

THE GATES OF THE NEW JERUSALEM

Message 1

Seeing Our Need for Both Walls and Gates as Revealed in the Sign of the New Jerusalem

Scripture Reading: Rev. 21:12-13, 18, 21, 25; 22:14; Psa. 87:2; Luke 15; Eph. 2:18

I. “[New Jerusalem] had a great and high wall and had twelve gates...”—Rev. 21:12:

- A. The wall of the New Jerusalem is for separation and protection—v. 12, note 1:
 - 1. New Jerusalem will be absolutely separated unto God and will fully protect the interests of God; its wall will be great and high.
 - 2. Today all believers need such a great and high wall for their separation and protection.
- B. The twelve gates are for communication, for coming in and going out—v. 12, note 2:
 - 1. The twelve gates of the city are pearls, which signify the Son’s overcoming death and life-imparting resurrection, through which entrance to the city is gained—v. 21, note 1.
 - 2. There are three gates on each of the four sides of the holy city; three multiplied by four is twelve:
 - a. Four refers to us as God’s creatures and three refers to the Triune God—Rev. 4:6; Ezek. 1:5-14; Matt. 28:19.
 - b. The number twelve in the New Jerusalem is not arrived at by an addition but by multiplication; multiplication is a blending or a mingling; the number twelve is mingled or blended by three times four.
 - c. This means that the entire New Jerusalem is a blending, a mingling, of the Triune God with us human beings—cf. Eph. 4:4-6.
 - 3. We enter into God through the triune entrance—the Son is the channel, the Spirit is the sphere, and the Father is the very destination—Eph. 2:18.

II. Revelation 21:13 reveals that in New Jerusalem there are three gates on the east, three on the north, three on the south, and three on the west; thus, the city lies square (v. 16), with three gates on each of its four sides:

- A. The gates on the four sides are toward the four directions of the earth, signifying the availability of the entrance of the holy city to all the peoples on earth—cf. Rev. 22:14.
- B. We can compare this with the four heads of the river in Genesis 2:10-14:
 - 1. The river flows out of Eden, meaning that it flows out of God.
 - 2. This one river was parted and became four heads; this means that the river flows out of God as the source and the center to reach men in every direction.
 - 3. In the Bible the number one is the number of God, the Creator, for He is unique; the number four signifies man, the creature.
 - 4. Because men live in each of the four directions, the one river flows out of God in every direction to reach them.

III. That there are three gates on each side signifies that the three of the Trinity—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit—work together to bring people into the holy city; this is indicated in the three parables in Luke 15:

- A. In answering the self-righteous Pharisees and scribes who condemned the Savior for eating with the sinners, He spoke three parables unveiling and depicting how the Divine Trinity works to bring sinners back through the Son by the Spirit to the Father.
- B. The Son as the shepherd came to die for us to bring us back to God—vv. 3-7:

1. The reason the Son is first is that in God's salvation the One who comes, practically speaking, is the Son; the Son comes to accomplish redemption, which is the first need, because redemption is the foundation of our salvation—Rom. 3:24; Eph. 1:7.
 2. The shepherd going into the wilderness to seek the lost sheep indicates that the Son has come to the world to be with men—John 1:14; 1 John 4:9-10.
- C. The Spirit as the seeking woman enlightens our heart to cause us to repent, to make a decision to come back to the Father—Luke 15:8-10; cf. John 16:7-10; 1 Pet. 1:2:
1. In the Gospels the Son came to accomplish redemption; after the accomplishment of redemption by the Son, we see from the book of Acts that the Spirit comes to seek us and find us—cf. Acts 8:29.
 2. The lamp signifies the word of God (Psa. 119:105, 130) used by the Spirit to enlighten and expose the sinner's position and condition so that he may repent.
 3. The Son's finding in Luke 15:4 is outside the sinner, completed at the cross through His redemptive death; the Spirit's seeking in verse 8 is inside, carried out by His working within the repenting sinner.
- D. Then the loving Father receives the returning prodigal son—Luke 15:17, 20-24:
1. Because of the Spirit's finding of us, we repent and come back to God the Father.
 2. Verse 17 tells us that "when he came to himself, the son said, How many of my father's hired servants have an abundance of bread, but I am perishing here with famine!" This is due to the enlightening and searching of the Spirit (v. 8) within him.
 3. Verse 20 says, "And he rose up and came to his own father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was moved with compassion; and he ran and fell on his neck and kissed him affectionately"—*Hymns*, #43, s. 3.
 4. The father's seeing the son did not happen by chance; rather, the father went out of the home to look for his prodigal's return; when the father saw his son, he ran to him and fell on his neck and kissed him affectionately; this indicates that God the Father runs to receive a returning sinner.
 5. The father's falling on his son's neck and kissing him affectionately shows a warm and loving reception.
- E. These three parables in Luke 15 show us the three steps taken by the Triune God to bring fallen man back to Himself; based upon the Son's redemption and through the Spirit's searching the Father was ready to receive us back into His house to enjoy Him and to enjoy His rich inheritance; this is our triune entrance.
- F. The entire Divine Trinity treasures the sinner and participates in bringing him back to God; all three parables emphasize the love of the Divine Trinity more than the fallen condition and repentance of the penitent sinner.

IV. We need to follow the steps of the processed Triune God in seeking and gaining the fallen people—Luke 15:

- A. Our shepherding should be according to God's love toward the fallen human race; the fallen human race is joined with Satan, but God has a heart of love toward these people:
1. The Son as the shepherd would leave the ninety-nine to seek the one lost sheep—v. 4.
 2. The woman seeking a lost coin, signifies the Spirit seeking a lost sinner—vv. 8-10.
 3. The father was expectantly watching and waiting for his son to return; when his father saw him, he ran to receive his returning son; this shows that God the Father runs to receive the returning sinners—v. 20.
- B. We need to shepherd people; this is the way to be fruitful, to have the multiplication and the increase.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

THE NEW JERUSALEM— ITS GATES

Let us now devote our attention to the gates of New Jerusalem. The significance of the gates is not less profound than that of the foundations. It is crucial to grasp the significance of these twelve gates.

Three on Each of the Four Sides

Revelation 21:13 reveals that in New Jerusalem there are three gates on the east, three on the north, three on the south, and three on the west. Thus, the city lies square (v. 16), with three gates on each of its four sides. The east side at the front, toward the glory of the sunrising, ranks first; the north side at the top ranks second; the south side at the bottom ranks third; and the west side at the rear ranks fourth. The gates on the four sides are toward the four directions of the earth, signifying the availability of the entrance of the holy city to all the peoples on earth. (Compare with the four heads of the river in Genesis 2:10-14.)

The Triune God Being Available to All People

The three gates on each side signify that the Triune God—Father, Son, and Spirit—work together to bring people into the holy city. This is indicated in the three parables in Luke 15 and implied in the Lord's word in Matthew 28:19. The three parables in Luke 15 concern the shepherd and the lost sheep, the woman and the lost coin, and the father and the returned prodigal son. The shepherd refers to the Son; the father, of course, to the Father; and the woman signifies the Spirit. In order for a sinner to be brought back to the Father's house, there is the need of the Son, the shepherd, to bring back the lost sheep; there is the need of the Spirit to enlighten the hearts of people that they may repent; and there is the need of the Father to receive the returned and repentant prodigal son. Hence, the Triune God is the entrance into the New Jerusalem.

The fact that the Triune God is working to bring people into the holy city is also implied in the Lord's word in Matthew 28:19. To be baptized into the Father, the Son, and the Spirit is the entrance into the holy city. Thus, the Father, Son, and Spirit are the three gates on each side of the city. The three gates are not on three sides respectively; rather, there are three gates on each of the four sides repeatedly. The gates on any one of the sides are exactly the same as the gates on the other three sides. This indicates that the Triune God is available to people in all four corners of the earth.

The three gates indicate that the Triune God has come to reach us and to bring us into His eternal economy. The three in the Godhead, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, have come out in God's economy to reach us and to bring us back to His economy. A number of verses in the New Testament speak of the Triune God. For example, in Ephesians 3:14 through 17 Paul said, "I bow my knees unto the Father... that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit into the inner man; that Christ may make His home in your hearts through faith." In these verses we see the Father, the Spirit, and Christ, the Son. Second Corinthians 13:14 also unfolds the Triune God: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all." In this verse the three of the Godhead are for His dispensing, for His going out and coming in, that is, for His spreading out and our entering in.

The first mention of man in the whole Bible speaks of him in relation to the Triune God. Genesis 1:26 says, "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." The "us"

in this verse refers to the Triune God. Thus, in the verse where man is first mentioned, God is alluded to as being triune. If God were not triune, He would not be able to dispense Himself into us, to work Himself into us, and to mingle Himself with us. But because God is triune, He can enter into human beings. The Father is the source, the Son is the course, and the Spirit is the flow. In this way, the Triune God comes into us.

The Mingling of the Triune God with His Creature, Man

Three gates on each of the four sides, constituting the number twelve, also imply the mingling of the Triune God with man, God's creature. The number four signifies the creature (4:6), and the number three, of course, signifies the Triune God. The number twelve does not denote addition but multiplication. Three times four indicates that the Triune God mingles Himself with His creature, man, to produce a composition, a compound.

Every Gate Being a Pearl

Verse 21 says, "And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; each one of the gates was, respectively, of one pearl." We have seen that gold signifies the divine nature and that the precious stones signify what is produced by the transforming work of the Spirit. The significance of the pearl is found in the way it is produced. Pearls are produced by oysters in the waters of death. When the oyster is wounded by a particle of sand, it secretes its life-juice around the sand and makes it a precious pearl. This depicts Christ as the living One coming into the death waters, being wounded by us, and secreting His life-juice over us to make us precious pearls for the building of God's eternal expression.

We must admire God's wisdom. Nearly everything in His creation is an illustration of an aspect of His economy. When the Lord Jesus was on earth, He used many of the things found in nature as parables. Light, wheat, food, and even pearl-producing oysters are parables. Christ, the living One, entered into our death situation and lived in it. Through living in the waters of death, He was wounded by us. After wounding Him, we remained near His wound. This means that we repented, believed in Him, and received Him. How deeply we appreciate the wounds He suffered in His crucifixion! As we stay near His wounds, He secretes the life-juice of His resurrection life, and this life-juice envelops us and eventually transforms us into pearls. By staying at Christ's wound, we receive His life and are regenerated. By remaining there after our regeneration, we are also transformed and become pearls.

That the twelve gates of the holy city are twelve pearls signifies that regeneration through the death-overcoming and life-secreting Christ is the entrance into the city. This entrance meets the requirement of the law as represented by Israel and as observed by the guarding angels (v. 12). Hence, the pearl is the entrance into the city. How did you enter into the New Jerusalem? Did you climb over the wall? This would be impossible because the wall is too high. The only way to enter into the New Jerusalem is through the pearl gates, through the gates constituted with the overcoming death and the life-imparting resurrection of Christ. Praise the Lord, we have all entered the New Jerusalem in this way! We confessed, we repented, we appreciated His death, and we enjoyed staying at His wounds. Immediately, we received the life-secretion that regenerated us and that is now transforming us. Through our experience of the death and resurrection of Christ, we have passed through the pearl gates and are now within the city. Hallelujah! (*Life-study of Revelation*, msg. 63, pp. 720-724)

BECOMING THE PROPHETS OF GOD

In God's oracle we become the prophets of God speaking God, speaking for God, and speaking forth God (1 Cor. 14:1, 31).

FOR FRUIT-BEARING

Our speaking for God is for the fruit-bearing of God's multiplication and spreading (John 15:5). A tree multiplies and spreads by bearing fruit.

THROUGH CONTACTING PEOPLE BY SHEPHERDING THEM

We bear fruit through contacting people by shepherding them. We should be those who are always shepherding and teaching by speaking forth Christ to others....

According to God's Love

Our shepherding should be according to God's love toward the fallen human race. The fallen human race is joined with Satan to be his world in his system, but God has a heart of love toward these people.

Following the Steps of the Processed Triune God in Seeking and Gaining the Fallen People

My burden in this message is that we have to learn of the apostles, the elders, and even of the Triune God. We have to follow the steps of the processed Triune God in His seeking and gaining fallen people. Luke 15 records that the Pharisees and scribes criticized the Lord by saying, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them" (v. 2). Then the Lord told three wonderful parables, which unveil the saving love of the Triune God toward sinners.

The Son as the Shepherd Seeking the One Lost Sheep

The Son as the shepherd would leave the ninety-nine to seek the one lost sheep (Luke 15:3-7).

The Spirit as the Woman Seeking the Lost Coin

The second parable is that of a woman seeking a lost coin (vv. 8-10). This signifies the Spirit seeking a lost sinner. The Son's finding took place outside the sinner and was completed at the cross through His redemptive death. The Spirit's seeking is inward and is carried out by His working within the repenting sinner.

The Father as the Father of the Prodigal Son

Because of the Son's step of seeking the sinner by dying on the cross and the Spirit's step of sanctifying by searching and cleansing the sinner's inward parts, the sinner comes to his senses. This is shown by the prodigal son's coming to himself and desiring to return to his father (vv. 17-18). First Peter 1:2 reveals that before we received the sprinkling of Christ's blood, the Holy Spirit sanctified us. This is His seeking sanctification. The sinner is awakened by the Spirit's seeking to cause him to return to the Father. When the prodigal son returned, his father saw him while he was still a long way off. This indicates that the father was expectantly waiting and watching day by day for his son to return. When his father saw him, he ran to receive his returning son (Luke 15:20). This shows that God the Father runs to receive the returning sinners.

I hope that there will be a genuine revival among us by our receiving this burden of shepherding. If all the churches receive this teaching to participate in Christ's wonderful shepherding, there will be a big revival in the recovery. In the past we did much speaking and teaching with very little shepherding. Shepherding and teaching should be like two feet for our move with the Lord. Our shepherding should always be with teaching, and our teaching should always be with shepherding.

We have seen from our crystallization-study of the Gospel of John that its last chapter, John 21, reveals the apostolic ministry in cooperation with Christ's heavenly ministry. In His heavenly ministry Christ is shepherding people, and we need to cooperate with Him by shepherding people. Without shepherding, our work for the Lord cannot be effective. We must learn all the truths so that we may have something to speak and go to contact people to shepherd them.

Shepherding is something divine. In order to be a shepherd, we must be a witness of Christ, a member of Christ, and a brother of Christ, sharing His sonship. Then we will participate in the oracle of the sonship to become a prophet. As a prophet for God's oracle, we will speak for the Lord. Meanwhile, we need to shepherd people. This is the way to be fruitful, to have the multiplication and the increase. If this kind of fellowship is received by us, I believe there will be a big revival on the earth, not by a few spiritual giants but by the many members of Christ's Body being shepherds who follow the steps of the processed Triune God in seeking and gaining fallen people. (*The Vital Groups*, msg. 4, pp. 39-40)

References and Further Reading:

1. *God's New Testament Economy*, msg. 35
2. *Life-study of Revelation*, msg. 63
3. *Life-study of Luke*, msg. 34
4. *The Vital Groups*, msg. 4