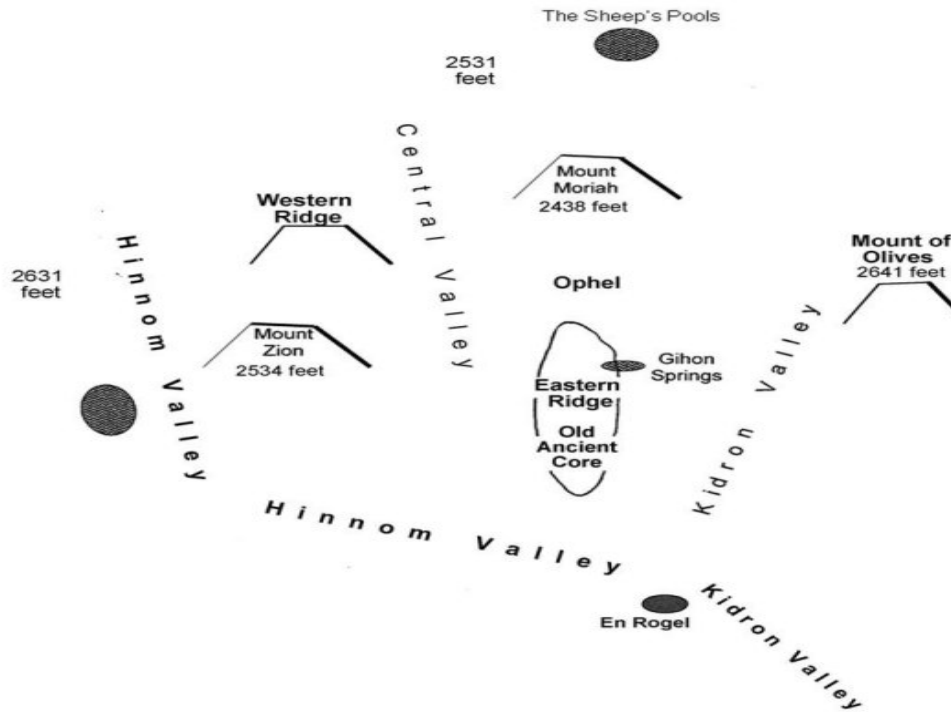


Finishing Well

Lesson #3

The Call Of The Dung Gate

Jan. 18, 2023



3 Main Valleys Provide A Natural Defense For Jerusalem

1. The Gehenna or Hinnom Valley is south of Jerusalem.

a. In the late monarchical period, a very sad place in the valley was called Topheth or "fire stove." [Isa. 30:33] Children were presented as burnt offerings [passed children through the fire] to Molech and other Canaanite gods [II Kings 23:10; Jeremiah 7:31-34; II Chron. 28:23, 33:6]. It was a place of tremendous evil for many years.

b. The name Topheth = Hebrew word toph, meaning "a drum," or "to burn." Possibly both, because the shrieking of the children sacrificed by the priests to Molech was drowned out by the sound of beating drums. King Josiah ended this horrible practice [II Kings 23].

c. In later years, the valley was used for incinerating the corpses of criminals and unclean animals and as a place to burn garbage from the city. A fire was kept constantly burning. Gehenna became associated with eternal torment because of the detestable infant sacrifices to Molech.

d. Gehenna presented such a vivid image that Jesus used it as a symbolic depiction of hell: a place of eternal torment and constant uncleanness, where the fires never ceased burning and the worms never stopped crawling. [Matt. 10:28; Mark 9:47-48]

e. The Gehenna Valley was thus a place of burning sewage, burning flesh, and garbage. It was a dark and dreary place. Maggots and worms crawled through the waste, and the smoke smelled strong and sickening [Isaiah 30:33].

It was a place utterly filthy, disgusting and repulsive to the nose and eyes.

2. The rugged Tyropoean Valley originates in the upper part of the city and passes down beside the western wall of the Temple Mount. It separates Mt. Moriah from Mt. Zion.
 - a. It eventually joins the Kidron Valley. This was the main street of Jesus' time. Shops and markets lined the valley with bridges above.
3. The Kidron Valley, [Valley of the Shadow of Death] separates the city from the Mount of Olives. Its name, meaning "dark" or "shady," probably reflects its depth (at least 50 feet deeper than it is today). The Kidron also provided the water resource for Jerusalem's only spring, the Gihon Spring on the eastern slope.

These 3 deep valleys made Jerusalem feel safe and secure as if God Himself were guarding it. Even Titus, the Roman General who destroyed the city in 70 AD said, "If it had not been for the internal dissensions, the city could never have been taken." God Himself is still on guard for Jerusalem as El Shaddai.

In I Kings 8:28-29, Solomon quotes the Lord as stating that His Name shall be in the land where Solomon is to build the House of God:

"That thine eyes may be open toward this house night and day, even toward the place of which thou hast said, My name shall be there: that thou mayest hearken unto the prayer which thy servant shall make toward this place."

Interesting Points: The three valleys form the Hebrew letter "Shin" which represents God's name as in "El Shaddai"= God Almighty; ALL Sufficient One.

It represents the unspeakable name of the one and only God, YAHWEH.

Shaddai = the keeper of the doors of Israel

I Kings 11:36 I will give one tribe to his son so that David my servant may always have a lamp before me in Jerusalem, the City Where I Chose To Put My Name.

Jerusalem literally sits on the name of God. His Name; His Land



We are examining 10 gates of Jerusalem during Nehemiah's time.

Each gate is in a specific position. Each one ready for us to pass through.

Each gate shows the Lord Jesus in His humility and in His glory.

- The first 3 gates, Sheep, Fish & Old, are the priority gates which must be in place before the others can be restored.

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

Ps. 46:1-3 God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore, will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. Selah.

Ps. 46:10-11 Be still and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth. ¹¹ The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah.

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.

Proverbs 24:10 If you faint in the day of adversity, your strength is small.

Problem: Using my strength instead of His strength which is available to me!

Reasons we are anxious & panic: We don't have a solid belief in God's Word & promises.

We do not understand God's ways. My response is based on emotion rather than truth.

- It is time to walk by faith. Act like the Word of God is true.

Gates 4 & 5, Valley & Dung, are to test our character and purify us to outwork God's purpose for our lives.

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

Truth: There is abundant growth in the valleys, but not much growth on mountain tops.

Valley experiences are used by the Lord:

- For my personal growth = Spiritual Maturity
- Clear away the rubbish; my faith refined by the fire
- Produce fruit in my life

Summary Points of the Valley Gate:

1. The Refiner's fire will test my "mettle" through tribulations, trials & fiery trials.
2. Develop in me the humility of Jesus Christ. Be equipped with proper attitude

3. Self, the flesh, my sin nature: PRIDE must be slain. I must decrease; He must increase.
4. Promote spiritual growth and maturity as I am conformed to the image of Jesus Christ.
6. I am in "boot camp" as He prepares me to rule and reign in His literal, 1000 year Millennial Kingdom. Remember: Suffering comes before Glory. Servant comes before rulership.
7. Instructions for successful passage in the valley: Delight in the Lord; Depend on His strength alone; Set my heart on the journey with the attitude of being a "pilgrim"; Dig a well in the valley; Drink from the well. Praise while I dig and dig while I praise.

Call of the Dung Gate: Time to Take the Garbage Out

The Dung Gate was situated here at the southeast corner of the wall. There is quite a distance to this gate from the Valley Gate indicating that, unfortunately, the valley experience can carry on for some time. The Dung Gate led out to the convergence of the Valley of Hinnom [all the garbage, rubbish and dung (filth) of the city was deposited and burned; children offered alive to Molech], and the Kidron Valley [idols were ground to powder and burned in the OT; burial place of the more distinguished persons].

A. Important for Well-Being of Ancient Cities

The earliest recorded sanitary laws concerning disposal of human waste is attributed to Moses in the Old Testament. Around 1500 B.C, he instructed the people to dispose of their waste away from the camp, and to use a spade to turn the remains under the earth or sand.

➤ Think: 2 million people: no toilets and no sewer system.

Consider how life was different 2500 years ago. In ancient Rome, if you threw excrement out of your house and it landed on someone, you had to pay a fine, but only during daylight hours. At night it wasn't considered a crime if you hit someone due to no lighting.

Imagine a city of a couple hundred thousand with no sanitary system? Jerusalem in Jesus' day. People collected their waste, carried it via the Dung Gate, and threw it outside the city in a designated place, the Valley of Hinnom. Corpses of the indigent, foreigner, leper, and beggar would have been thrown outside the city in this Valley.

On high holy days upwards of 15,000 sheep would be slaughtered.

The city would have 125,000 extra people. The amount of waste generated was astronomical.

Imagine the view outside the Dung Gate:

a perpetual fire burning with rotting bodies riddled with worms and flies.

The Dung Gate was important for health, safety, and prevention of disease.

People were employed in the removal of biological waste and dead organisms.

B. Important for Health of Physical Body

God in His wisdom provided numerous ways to rid our body of the daily toxins that bombard us. Killer T-cells to attack foreign invaders, a liver for toxins in our food, kidneys for toxins in our blood, tear ducts to wash dirt from our eyes, a bladder and colon to remove waste products, lungs to rid us of carbon dioxide.

➤ If we don't eliminate this waste, body does not function properly; choke out life

C. Purpose of A Spiritual Dung Gate

Warren Wiersbe "The sanitary disposal of waste materials is essential to the health of a city. This gate did not have a beautiful name, but it did perform an important service!

It reminds us that, like the city, each of us must get rid of whatever defiles us, or it may destroy us." Choke out my spiritual life and growth. My soul is clogged with unconfessed sin. Garbage in our lives will drain our strength and energy.

➤ The Dung Gate is the port for cleansing from defilement.

Neh. 2:12-15 And I arose in the night, I and some few men with me; neither told I any man what my God had put in my heart to do at Jerusalem: neither was there any beast with me, save the beast that I rode upon. ¹³ And I went out by night by the gate of the valley, even before the dragon well, and to the dung port, and viewed the walls of Jerusalem, which were broken down, and the gates thereof were consumed with fire.

¹⁴ Then I went on to the gate of the fountain, and to the king's pool: but there was no place for the beast that was under me to pass. Then went I up in the night by the brook, and viewed the wall, and turned back, and entered by the gate of the valley, and so returned.

Note: We are descending to the lowest part of the city and gates.

Nehemiah 4:10 And Judah said, The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed, and there is much rubbish; so that we are not able to build the wall.

Question: Can we search the Bible and define "spiritual rubbish?"

The NT doesn't make any reference to "rubbish", but it makes many references to "old."

I Cor. 5:7a Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened.

I Cor. 5:8 Old Yeast is: ". . . The yeast of MALICE and WICKEDNESS . . ."

II Cor. 5:17 Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. **OLD HAS GONE, NEW has come!"**

Rom. 6:6-7 Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin.

Consider: As I yield to the call of the Dung Gate for sanctification and cleansing of my vessel, I am free from the **POWER OF SIN** in my life.

Col. 3:9-10 Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him:

Gal. 5:17-21 The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like.

Mark 7:20-23 What comes out of a man makes him unclean [defiles]. For from within, out of men's hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly.

All these evils come from inside and make a man unclean.

Consider: Evil thoughts is put first by the Lord, for from these spring the actions and attitudes that follow. Evil actions are more objectionable in the eyes of men; for they can be seen, reported in the news and they may become the subject of gossip.

God sees the heart. Sins of the spirit, sins of attitude, may be less obvious, but are more subtle; for they are easier to hide from the eyes of others.

➤ Jesus emphasized this when He spoke of murder and adultery 'in the heart.'

We all have our arrogance, our pride, our evil thoughts. None of us finds it easy to acknowledge before the Lord our guilt, and especially to use the word 'filth' with respect to our own folly. Yet Isaiah does not tell us that all our *sins* are like filthy rags.

No, he tells us that all our righteousness is as filthy rags. Everything we touch is tainted.

Isaiah 53:6 "The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all."

The Bible uses words such as iniquity, transgression, and trespass to indicate levels of disobedience to God.

Micah 2:1 Woe to those who plan iniquity, to those who plot evil on their beds! At morning's light they carry it out because it is in their power to do it.

Iniquity is premeditated, continuing, and escalating. When we flirt with sin, we fall for the lie that we can control it. When we give ourselves over to a sinful lifestyle, we are committing iniquity. Sin has become our god rather than the Lord. [Romans 6:14].

If we continue to choose sin, our hearts harden toward God.

One sin leads to another, and iniquity begins to define our lives.

II Sam. 11:3-4 David's initial sin of lust as he looked at Bathsheba resulted in a hardening of his heart, and his sin deepened. He committed adultery, then had Bathsheba's husband killed.

Iniquity had taken over David's life. It was only when confronted by the prophet Nathan that he repented with great sorrow. His heartfelt cry for forgiveness is detailed in Psalm 51.

Ps. 51:2 Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.

David is a picture of someone who clearly understood the progression of iniquity and who experienced the mercy and forgiveness of God [Psalm 103:1-5].

How awe-ful [full of awe; reverential fear and wonder], then are the words in...

Isaiah 53:6 "The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all."

Note: The psalmists distinguish between sin and iniquity when they ask God to forgive both.

Psalm 32:5; 38:18; 51:2; 85:2

II Cor. 5:21 For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. *Incomprehensible. Unfathomable.*

I Pet. 2:22, 24a He committed no sin, and no deceit was in His mouth... Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness:

Message Of the Dung Gate: Necessity of Sanctification & Holiness - Submit & Allow It

I Thess. 4:3 For this is the will of God, your sanctification

Rom. 8:29 It is the purpose to which He has called you - Be conformed to His image.

Sanctification Involves Obedience; Humility; Surrender - Transformation of Your Soul

A. Death of Our Flesh - Sin, which smells bad and destroys our heart and mind, must be put away, by the dying of the flesh. Mortify the Deeds of the Flesh

John Owen: Be killing sin or it will be killing you.

B. Walk in the Spirit.

C. Purify yourself; Be holy even as I am holy.

D. Be clothed with the humility of Christ

E. Be an empty vessel for His use.

Response: Wait! I am overwhelmed by these commands. I can't possibly obey and perform these commands. I can't sanctify or purify myself. I can't transform myself.

The Cry Of the Dung Gate - Its ascending smoke and perpetual fire remind you of your necessity to use this gate frequently.

Bring me all the rubbish and garbage of your life; the stench and filth; the pride.

Bring me your sin of self-reliance; external religion

Bring me all your unconfessed sin.

Bring me your negative emotions.

Bring me your instances of grieving the Holy Spirit. (Eph. 4:25-32)

Rubbish and accumulated debris needed to be carried out and burned so that the work could be accomplished and completed.

The Valley experiences have revealed weaknesses in my life such as pride and sin in my life.

Circumstances will build me, strengthen me and prepare me for God's plan for my life.

As His child, I must in obedience contend with the rubbish and refuse of my life.

"Get rid of the garbage and the power will come." Fruit of Spirit will be produced in me.

Good News: God's Holy Spirit, dwelling in believers, will "do the work" of sanctification [growing in holiness] in those who are willing to humble themselves to Him.

➤ The Holy Spirit is to be in me what I can NEVER be by myself.

My Part: Heb. 12:1 Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,

Use of The Dung Gate forces me to cast aside the weights and sin that so easily trip me up in my service to the Lord, my spiritual growth and from being molded into His image.

My Part: Humble myself; Applying this gate to my life and diligently using it will bring victory. Continual, proper use will allow the power of the Holy Spirit to burn away every sin so I can experience the "fullness of Jesus" in my walk with the Lord.

Isa. 64:8 But now, O LORD, thou art our father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand.

Nehemiah knew what needed to be done. The only question: Did Jerusalem's people have the will to make it happen? Rebuilding the wall would require the efforts of every man inside and outside the city. They would serve for months *without pay*.

Manual labor promised no glory or status. So perhaps it's no surprise that many resisted:

Neh. 3:5 *And next to them the Tekoites repaired;*

But the nobles [of Tekoa] would not put their necks to the work of their LORD.

"I would never demean myself with manual labor. My skills are elsewhere. No time."

Our pride keeps us from serving those we see as below us.

Our egotistical selfishness expects to be served, not to serve others.

Imagine: Nehemiah sitting down with the builders, assigning people to different sections.

He finally gets to the dung gate. Everyone averts their eyes.

In a world without plumbing, everyone was responsible for collecting their own human refuse and carrying it to a location outside of the city to be burned. To keep the whole place from stinking to high heaven, they lugged their sloshing fecal matter through one gate: the dung gate.

➤ Whoever re-built this gate would spend his time seeing and smelling a lot.

Neh. 3:14 Malchiah the son of Rechab, leader of the district of Beth Haccerem, repaired the Refuse Gate; he built it and hung its doors with its bolts and bars.

➤ Ruler of an entire district of Jerusalem, hung up his robes to rebuild the dung gate.

➤ He laid down his self-interest and took the lowest job.

➤ Humble work, undertaken willingly by a prominent man of authority.

Can you see his re-election campaign? Just a very simple but effective message.

➤ "Hello, my name is Malchiah. I repaired the Dung Gate."

You let someone else have the spotlight and took on the less prestigious role to serve your people?

People will run to follow a leader like this. He repaired the Dung Gate! He didn't complain.

All he cared about was completing a major project for his people and his Lord.

Why did he do it? Did he understand that God was telling a story in Jerusalem?

God was rebuilding the city to use it as the future outpost of his kingdom from which the gospel would spread.

Did he somehow grasp that the kingdom story is, at its most basic level, a story of self-sacrifice? The kingdom comes not by swords and power, but by self-sacrifice and love.

Consider: By laying down his self-interest, Malchiah foreshadowed Israel's true king, laying down the pleasure of heaven to become a human and die for His rebellious creation.

Jesus Christ is our Porter at the Dung Gate.

What Jesus has done for us goes way beyond words. What condescension! What selflessness!

That He should leave His throne on high,

And come for sinful man to die:

You count it strange? So once did I -

Before I knew my Savior.

Will You Obey The Cry Of The Dung Gate?