

SEEING THE GATES FOR ENTRY INTO THE NEW JERUSALEM

Week 1 – Day 1

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

Eph. 2:18 For through Him we both have access in one Spirit unto the Father.

The wall is for separation and protection. New Jerusalem will be absolutely separated unto God and will fully protect the interests of God. Its wall will be great and high. Today all believers need such a great and high wall for their separation and protection. (Rev. 21:12, note 1)

In our fellowship concerning the gates of the New Jerusalem we will use the words entrance and entry. Entrance will be used to denote the gates and entry will be used to denote the entering in. We need to consider how we entered into the kingdom of God in our experience. When we heard the preaching of the gospel the Spirit worked within us. We then believed in Jesus Christ and were touched by the Spirit to call on the name of the Lord Jesus, the Son of God who became incarnated to be our Redeemer. Eventually we reached the Father and were brought into the Father. This is the triune entry.

No one can enter into God without the inspiration of the Spirit and without the redemption of the Son. In order to enter into the Father there is the need of the Spirit and the Son. We entered into the Father through the Son as a channel and in the Spirit as a sphere. In the ultimate consummation of the entire revelation of the sixty-six books of the Bible there is an allegory, a picture, showing us how to enter into God through three gates. 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. Now we are in the Father, in His kingdom, in His interest, and in the church. Eventually we will be in the New Jerusalem....

There are three gates on each of the four sides of the holy city. Three multiplied by four is twelve; therefore, there are a total of twelve gates on four sides. The number four refers to God's creation. In Revelation 4:6 we see that the four living creatures represent all other living creatures (cf. Ezek. 1:5-14). Four refers to us as God's creatures and three refers to the Triune God. 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. This means that the entire New Jerusalem is a blending, a mingling, of the Triune God with us human beings. God is mingled with His creature man in His eternal administration in the New Jerusalem.

Twelve is the number of absolute perfection and eternal completion in God's administration. In the Old Testament, God administrated His government through the twelve tribes. The twelve tribes were for God's administration. In the New Testament the twelve apostles' preaching was for the producing of the churches, and the churches are God's government for God's administration. Thus, both the twelve tribes in the Old Testament and the twelve apostles in the New Testament are for God's governmental administration. The number twelve indicates God's governmental administration and the entire New Jerusalem will be the consummation of God's administration. This is why the center of the New Jerusalem is God's throne, which is mainly for God's governmental administration.

This administration has twelve gates. The gates are for communication, coming in and going out. Hence, "twelve gates" indicate that the communication in the New Jerusalem is absolutely perfect and eternally complete for God's administration. (*God's New Testament Economy*, ch. 35, pp. 372-374)

Rev. 21:13 On the east three gates, and on the north three gates, and on the south three gates, and on the west three gates.

Rev. 5:9b ...You were slain and have purchased for God by Your blood men out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation.

Gen. 2:10 And a river went forth from Eden to water the garden, and from there it divided and became four branches.

The twelve gates as the entrance of the New Jerusalem are on four sides of the earth (Rev. 21:13), signifying that the entrance of the New Jerusalem is toward all the inhabited earth (Matt. 8:11). It is available to all the peoples on the earth (Rev. 5:9). (*God's New Testament Economy*, ch. 35, p. 372)

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.) (*Life-study of Revelation*, msg. 63, p. 721)

Although Genesis 2 appears to be a record of creation, it was actually written according to the experience of life. The tree of life and the flowing river indicate this: whenever we take Jesus into us as food, that food will impart divine life, a life that is a watering and flowing life. In Revelation 22:1-2 we see that the river of life with the tree of life growing in it proceeds out of the throne of God. This picture is a further proof that the tree of life and the river of life represent the genuine experience of life. Whenever we take God in Christ as our life, we will have this river flowing within us to water us and work many things within us.

This river was made to water the garden that the garden might grow things of life. Surely it also quenched man's thirst that he might survive. All this means that this river caused life to flow. In our physical life we must drink enough water to maintain the circulation of our blood. The flow of our physical life depends on water. Likewise, day by day we must take the water of life to maintain the flow of the divine life within us. This gives us the spiritual circulation of the divine life.

The river flows out of Eden, meaning that it flows out of God. In Revelation 22, the river of the water of life proceeds out of the throne of God. It is also a flow out of God Himself. God as the very life is the source of the living water, flowing into us for our enjoyment.

This river is one river. Do you have two rivers? Although the believers here may number a thousand, we still have one river because we all are of the same source—God the Creator. Since the source is one, the course also must be one.

This one river was parted and became four heads (Gen. 2:10-14). What does this mean? This means that the river flows out of God as the source and the center to reach men in every direction. In the Bible the number one is the number of God, the Creator, for He is unique. The number four signifies man, the creature. Because men live in each of the four directions, the one river flows out of God in every direction to reach them. (*Life-study of Genesis*, msg. 11, pp. 142-143)

Matt. 28:19 Go therefore and disciple all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Eph. 3:14-17 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.

2 Cor. 13:14 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

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.” 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. (*Life-study of Revelation*, msg. 63, pp. 721-722)

Luke 15:4 Which man of you, who has a hundred sheep and has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the one which is lost until he finds it?....8 Or what woman having ten silver coins, if she loses one silver coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and seek carefully until she finds it?

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. The Son came in His humanity as the Shepherd to find the sinner as a lost sheep and bring it back home (vv. 4-7). The Spirit seeks the sinner as a woman seeks carefully one lost coin until she finds it (vv. 8-10). And the Father receives the repenting and returned sinner as a certain man receives his prodigal son (vv. 11-32). 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. The divine love is fully expressed in the Son's tender care as the good Shepherd, in the Spirit's fine seeking as the treasure lover, and in the Father's warm receiving as a loving father....

It is important for us to understand why the Son is mentioned first in Luke 15. 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. The redemption accomplished by Christ's death on the cross is the base of God's salvation. Once this foundation has been laid, we can build upon it. In order to accomplish redemption, the Son, portrayed in Luke 15 as the good shepherd, comes first.

Now that the Son has accomplished redemption, the Spirit comes to find us. The book of Acts indicates this. 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. Because of the Spirit's finding of us, we repent and come back to God the Father. Then, according to the third parable in Luke 15, the Father is waiting for us to come back.

What a wonderful sequence we have in Luke 15! The sequence here is not according to Persons of the Trinity; the sequence is according to the steps of God's salvation, the salvation based on Christ's redemption. God's salvation is by the Son, through the Spirit, and unto the Father.

Luke 15:4 says, "What man of you, having a hundred sheep and having lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the one which is lost until he finds it?" Here the "wilderness" signifies the world. 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).

Luke 15:5 continues, "And having found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And coming into his house, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep, the one that was lost!" Here we see the Savior's saving strength and His saving love.

In 15:8 the Lord goes on to say, "Or what woman having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp, and sweep the house, and seek carefully until she finds it?"....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.

According to verse 8, the woman sweeps the house and seeks carefully until she finds the lost coin. The word "sweep" indicates the searching and cleansing of the inside of a sinner....The Spirit's seeking here is inside, carried out by His working within the repenting sinner. (*Life-study of Luke*, msg. 34, pp. 290, 291, 292)

Luke 15:20 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. 22 But the father said to his slaves, Bring out quickly the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet. 23 And bring the fattened calf; slaughter it, and let us eat and be merry.

In 15:11-32 we have the parable of a loving father.

Verse 20 says, “And [the prodigal] 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.” 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. What eagerness this shows! The father’s falling on his son’s neck and kissing him affectionately shows a warm and loving reception. The prodigal son’s return to the Father is due to the Spirit’s seeking (v. 8); the Father’s receiving of the returned son is based upon the Son’s finding in His redemption.

Verses 21 and 22 continue, “And the son said to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son. But the father said to his slaves, Quickly bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and sandals on his feet.” Verse 22 begins with “but.” What a word of love and grace! It counters the prodigal’s own thinking and stops his nonsensical talk.

The father told his slaves to quickly bring out the best robe and put it on his son. The word “quickly” matches the father’s running (v. 20). The definite article “the” used with “best robe” indicates that a particular robe had been prepared for this particular purpose at this particular time. Literally, the Greek word translated “best” means first. The best robe here signifies Christ the Son as the God-satisfying righteousness to cover the penitent sinner (Jer. 23:6; 1 Cor. 1:30; Phil. 3:9; see Isa. 61:10; Zech. 3:4). This best robe, which is the first robe, replaced the rags (Isa. 64:6) of the returned prodigal.

According to verse 22, the father also told the slaves to put a ring on his son’s hand and sandals on his feet. This ring signifies the sealing Spirit as the God-given seal upon the accepted believer (Eph. 1:13; see Gen. 24:47; 41:42). The sandals signify the power of God’s salvation to separate the believers from the dirty earth. Both ring and sandals were signs of a free man. The adornment of the robe on the body, of the ring on the hand, and of the sandals on the feet makes the poor prodigal match his rich father and qualifies him to enter the father’s house and feast with the father.

In verse 23 the father goes on to say to the slaves, “And bring the fattened calf; slaughter it, and let us eat and be merry.” The fattened calf signifies the rich Christ (Eph. 3:8) killed on the cross for the believers’ enjoyment.

God’s salvation is of two aspects: the outward objective aspect signified by the best robe, and the inward subjective aspect signified by the fattened calf. Christ as our righteousness is our outward salvation; Christ as our life for our enjoyment is our inward salvation. The best robe qualifies the prodigal son to match his father’s requirements and satisfy his father; the fattened calf satisfies his hunger. Hence, both the father and the son can be merry together.

In verse 24 the father explains, “Because this son of mine was dead and lives again, was lost and was found! And they began to be merry.” The word “dead” here is significant. All lost sinners are dead in the sight of God (Eph. 2:1, 5). When they get saved, they are made alive (John 5:24; Col. 2:13). (*Life-study of Luke*, msg. 34, pp. 292-295)

Luke 15:1-2 Now all the tax collectors and sinners were drawing near to Him to hear Him. And both the Pharisees and the scribes murmured among themselves, saying, This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.

Mt 11:19a The Son of Man came eating and drinking; and they say, Behold, a gluttonous man and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners...

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.

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....

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

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.

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....

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*, ch. 4, pp. 39-40)