

BECOMING GATES IN THE LORD'S RECOVERY TODAY

Week 2 – Day 1

Rev. 21:12 It had a great and high wall and had twelve gates....13 On the east three gates, and on the north three gates, and on the south three gates, and on the west three gates.

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.

Verses 12, 13, and 21 speak of the gates of the New Jerusalem. We thank the Lord that in the holy city there is not only a wall but also twelve gates. The wall is for separation and protection, and the gates are for communication and entrance. If there were no gates, how could people enter in? We need a wall with gates. A gate is a break, an opening, in a wall. On the one hand, we need to build up the wall, but on the other hand, we need breaking to create an entrance into the city. Sometimes we sense that a dear brother has a strong wall without any gates. No one can enter in through him. I have seen this kind of spiritual persons. The more spiritual they become, the more they are not able to bring people to the Lord. They cannot beget spiritual children because they have a wall with no entrance. We need a breaking in order to reach out to others so that they may enter in through us.

Many dear Christians have no wall at all; they are too open. But other spiritual ones have a wall with no openings. This is a problem. We need the wall, and we need twelve gates, three gates in each of the four directions. How many gates do we have? Can people be saved and enter into the church through us? Some local churches have a wall without gates, so there is no way for people to enter in. If anyone wants to be saved and come into the church, it seems that they have to climb over the spiritual persons, that they must be holy and spiritual before they can enter in. Do we want this kind of Christian life and church life? The wall in our Christian life and church life must have adequate entrances in four directions. Then no matter what direction people come from, there is an entrance for them to get in. We say that we are not sectarian or exclusive, but where are our entrances? Do we have twelve gates toward creation in four directions?

In each direction, no matter where people come from, there must be an entrance for them. The gates are toward the Far East in the east, Africa and South America in the south, and Europe to the west. There is even an entrance for the Russian Bolsheviks from the north. The entrances are toward all directions. The entrances are also toward all classes of people, whether they are doctors or gamblers. There are twelve gates in four directions for people to enter in....

In our Christian life and church life, we must have the separating wall of the holiness and appearance of God in His glory, but our separation must provide adequate entrances for people to contact us and enter in. We need the breaking to create openings in the wall, which are the Triune God as the three gates in four directions. In some places the saints have asked me for the way to bring people into the church. The way is to have more breaking to create the openings, not by human hands but by the Triune God. This breaking is accomplished by the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. Consider from Luke 15 how the Son came to sacrifice His life to bring us back to God, how the Spirit diligently enlightens the darkened heart, and how the Father loves the fallen sinners and awaits their return. If we are willing for the Triune God to break us to create the openings, many people will be brought into the church life through us because the entrances, the gates, will be open. (*A General Sketch of the New Testament in the Light of Christ and the Church - Part 4: Revelation*, ch. 44, pp. 473-474)

Week 2 – Day 2

Hos. 7:8 Ephraim — among the peoples / He mixes himself; / Ephraim is a cake / Not turned.

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.

We should not be too spiritual and boast that we are separated, holy, and not worldly. If we are this way, then we may want to see people saved, but they will not come; we may distribute tracts, but there will be no response. This indicates that we are still too whole. We should fall down, prostrate ourselves, and cry to the Lord, “I do not care about my spirituality. I would rather see people be saved and helped by the church.” If we do this, the gates will be open. When our spirituality is broken, there are the gates, the openings and entrances, for the weak and sinful ones to come through. Then there is no need for them to use their own effort to climb over the high wall. We need to build up the wall, but we must not build up a wall that is whole, without entrances.

It is too easy for us to go to extremes. On the one hand, we may have no wall at all, but on the other hand, we may build a wall without entrances. We may have no desire to reach others for the Lord. We may prefer to stay within the wall and exclude others. Therefore, we need to be balanced. Hosea 7:8 speaks of a “cake not turned,” a cake burned on one side and raw on the other. We need to be turned again and again. We must build the wall, but there must be the breaking and cutting to create gates in every direction. Some Christians need to build the wall higher, but those who have built the wall need breaking to create gates for people to enter through.

To build three gates on each of four sides will balance us and balance the church. In order to construct a building with three gates on four sides, it must be erected at the center of the lot. If it were built on a corner of the lot, it could not have gates on all four sides. For a building to have three gates on each of its four sides is the best way to position it in the center of the lot and keep it balanced in every aspect. We may be a very good church, but we may be a church “in the corner”; we may not have gates on all sides. This means that we are not balanced; we have slipped toward a corner and have gone to an extreme. A building with three gates on four sides, one that is easy for people to come into, must be adequately balanced and properly in the center.

The New Jerusalem as the building of God is the very center of the entire universe. In every aspect and from every side it is one hundred percent balanced. It is neither too much to one side nor too much to another. The local expression of the church in the city where we live must also be in the center, not geographically but spiritually. It must not go too far in any direction, leaving only one or two sides with entrances. The church must be very balanced in every aspect and appear the same from every side. It must not be in any extreme but in the very center of God's testimony, having four sides full of gates for people to enter in.

The messages in this book are not a mere study of the prophecies of Revelation. Rather, I have a strong burden to tell you that to have twelve gates will keep us balanced and make us the very center of God's universe. May the Lord be merciful to us that we may be delivered from any unbalanced position and kept in the very center, balanced in every way and aspect. May we learn these lessons and apply them to our daily life, our Christian life, and our church life. (*A General Sketch of the New Testament in the Light of Christ and the Church - Part 4: Revelation*, ch. 44, pp. 474-476)

Week 2 – Day 3

Gen. 17:5 Your name shall no longer be called Abram, / But your name shall be Abraham; / For I have made you the father of a multitude of nations. 6 And I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings will come forth from you.

Abram - Meaning exalted father. (Gen. 17:5, note 1)

Abraham - Meaning father of a multitude. In order to fulfill His eternal purpose, God needs not one exalted person but the father of a great multitude (cf. 1:28; 9:1). Hence, the changing of Abraham's name, signifying the changing of his person, was for the fulfillment of God's purpose. In spiritual experience, the real changing of a name is the change from "I" to Christ (Gal. 2:20) and from "I" to the grace of God (1 Cor. 15:10). Only Christ as God's grace, not "I," can bring forth the multitude needed to fulfill God's purpose... (Gen. 17:5, note 2)

Now we come to the changing of name. In 17:5 God said to Abraham, "Neither shall thy name anymore be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee." Abram means an exalted father, and Abraham means the father of a great multitude. Although Abraham was a high father, he was not the father of a multitude, the father of many nations. But in 17:5 his name was changed from exalted father to the father of a multitude. In Hebrew the name Abram is composed of just four letters represented by the English letters A-b-r-m. The name Abraham is composed with one additional letter—h. This indicates four plus one. Four is the number of the creature, and one is the number of the Creator. Hence, as four fingers plus one thumb makes a complete hand, so man plus God equals perfection. Four plus one equals five, the number of responsibility. Regardless of how good we may be as the number four, we are still short of the number one. In order to be the number five, bearing the responsibility to fulfill God's eternal purpose, God must be added to us. What was the significance of the changing of Abraham's name? It was that God was added into him. Before Genesis 17, Abraham was just Abram, a man who did not have God added to him. But in Genesis 17 the man, and not only his name, was changed by having God added into him. One unique letter was added to the four letters, and God was added into man. God is the perfecting factor. Without Him we are imperfect. We all need God to be added into us. This is perfection.

As the person is the reality of one's name, so the changing of Abraham's name signifies the changing of his person. His original name indicated that he was an exalted father. Now God changed his name to indicate that he would be the father of a great multitude. What is needed to fulfill God's eternal purpose is not an exalted father but a father of a great multitude, not an exalted individual but a multiplied person, a person with a great multitude as his multiplication. God needed a great multitude of people to fulfill His purpose, and for this He needed a producing father. Most Christians desire to be a person with exalted spirituality. The more they seek this kind of spirituality, the more they become barren and individualistic, producing no seed. But God needs us to be multiplied in producing seed, not exalted in seeking spirituality. For this we need the changing of name, the changing of our person. The exalted father has to be changed to the father of a great multitude. The exalted-spirituality-seeking person has to be changed to the multitude-producing person. This requires the termination of the spirituality-seeking self. Even this kind of self has to be terminated so that we may be a multiplied person, not an exalted one, for the fulfilling of God's purpose. (*Life-study of Genesis*, msg. 47, pp. 633-634)

2 Cor. 12:15a But I, I will most gladly spend and be utterly spent on behalf of your souls.

1 Cor. 9:22 To the weak I became weak that I might gain the weak. To all men I have become all things that I might by all means save some.

The apostle Paul said, “But I, I will most gladly spend and be utterly spent on behalf of your souls” (2 Cor. 12:15). This passage has the sense of sacrificing one's wealth and one's life. Spend refers to the spending of Paul's possessions, and be utterly spent is the spending of what he was, referring to his being. If we have a spirit to spend whatever we have and to be spent, to sacrifice whatever we are, we will have a great increase each year. At the present time, our rate of increase is very low. This is because we have not adequately spent what we have and what we are. We have reserved our spending and preserved our self. It is impossible to have a higher rate of increase under this condition. As we pointed out in the previous chapter, the Boxers in China had a slogan: “Kill all the Westerners and their followers, except Mr. Corbett.” This is because that missionary spent everything and was spent for the Chinese people. Whenever any poor ones came to him, he would give them something, such as dinner or lodging. He reserved nothing. Eventually, when he himself was short of something, the people knew it was because he had spent it on them.

Paul was this kind of person. He always spent and was spent. He meant business with the Lord. He was on earth for nothing else but to gain people. Therefore, he also said, “To the weak I became weak that I might gain the weak. To all men I have become all things that I might by all means save some” (1 Cor. 9:22). Some in the church life are too strong in their disposition to be touchable in this way; it seems that no one can cause them to be shaped. Paul, however; seemed to have no disposition of his own. He was simply like a piece of wood that could be cut into any shape. Because his disposition was fully dealt with by the Lord, it was soft, bendable, flexible, and applicable to any situation. In my training in Taiwan in 1954, I told the serving ones that they should have a character and a disposition like paste, that can be applied to any kind of surface. On the contrary, some of the brothers and sisters are like pieces of hard rock that cannot be applied to any situation. This kind of “rock” is good only for beating others. Some may even feel good about this and say that a hard piece of rock was useful to the Lord to kill the Philistine giant (1 Sam. 17:49), but it is pitiful to think in this way. On the one hand, we need to be strong, but on the other hand, we should not be hard. We need to be soft, flexible, and applicable, good for any situation we are placed in, able to fit into every bend and corner.

Our disposition is the cause for our not bearing fruit and using our talent to care for people. We are still too natural. Some persons are always slow, regardless of the situation they are in or the persons they are with. It is as if they would not even pour water on a house fire before they carefully checked what kind of water they should use. This kind of person will try to justify himself from the Bible, claiming that God is always patient and never does anything in a hurry. Brother Watchman Nee pointed out to us how the Lord once ran to do something. When the prodigal son returned home, the father ran to meet him (Luke 15:20). The Lord may be patient in every other matter, but He is quick to receive sinners. Some, though, are too quick. They bear fruit quickly, but then because they offend the fruit with their quickness, eventually they have no remaining fruit. I do not care to rebuke or expose anyone. We simply must go to the Lord and let Him shine on us. Then we will see how natural we are. By His mercy, we must have a change. (*The Normal Way of Fruit-bearing for the Building Up of the Church*, ch. 3, pp. 39-41)

Jn 15:1 I am the true vine, and My Father is the husbandman. 2 Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes it away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it that it may bear more fruit.

To make our preaching a work is poor. We are not carrying out a job in our preaching; we are living a life. Therefore, if anything hinders us in our fellowship with the Lord, we should say, “Lord, prune this. I give You the freedom to cut it.” This is what is meant by the Lord's word, “Every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it that it may bear more fruit.”....Therefore, we do not wish to encourage, charge, or stir up anyone to have a mere gospel preaching work. Instead, what we need in the Lord's recovery is for many dear saints who love the Lord and mean business with Him to constantly be one with Him. We should pray, “Lord, I am one with You in my shopping. Whatever You do not want to buy, I also do not want to buy it. If You want to buy something, I will buy it only because You are buying it.” We may also say, “Lord, I do not care for short hair, long hair, a beard, or no beard. I care only for You and for what You want. In my whole life, as one saved by You and under Your transformation, I like nothing and I dislike nothing. I have no love for anything else. My love is only for You. I want You to prune everything that is not Yourself.” If we always remain in this condition, we will be the pruned branches.

A pruned branch always has fresh, new, tender shoots that bring forth fruit. Those who keep vineyards know that the branches of the vines bring forth fruit only at the fresh shoots. We all need to have “fresh shoots.” If the sisters who love to have many pairs of shoes would say, “Lord, prune me in this matter,” and they allow the Lord to do it, they will have a new “shoot” full of freshness, newness, and tenderness, and a good cluster of grapes will be brought forth. There is no need to say that we must deal with sinful matters. In the Lord's recovery we all hate anything sinful. However, there are many other items which are not sinful that we still hold on to. These matters deaden us even though we still endeavor to preach the gospel and bring people to the Lord. The Lord will not honor this kind of endeavoring very much. This is why we all need to go to the Lord, not to will or to make up our mind but to have a thorough dealing. We must lay ourselves on the altar and say, “Lord, strip off my covering, cut me, and shine upon me. Expose me, and show me the true situation with my likes and dislikes.” Then if we go along with the Lord's exposing and enlightening, and we have a thorough dealing with Him, we will be fruitful.

We must all be tested by the church life, by fruit-bearing, and by lamb-feeding because these are the three matters that kill our natural disposition. The church life is a killing, not of the good things but mostly of our disposition. Likewise, fruit-bearing and lamb-feeding are a killing. All these are killing “knives” for our disposition. Passing through these three tests causes us to become right, because after passing through them we become persons who have dealt with our natural disposition. Then we will be flexible. To care for little children requires much flexibility. Any mother who is not flexible should not expect to have good children. Her children will all be damaged by her inflexibility. To bear fruit among our in-laws, cousins, and schoolmates requires us to be flexible. We should not speak of inconvenience or say that we do not have time. Whether we have time depends on our desire....

If we are not flexible, we cannot bear fruit. In order to bear fruit, we need to be flexible, available at any time, and never claiming to be too busy. We should always have time to talk to people....Being busy or available is a matter of our disposition. Therefore, we first need a thorough dealing with the Lord, and then we need to become available, flexible, and fully dealt with in our disposition. (*The Normal Way of Fruit-bearing...*, ch. 5, pp. 61-64)

Jn 4:32 But He said to them, I have food to eat that you do not know about. 34 Jesus said to them, My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to finish His work.

After we reconsecrate ourselves and deal thoroughly with the Lord, we can pick up a burden before Him. There is no need to pray particularly for a burden. Whatever burden we pick up will be the Lord's burden....For this purpose, the Lord needs even the teenagers. I hope that the older teenagers will pick up the burden to care for those in junior high school. According to my observation, we have many ten-year-old, eleven-year-old, and twelve-year-old sisters, but there are no teenage sisters taking care of them. Therefore, we need some young sisters to give themselves for this. After their reconsecration and dealing with the Lord, they should say, "Lord, I pick up this burden. I give myself to take care of the junior high girls. This is my service. I will pick them up, and I will bear them all the way to the New Jerusalem." If some teenagers will do this, they will have the Lord's presence with them, and they will see the blessing....

All the brothers and sisters need to pick up such a burden. The older sisters, for example, can pick up the burden to care for the older saints. No one can appoint us to this service. We must all go to the Lord, the Head of the Body, have a thorough dealing with Him, and pick up a burden....

After we have a thorough dealing with the Lord and pick up a burden, we must learn to be interested in people. Because of the fall, many of us are not interested in others. We consider that whether others go to heaven or to hell is their own business. We do not care whether others grow in life, and we feel that it is sufficient for us to care for our own spiritual welfare. However, the church service requires every one of us to be involved with others. We need an interest in the Lord's people. We may illustrate this interest by the taste for certain foods. Many Chinese people are interested in Chinese cooking and have the taste to go to Chinatown. We, however, need to be interested in the Lord's people. Every day the Lord's people must be our "food" (John 4:31-34). Some older teenage sisters should say, "All the young girls between ten and fifteen years old in the church life are my food. I am interested in the young people to this extent."

However, we must not be interested in people in a natural way....We should all pray, "Lord, burden me. I want to be fully interested in and involved with all Your dear saints, not in a natural or social way but in the way of life. Lord, I am willing to pay any price, even at the cost of my life. I love these people, and I would die for them. I want to see them saved, grow in life, and become matured."

Then we can pick up the burden for some specific persons. We should make a list of their names, always keep it in front of us, and pray for them one by one. A teenage sister may pray, "Lord, this one is still not saved. Lord, I will never be at peace until I see her saved. Lord, even for my sake You must save her." We may be too spiritual and say, "Lord, this is not for my sake." However, the Lord may say, "Because you have a genuine burden for this one, I will save her for your sake." Eventually the sister will see the little one be saved. After this she may say, "Lord, this little one is now saved, but she does not love You. I can never be satisfied with this. Do something in her so that she will love You, Lord, as I love You." Again, the sister will see the Lord answer her prayer. Likewise, the older generation must be burdened and pray in the same way. We need to be interested in people and involved with people. Then we can pick up a burden. Many in the church need our shoulders to bear them and our breast to embrace them (Exo. 28:9-12, 15-21, 29). We must love them. When they fall, we should weep, and when they rise up, we should be joyful. We must bear them as our burden....We must all go to the Lord, pray, and pick up this burden. (*The Normal Way of Fruit-bearing...*, ch. 1, pp. 15-18)