

Messages From the Gates of Jerusalem
#35 - Conclusion: Don't Let Your Walls & Gates Crumble

The Gospel of the Gates of Jerusalem

Each gate, whose order and position is very specific (not a coincidence), speaks of a different experience and spiritual truth that must be applied in our Christian life.

- a. Named 1000 years before the Lamb came
- b. Give the perfect portrait of true salvation in Christ (author and finisher of our eternal salvation), from His sacrifice to the gathering together of His people in heaven.

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

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 Miphkad Gates.

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

Consider: The completion of the wall and gates marked a tremendous victory.

Warning: This is a moment of supreme peril. Surrounding God's people are enemies eager to attack them in spite of the wall. They will be in perpetual danger.

I Peter 5:8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

Joshua discovered this principle early after crossing the Jordan River.

A tragic and humiliating defeat at Ai followed the tremendous triumph at Jericho.

Why? They underestimated the power of the enemy.

Consider: They imagined the victory at Jericho had imparted to them an inherent strength for future battles.

Truth: There is no experience in our Christian life which imparts to us strength for the future. Nehemiah and Ezra were fully aware of this principle. Chapters 7 & 8 detail the careful provision regarding the opening and closing of the city gate.

Rules were set up for those who would be on duty as watchers on the wall.

They were determined to be on their guard against possible attack.

Spiritual App: Every alert "soldier" will always be prepared for the possibility of a counterattack from the devil. Guiding Principle > Watch & Pray

Therefore, Nehemiah and Ezra held a revival (glorious outpouring of God's Spirit) at the Water Gate:

1. To put the Word of God FIRST in the lives of the people.
 2. To instruct the people in an intelligent understanding of the Word of God
- Truth: God's Word must be understood before it can enter the heart and release its life-changing power.
3. To bring spiritual understanding of the secret of their strength for the future

Result: The Spirit of God used the Word of God to cleanse and revive the hearts of God's people. People were made conscious of their own failure and sin > they wept. This day of great victory was also a day of deep conviction resulting in sadness of heart as they discovered how serious had been their failure in the light of God's Word.

Consider: This should happen in my life with every progressive step of spiritual maturity. As the Holy Spirit works in me through the living Word of God, I should realize an increasing revelation of my own corruption. God never allows us to get away with the idea that we are becoming progressively good and holy. He seeks to remind us that He will not give His glory to another, that the battle is His and the victory is His.

Rom. 7:18 For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; The conviction of the Holy Spirit should bring us to the end of our own strength so we might discover infinite resources in Christ our Lord.

Nehemiah 9 recounts the days which followed the rebuilding of the wall and gates were like heaven on earth as the people experienced a great revival. Humility and repentance are two key components of revival.

Neh. 9:1-2 Now on the twenty-fourth day of this month the children of Israel were assembled with fasting, in sackcloth, and with dust on their heads. ² Then those of Israelite lineage separated themselves from all foreigners; and they stood and confessed their sins and the iniquities of their fathers.

Sequence: 1. Wall & gates had been rebuilt.
2. Law of God had been expounded. His understood Word brought conviction and cleansing.
3. Feast of Tabernacles (harvest celebration) had been observed again for the 1st time since Joshua's day. Neh. 8:17 says there was very great gladness.

Note: After a few days' interval, feasting gave place to fasting; joy became humiliation.
Truth: Confession of sin and repentance are NOT to be left in the background of a maturing believer. It is the humble and contrite heart which God does not despise.
Warning: If you avoid a daily humbleness before God, you will soon become hard-hearted, cold and indifferent to spiritual things.

Truth: God will only plant the seed of His life where the conviction of His Spirit has brought brokenness. My "soil" must be watered with tears of repentance as well as tears of joy.

Consider: How often the discovery of something new about our Lord Jesus brings with it the discovery of some new corruption in our own heart.

I Cor. 15:9 I am the LEAST of the Apostles > 18 years after conversion

Eph. 3:8 Less than the least of all the Saints > 24 years after conversion

I Tim. 1:15 Christ Jesus came to save sinners, of whom I am CHIEF > 29 yrs after conversion

At the conclusion of the revival, they made a covenant with the LORD to obey His Word.

Items listed in the covenant included: (Neh. 10:28-39)

1. We will separate from the peoples around us and to the Lord and His Word.
2. They united with their brothers and sisters in promising to obey the law of God.
3. We would not give our daughters as wives to the peoples of the land, nor take their daughters for our sons;
4. If the peoples of the land brought wares or any grain to sell on the Sabbath day, we would not buy it from them on the Sabbath, or on a holy day.
5. We would forego the seventh year's *produce* and the exacting of every debt.
6. We will support the house of God by paying the temple tax, supply wood for offerings, offering the firstfruits of harvest and the tithes.
7. We will not neglect the house of our God.

Chapter 10 lists the names of 84 men who set their seals to the dedication covenant.

Chapter 11 reveals Nehemiah's strategy once the walls and gates were restored.

He knew Jerusalem could not be strong unless the people were willing to sacrifice so he called on the people to present 3 sacrifices to the Lord for the sake of His dwelling place.

1. Give Yourself to God

It was important the Jews inhabit their capital city and make the population grow. People were needed to protect the city; they never knew when the enemy might decide to attack.

Note: It may have been safer to live in the small outlying villages that were no threat to the Gentile society, but somebody had to take the risk and move into Jerusalem.

A. If they really loved God & His Holy City, they would want to live there - even if only as a witness to the skeptical Gentiles around them.

B. Why rebuild the city if you don't plan to live there?

C. God had a special job for them. To abandon the restored city was to obstruct the working out of God's will through Israel and in them.

Rom. 12:1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.

Consider: Some of the Jews volunteered willingly while others had to be "drafted."

Neh. 11:1-2 Now the leaders of the people dwelt at Jerusalem; the rest of the people cast lots to bring one out of ten to dwell in Jerusalem, the holy city,

and nine-tenths *were to dwell in other cities.* ² And the people blessed all the men who willingly offered themselves to dwell at Jerusalem.

At this time there were few residents in the city and the housing situation was bad.

Neh. 7:4 Now the city *was* large and spacious, but the people in it *were* few, and the houses *were* not rebuilt.

So it isn't surprising many of the Jews were unwilling to move.

2. Give Your Praise to God

Nehemiah & Ezra had assigned workers and watchers on the wall; now they assigned people to be worshippers on the wall.

Chapters 8-10 relate the dedication of the people. Nehemiah instructed them it was now time to dedicate the work they had done. This is the correct sequence:

What good are dedicated walls and gates without dedicated people?

Chapter 12 relates the dedication service of the wall and gates. Nehemiah's emphasis is on joyful praise with singing, thanksgiving and rejoicing. Two groups of people started from the area of the Valley Gate. They marched in opposite directions and met at the Temple where the dedication service climaxed with sacrifices to the Lord. Nehemiah tells us they offered their praise thankfully, joyfully and loudly. The people gave themselves, their praise and their offerings to God. So great was the peoples' praise, "the joy of Jerusalem was heard even afar off." (Neh. 12:43)

3. Give Your Gifts to God

Chapter 10 tells us the people covenanted with God to support the temple ministry. They were to bring tithes and offerings which would be stored in the temple for the support of the temple workers.

Neh. 12:44 for Judah rejoiced over the priests and Levites who ministered.

The ministers at the temple were exemplary in their personal purity and in their obedience to God's Word. (12:30, 45)

Note: When believers have a godly ministry that exalts the Lord and obeys the Word, they are only too glad to bring tithes and offerings to support it.

Result of the joyful dedication: Plentiful supply of produce to sustain the work.

Hudson Taylor: "When God's work is done in God's way for God's glory, it will not lack God's support."

Consider: Before we bring our material gifts to the Lord, we must first give ourselves to Him.

Chapter 12 ends on a high note. Work was complete and God had been glorified.

Gen. William Booth to a new group of young officers: "I want you young men always to bear in mind it is the nature of a fire to go out. You must keep it stirred, fed and the ashes removed."

After serving as governor for 12 years (Neh. 5:14), Nehemiah left Jerusalem for about year to report to the king in Persia (Neh. 13:6). Upon his return, Nehemiah discovered the fires of devotion had gone out in Jerusalem. He discovered the situation had deteriorated dramatically; the people were defiled by compromise. The people were not living up to the vows they had made. Nehemiah immediately began to act decisively to change the situation.

Consider: Without my submission to the Holy Spirit and His working in me, where would I be? I must be submitted and under the leadership of the Holy Spirit so He can work in me.

It is quite tragic the experience of blessing was short-lived. The sins which had ruined their lives before their captivity had attacked again and overcame them.

I. Failure In Their Separation Promise = Failure in Sanctification

They had willingly separated themselves from the people of the land and united with Jewish people to obey the law and walk in the way of the Lord. (Neh. 10)

A. Mixed Multitude - Neh. 13:1-3 > Principles of Separation

On that day they read from the Book of Moses in the hearing of the people, and in it was found written that no Ammonite or Moabite should ever come into the assembly of God,² because they had not met the children of Israel with bread and water, but hired Balaam against them to curse them. However, our God turned the curse into a blessing.³ So it was, when they had heard the Law, they separated all the mixed multitude from Israel.

Ammonites and Moabites were now in their congregation > contrary to the law of Moses.

1. Ammon and Moab were born from the incestuous union of Lot and 2 of his daughters.

Their descendants were avowed enemies of the Jews.

2. It was also the "mixed multitude" that gave Moses so much trouble. (Desire the fellowship of God's people, but do not want to submit to God's will; blessing without obligation)

3. Balaam was a hireling prophet who tried to curse Israel, but each time saw the curse turned into a blessing. (Num. 22-24) He ultimately devised a scheme to defeat Israel.

He encouraged the Moabites to be neighborly and invite the Jews to share in their religious feasts which involved idolatry and immorality. He knew human nature would respond to the opportunity for sin and the Jews would disobey God.

As a result of their sin, Israel was disciplined by God, and 24,000 people died.

Consider: The "mixed multitude" in the church urges us to follow the philosophy of Balaam and cater to what the world (culture) wants.

Truth: We must not imitate the world in order to try to witness to the world.

Oswald Chambers: "Today the world has taken so many things out of the church, and the church has taken so many things out of the world, it is difficult to know where you are."

Vance Havner: "Today the world has so infiltrated the church, we are more beset by traitors within than by foes without. Satan is not fighting churches - he is joining them."

B. Enemy Intruder - Neh. 13:4-9 Tobiah the Ammonite (bitter enemy), who had been a ruthless enemy opposed to the building of the wall, was now comfortably HOUSED in the court of God's house (Neh. 13:28). He was given a room by Eliashib, the high priest, who was listed first in the list of workers (3:1). He became a traitor! Why?

A relative married the daughter of Sanballat (13:28) who was a close friend of Tobiah. They were part of the secret faction in Jerusalem that was fraternizing with the enemy (Neh. 6:17-19).

Note: Tobiah was using a room dedicated to God for the storing of the offerings used by the Levites. He defiled the Temple and robbed God's servants.

Nehemiah immediately threw out Tobiah and his furniture into the street.

Then he rededicated the room to the Lord for its intended purpose.

C. Marriages with Heathen = Failure in Sanctification

1. In Neh. 10:30, they had promised "to not give their daughters as wives to the peoples of the land, nor take their daughters for our sons." They did not keep the covenant.

Nehemiah saw women from Ashdod, Ammon and Moab married to Jewish men; the children were speaking a foreign language!

Question: Do I speak easily concerning the Lord and spiritual matters or do I talk more about non-spiritual matters?

2. Nehemiah's reaction: Neh. 13:25 So I contended with them and cursed them, struck some of them and pulled out their hair, and made them swear by God, *saying*, "You shall not give your daughters as wives to their sons, nor take their daughters for your sons or yourselves.

II. Failure in Their Support Promise

Neh. 10:32-29 They promised to pay the temple tax, provide wood for the altar, and bring the required tithes and offerings to the priests and Levites.

Neh. 10:39 we will not neglect the house of our God.

Neh. 13:10 I also learned that the portions assigned to the Levites had not been given to them, and that all the Levites and musicians responsible for the service had gone back to their own fields.

Result of Failure:

1. Priests and Levites were without support so they were deserting their work to survive.

a. They ignored the warning of Moses in Deut. 12:19: Take heed to yourself that you do not forsake the Levite as long as you live in your land.

b. Deut. 14:27 You shall not forsake the Levite who *is* within your gates, for he has no part nor inheritance with you.

III. Failure to Observe the Sabbath = Failure In Service

Neh. 13:15-18 In those days I saw people in Judah treading winepresses on the Sabbath and bringing in grain and loading it on donkeys, together with wine, grapes, figs and all other kinds of loads. And they were bringing all this into Jerusalem on the Sabbath.

Therefore I warned them against selling food on that day.

¹⁶ People from Tyre who lived in Jerusalem were bringing in fish and all kinds of merchandise and selling them in Jerusalem on the Sabbath to the people of Judah.

¹⁷ I rebuked the nobles of Judah and said to them, 'What is this wicked thing you are doing - desecrating the Sabbath day? ¹⁸ Didn't your ancestors do the same things, so that our God brought all this calamity on us and on this city? Now you are stirring up more wrath against Israel by desecrating the Sabbath.'

Nehemiah's Actions:

Neh. 13:19-22 When evening shadows fell on the gates of Jerusalem before the Sabbath, I ordered the doors to be shut and not opened until the Sabbath was over. I stationed some of my own men at the gates so that no load could be brought in on the Sabbath day. ²⁰ Once or twice the merchants and sellers of all kinds of goods spent the night outside Jerusalem.

²¹ But I warned them and said, 'Why do you spend the night by the wall? If you do this again, I will arrest you.' From that time on they no longer came on the Sabbath. ²² Then I commanded the Levites to purify themselves and go and guard the gates in order to keep the Sabbath day holy.

Once again, the enemy was deeply entrenched in Jerusalem!

Question: Do you think he was too severe?

Nehemiah 13:7 and I came to Jerusalem and discovered the evil that Eliashib had done for Tobiah, in preparing a room for him in the courts of the house of God. It grieved me bitterly. Nehemiah understood God's purposes depended upon a holy people. God must have them at any cost; the few who were clean, empty and yielded to the Holy Spirit.

Spiritual App: Does God see Failure in Separation, Sanctification or Service in my life?

What "Tobiah" has wormed his way into the center of my life and sits there comfortably enthroned where Jesus Christ should be?

Do I have little room for the Holy Spirit because I have allowed other things to crowd into my life?

Illus: Cottage meeting in Ireland

Consider: Are Tobiah and his furniture cluttering up my temple?

Things to consider: Books and magazines in my home; CD'S; DVD's, etc.

Would Jesus approve of everything in "His dwelling place" or would He point to wrong attitudes, wrong thoughts, books, magazines, wrong music and movies and say:

THROW THEM OUT!