of Canaan where Israel would dwell [v.16-18]. These are cities and people in your inheritance; the Promised Land flowing with milk/honey; God promised victory.

He commanded them to GO IN & POSSESS THE LAND.

Before besieging a city afar off, the Jews were to give that city an offer of peace, and if the city surrendered, the Jews would spare the people and make them subjects. But the people in the cities in the land of Canaan were to be destroyed completely, and their cities burned.

The Canaanites were by no means innocent. They were a vile people who practiced the basest forms of immorality including child sacrifice. God had given them over 400 hundred years to repent, but now their iniquity had become full. [Gen. 15:16; Lev. 18:24-28]

- The Canaanites KNEW what was transpiring with the Jewish nation. [Josh. 2:8-13]

Wiersbe: Every wonder that God performed and every victory that God gave His people was a witness to the people of the land, but they preferred to go on in their sins and reject the mercy of God. Never think of the Canaanites as helpless ignorant people who knew nothing about the true God. They were willfully sinning against a flood of light.

Consider: We should also keep in mind that these historical events were written "for our learning" [Rom. 15:4] as we seek to live for Christ today.

In the destruction of Jericho and its population God is telling us that He will tolerate no compromise with sin in the lives of His people.

G. Campbell Morgan "Thank God that He will not make peace with sin in my heart! I bless His name for the thunder of His authority, and for the profound conviction that He is fierce and furious in His anger against sin, wherever it manifests itself."

Wiersbe: The Lord will not share my life if there are rival gods in my heart. He will not permit me to compromise with the enemy.

- The few who did turn to the Lord [Rahab and her family] were spared.
- As with Sodom and Gomorrah, if there had been even 10 righteous, God would have spared the city. [Gen. 18], Since He could not find even 10, God removed Lot and his family [Gen. 19] before He utterly destroyed it.
- If any city had repented as did Nineveh, God would have spared that city.
- In spite of all the miraculous works of God which they had heard about, there was no repentance, the Canaanites remained steadfast in their depravity.

Note: The battle confronting Israel was not simply a religious war; it was a theocratic war.

God's purpose for Israel: Be the channel for His blessing [Gen. 12:1-3]

- The writing of the Scriptures and the coming of the Savior
- The Old Testament records Satan doing everything he could to pollute the Jewish nation and prevent the birth of the Messiah.
- When the Jewish men married pagan women and began to worship pagan gods, it was a threat to God's purposes for His chosen people. [Neh. 13:23-31]
- God wanted a "holy seed" [Mal. 2:14-15] so His Son could come to be the Savior of the world.

G. Campbell Morgan: God is perpetually at war with sin. That is the whole explanation of the extermination of the Canaanites.

Israel was directly ruled by God and the extermination was God's direct command.

- Ex. 23:27-30; Deut. 7:3-6; Josh. 8:24-26.

Truth: Israel as a theocracy was an instrument of judgment in the hands of God.

2. All the valuable objects like silver and gold were to be dedicated to the Lord's treasury.
 - Similar to the first fruits of the land.
 - Evidence of the people's trust in the Lord's supply for their future. [Lev. 27:28-29]

4. Burn The City

Deut. 4:24 Thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God.

Moses' warning: The danger of idolatry! Do not follow the religious practices of the Canaanites. God is jealous over His people and will not permit them to divide their love and service between Him and the false gods of the world [Ex. 20:5; 34:14]. We cannot serve two masters.

The burning of Jericho, like the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah [Jude 1:7], is a picture of the judgment of God that will fall on all who reject the truth.

After burning the city, Joshua put a curse on Jericho. This would warn any of the Jews or Rahab's descendants who might be tempted to rebuild what God had destroyed.

Because of its strategic location, Ai was the next objective in the path of conquest.

As with Jericho, its defeat was vital to the conquest of the entire land because it would give Israel control of the main route that ran along the highlands from north to south in the central portion of the land.

Valley of Achor, situated northwest of Jericho on the northern border of the tribe of Judah.

- Achor = trouble, affliction or taboo; implies a severe kind of trouble

Josh. 6:27 So the LORD was with Joshua; and his fame was noised throughout all the country.

- If the Lord magnifies me, I must be careful to give Him the glory.

Suddenly we are hit with a series of failures in Joshua 7.

Sin In The Camp: Joshua 7:1-5

The Disobedience of Israel Defined

Joshua 7:1 BUT the children of Israel committed a trespass in the accursed thing: for Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took of the accursed thing: and the anger of the LORD was kindled against the children of Israel.

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|---------|-------------------|--------------------------------|
| ➤ Zerah | Great-grandfather | Dawning; shining; brightness |
| ➤ Zabdi | Grandfather | Dowry; endowed; gift of Yahweh |
| ➤ Carmi | Father | My vineyard; fruitful; noble |
| ➤ Achan | Self | Troubler; disturbance |

Note: Achan was of the tribe of Judah = praise.

He had witnessed life in the wilderness. He had witnessed the miracle of the crossing of the Jordan River. He had experienced circumcision and Passover at Gilgal. He had been an eyewitness of God's miraculous victory at Jericho. He was finally living in his inheritance.

- The ominous word BUT follows this verse.
- There was the thrill of victory, BUT NOW > there is the agony of defeat.

Note: This little conjunction of contrast is designed to drive home an important truth—

- the reality of the ever-present threat and contrasts of life—
- Victory is always followed by at least the threat of defeat.

Josh. 7:25 Achan = the man who troubled Israel.

- Because of his disobedience, Israel suffered defeat at Ai and lost 36 Jewish soldiers.
- It is their first and only military defeat under Joshua.

God made it clear: It was Israel that had sinned and not just Achan alone [Josh. 7:1, 11].

Joshua 22:20 Did not Achan the son of Zerah commit a trespass in the accursed thing, and wrath fell on all the congregation of Israel? and that man perished not alone in his iniquity.

Consider: The LORD held the whole camp of Israel accountable for the act of one man and withheld His blessing until the matter was corrected.

- This sin was direct disobedience and rebellion. God used it to teach Israel a lesson.

Redpath: The children of Israel were a nation who had been brought to redemption ground as one man, the weakest of them and the strongest of them. They were a complete entity; God was dealing with them as a corporate body through whom His purposes for men were to be fulfilled. Jehovah God walked about in their camp. Therefore, the camp was to be kept holy [Deut. 23:14]. Anyone who disobeyed God defiled the camp which affected their relationship to the Lord and to one another. Therefore, the verdict from heaven on the sin of one member of the community was: Israel has sinned.

Lesson: Never underestimate the amount of damage one person can do outside the will of God.

- Abraham's disobedience in Egypt almost cost him his wife Gen. 12:10-20
- David's disobedience in taking an unauthorized census led to the death of 70,000 people.
- Jonah's refusal to obey God almost sank a ship [Jonah 1].
- Paul admonished the Corinthian believers to discipline the disobedient man in their fellowship, because his sin was defiling the whole church [I Cor. 5].

I Cor. 5:6-7 Your glorying [boasting] is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? ⁷ Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us:

Consider: Achan's behavior illustrates how one or a few believers out of fellowship, when pursuing their own selfish desires and agendas, can negatively impact an entire group and create trouble for the rest.

Joshua 7:1 But the children of Israel committed a trespass:

- Trespass = Strong's #4604 maal = an unfaithful or treacherous act

But the sons of Israel acted unfaithfully and violated their obligation regarding the things designated for destruction, [those things belonging to the LORD], [Amplified; NASB]

1. "Unfaithfully" represents a Hebrew word that means "to act underhandedly."

- "It was used of marital infidelity, of a woman who was unfaithful to her husband.

2. This sin: Was an act of spiritual infidelity

James 4:4 Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.

- If I love the world, it makes me behave as though I am an enemy of God

3. Was a faithless act: seeking happiness and security from things rather than from God

I Tim. 6:6 But godliness with contentment is great gain.

Designated or devoted for destruction: The exclusion of an object from the use or abuse of man and its irrevocable surrender to God.

Consider: Spiritual warfare: Churches are wrecked from within, not from forces without. When Jesus Christ wrote to the 7 churches in Revelation, He gave them certain warnings. None of the warnings referenced the enemy on the outside.

Rev. 2:14-15, 20 But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam,...¹⁵ So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate. ²⁰ because thou allow that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.

Key Point: You have something within that is bringing about your own destruction. Disloyalty and unfaithfulness in the church is hurting God's cause more than any outside enemy.

Redpath: Believers are one body in Christ. No child of God can grow cold in his spiritual life without lowering the temperature of everybody else around him. The victory of the whole community depends on the victorious life of every individual church member. The testimony of our church in its community depends on the victorious life of every man and woman on the church roll. The witness of our church to the glory of God is affected by the testimony of each member. We must recognize the need for helping, strengthening and praying for each other on our pilgrim journey.

A.W. Tozer *The Set of the Sail*, pp. 11-13

Though we do not hear much of it in this age of spineless religion, there is nevertheless much in the Bible about the place of moral determination in the service of the Lord.

- "Jacob vowed a vow," and it was the beginning of a very wonderful life with God....
- But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's delicacies, nor with the wine which he drank.... --Daniel 1:8
- Jesus set his face like a flint and walked straight toward the cross.
- Paul "determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified,"...

These are only a few of the many men and women of the Bible who have left us a record of spiritual greatness born out of a will firmly set to do the will of God....

Let us, then, set our sails in the will of God. If we do this we will certainly find ourselves moving in the right direction, no matter which way the wind blows.