

Finishing Well

Lesson #34

The Sheep Gate: Behold The Lamb of God

Sept. 15, 2021

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.

Ps. 46:4 The city is described as "the place where God dwells."

Isa. 62:6-7 I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night: ye that make mention of the LORD, keep not silence,

⁷ And give him no rest, till He establish, and till He make Jerusalem a praise in the earth.

Gates in Scripture were places of:

POWER - A gateway was possessed [Gen. 24:60] by one or two forces who would set up authority [Jer. 1:15] after they won the war [Judges 5:8, 11].

Enemies were burned at the gates

Joshua 8:29

Idols were cast down at the gates

Judges 18:16-17

When the gate was taken, it belonged to the King

II Sam. 19:8; II Sam. 18:4

Gates were guarded by the watchmen.

I Chron. 9:18; 26:13

PURITY

Jerusalem's gates were not to have any impure thing pass through them

II Kings 7:3

Purging at the gates

II Sam. 3:27-28

PROTECTION or PROSECUTION

Gates were Places of Judgment

Deut. 21:19; II Sam. 15:2; Ruth 4:1-2

Local justice carried out; places of refuge for innocent

Joshua 20:4

PURCHASE

Legal transactions took place at the gates.

Gen. 23:18; II Kings 7:1

Land could be obtained

Gen. 34:20-24

Market place was at the main gate

PROPHECY

Gates were a place of prophetic utterance

I Kings 22:10; I Sam. 9:18-19

Gates were a place of prophetic fulfillment

II Kings 9:30

PROCLAMATION

Place of proclaiming wisdom in teaching and counsel

Neh. 8:1

Place of intercession & prayer

Esther 4:1-3

PRAISE

Praise & celebration took place at the gates.

Neh. 3:16-17; Isa. 60:18

Dr. J. Vernon McGee: When the Lord Jesus Christ rode into Jerusalem to proclaim publicly His right and title to kingship, the multitudes shouted the hosannas. This so enraged the religious rulers that they attempted to silence the voices of praise and, failing, demanded that the Lord rebuke and silence them. But He, with biting satire, answered them saying,

"If these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out" [Luke 19:40]. With bitter irony He sent them back to the ABCs written in the walls of Jerusalem, for those very stones and walls were proclaiming the gospel message and the gates were fairly shouting, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts, he is the King of glory. [Ps. 24:9-10] Those stones had been giving a message for centuries, and they are still speaking today. A Broadcast Through the Ages John the Baptist had been silenced, the apostles would be silenced and scattered, and the Lord Jesus Christ had not actually lifted up His voice, but the stones in the walls of Jerusalem were singing the "Hallelujah Chorus." Theirs is a continuous song in the night - a psalm of praise and a golden voice singing a song of deliverance. It is a trumpet of jubilee to slaves of passion and pride; a harmonious chorus in the babel of this world's confusion. It is a foghorn across the ocean of life; a siren in the night of sin; an SOS from the sinking ship of civilization; it is a broadcast that never goes off the air. Nehemiah Meets the Task Nehemiah and his helpers have undertaken to repair and restore the walls of Jerusalem. It was a most arduous task, for in conquering the land, the Babylonians had leveled the walls and debris had settled over the area. The report of reconstruction in Nehemiah 3 is as dry as an engineer's report. But we become fascinated as we make this tour of the walls of Jerusalem with Nehemiah. We want to stop at the gates and listen to their music. There are ten of these gates, and they form an instrument of ten strings from which vibrates heaven's harmony. As we stand back to better examine the massive stones of the walls, they begin to speak. They have a message for us, for you and I are building walls - spiritual walls, with the same gates and having the same message. Today God has given us a subcontract that you and I might build these walls of Jerusalem in our own hearts and lives.

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.

Am I Serving God In Vain? Does It Pay To Serve The Lord?

God is a recorder of names. Nehemiah specifically names each person that made repairs.

Malachi 3:16-17 Then those who feared the LORD spoke to one another, and the LORD listened and heard them; So a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the LORD and who meditate on His name. "They shall be Mine," says the LORD of hosts, "In that day that I make them My jewels. I will spare them as a man spares his own son who serves him."

Judgment Seat Appointment: Our lives and actions are recorded by the Lord for our rewards in the life to come. Nothing is done for the Lord in vain on this earth, even if no one else sees it.

Heb. 6:10 For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love, which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister.

I Cor. 15:58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

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.

Note: The city of Jerusalem was roughly shaped like a footprint. If we successfully pass through each of the gates, then when our life is finished, we should have completed a journey that has left a "footprint for God" on the world.

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

Known as *Stephen's Gate*: It is believed Stephen was martyred by this gate.

Neh. 3:1a Then Eliashib the high priest rose up with his brethren the priests and they builded the Sheep Gate.

- Eliashib [high priest] means "God will restore" or "leads back."

Neh. 3:1b They sanctified it and set its doors in place, even unto the Tower of the Hundred, [Meah] which they sanctified, unto the Tower of Hananel.

➤ Picture of Jesus Christ, our High Priest who builds and consecrates the Sheep Gate, the foundation gate in our lives.

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.

Finding Jesus In The Sheep Gate

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

J.Vernon McGee Personally, I think the Lord Jesus came in at the Sheep Gate every time He entered the city except at the Triumphal Entry. We can't be dogmatic about it, but we do know that on one occasion He came in through the Sheep Gate to the Pool of Bethesda.

- Pool of Bethesda = house of grace or mercy: Jesus healed man at the pool. [John 5:1-9]

John 5:1-2 After this there was a feast of the Jews; and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

² Now there is at Jerusalem by the sheep market a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches.

Archaeologists discovered 2 pools: 55' & 65' The shorter pool had 5 arches over it with a porch beneath each arch. This fits the description in John 5:2.

- One pool was for cleaning sheep before the sacrifice.
- The shorter pool was used for healing when the angel stirred the water.

McGee: The healing of the palsied man was symbolic of the fact that He came as the Lamb of God to take away the sin of the world. The poor man whom He healed is a picture of every sinner who, if willing to come to the cross of Christ, will find deliverance from sin.

Outside the gate were the sheep markets where lambs were sold for sacrifice in the Temple. The sheep were washed in the Sheep Pool before being led through the Sheep Gate into the Temple compound and the brazen altar.

McGee: Once inside the city and within the temple courts, there was only one door where the sheep went in. No lamb ever came back out after entering the temple precincts. They traveled in only one direction, and there they were sacrificed for the sins of human beings.

God placed emphasis on activities being done outside the camp.

- Burning of the sacrificed sin offering was to take place outside the camp [Ex. 29:14].
- Ashes of burnt offerings were taken to a clean place outside the camp [Lev. 6:11].
- If someone had leprosy, he was to dwell outside the camp. [Lev. 13:45-46]
- If a person was stoned to death, it took place outside the camp. [Num. 15:35]
- Outside the camp = home of the unclean

Heb. 13:11-12 For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp. ¹² Wherefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate.

Christ not only came in through The Sheep gate, but also when He was arrested and was led outside the city to be crucified, they took Him out through the Sheep gate. [Matt. 27:33]

- This gate also led to Golgotha, the path Jesus took to the crucifixion.
- The entrance marks the beginning of the traditional last walk of Jesus from prison to crucifixion, the Via Dolorosa

Jesus died the death of a criminal, outside the city, so that we might all be qualified through His blood to have righteousness and eternal life and to be part of His coming kingdom.

Jesus was fully God and worthy of glory, but He allowed Himself to be stripped of his glory, became a man, and was humbled to the point of death as a criminal on a cross [Phil. 2:6-8].

That Jesus died outside the city or outside the camp just adds to the humiliation He was willing to undergo in His love for us. How can we not respond to such a One with trust, love, and thanksgiving? No greater love exists than the kind He showed for us (John 15:13).

McGee: The Sheep Gate was the place of judgment, and it tells us that He bore the judgment of our sin. It is at this gate that we must begin with God.

He is not prepared to meet us anywhere but at the cross.

Neh. 3:2 Next to Eliashib [high priest] the men of Jericho built. And next to them Zaccur the son of Imri built."

- Jericho = Fragrance; Walk by faith
- Zaccur = remembrance; bring to mind Imri = Utter, Exalt

Men of Jericho [city of the curse-Joshua 6:26] were building right next to the Sheep Gate. That is not by accident! Christ bore on the cross for you and me the awful curse of sin. Gal. 3:13: Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us; for it is written, Cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree.

- Freedom from the curse of sin awaits us at the foot of the cross

We may come to this first gate from the way of the curse of sin, into the way of blessing, the way of forgiveness, redemption, reconciliation. Anyone attempting to enter in any way but through trust in Christ's sacrifice, will fall flat on his back, still on the outside.

- This is the starting place for our journey through eternal Life.

Note: Sheep gate had no locks or bars, for the door of salvation is always open to the sinner. In the very temple area filled with sheep on their way to slaughter, you hear the message and cry of the gate: "Behold THE LAMB OF GOD who takes away the sin of the world."

2nd Prophetic Message: Cry of this gate: Jesus Is The Door

John 10:7 Verily, verily, I say unto you, I Am The Door of the sheep.

- Third "I am" statement. He points out the exclusive nature of salvation.
- He is the only door by which we may enter and be saved [John 10:9].
- Jesus is the only means we have of receiving eternal life [John 3:16].

Jesus said, "*I am the way, the truth and the life. No man comes to the Father but by Me.*"

John 10:8 Jesus makes it clear that any religious leader who offers salvation other than the teachings of Christ is a "thief" and a "robber."

The true shepherd comes in through the door of the sheepfold. Thieves and robbers could never enter through the door so they have to climb over the wall and enter the fold through deception. Even if they get in, they would never get the sheep to follow them, for the sheep follow only the voice of their own shepherd. The false shepherds can never lead the sheep so they must steal them away.

If we would enter the City of God, we must enter by means of none other than the Sheep Gate.

Recognize the Principle of the Cross:

Recall: No lamb ever came back out after entering the temple precincts.

- They were sacrificed on the brazen altar.

Col. 3:3 For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

I Cor. 6:19-20 What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore, glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

George Mueller: "There was a day when I died, utterly died, died to self, my opinions, preferences, tastes, and will; died to the world, its approval or censure; died to the approval or blame even of my brethren and friends; and since then I have studied only to show myself approved unto God."

Gal 2:20 *I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but **CHRIST LIVES IN ME**; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.*

Dietrich Bonhoeffer: When Christ calls a man, He bids him, come and die.

Finding Jesus In The Sheep Gate

3rd Prophetic Message: Cry of this gate: I Am The Good Shepherd 4th I AM

John 10:11 I Am the Good Shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.

Jesus makes it clear that it wasn't just for the Jews that he laid down His life, but also for the "other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd" (John 10:16).

The "other sheep" clearly refers to the Gentiles. As a result, Jesus is the Good Shepherd over all, both Jew and Gentile, who come to believe upon Him (John 3:16).

As followers of Christ, Jesus is both our Shepherd and the Door to the sheepfold who provides for all our needs. Knowing that the world is full of predators whose sole intent is to destroy us [I Peter 5:8], we are always under His protection.

I can easily imagine the Savior entering in those beautifully carved, sanctified doors, perhaps even with the lambs as they were being herded through. Jesus walking with them, the Good Shepherd who giveth His life for the sheep, cradling in His loving arms a lamb or two. Knowing that soon He would be the Ultimate Sacrifice ... The Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world!

Jesus Christ alone can save and restore men back to the image of God.

The Sheep Gate proclaims forgiveness of sin through the blood of the Lamb, Jesus Christ.

Do you see Him in the Garden of Gethsemane, dreading to go through the Sheep Gate, praying to His Father that if possible, He might avoid it?

Do you see Him, a crown of thorns pressed on His head, scourged, mocked, suffering?

Do you see Him led as a sheep to the slaughter, wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities, bearing our sins in His own body on the tree?

John Bunyan: '*The Pilgrim's Progress*', wrote:

Christian ran till he came to a place somewhat ascending, and upon that place stood a cross, and a little below, a sepulchre... He looked therefore, and looked again, even till the springs that were in his head sent the waters down his cheeks...

Then Christian gave three leaps for joy, and went on, singing:

Thus far did I come, laden with my sin;

Nor could ought ease the grief that I was in, Till I came hither: What a place is this?

Must here be the beginning of my bliss? Must here the burden fall from off my back,

Must here the strings that bound me to it crack?

Blest Cross! Blest Sepulchre! Blest rather be

The Man that there was put to shame for me!