

Why Walls and Gates?

Jerusalem was in shambles. Both the walls and the gates needed to be rebuilt. The walls were reconstructed using the rubble that was already there. The new gates were hung on these walls. Within 52 days, a makeshift wall was up which ensured some protection from their enemies (cf. Nehemiah 6:15).

In Isaiah 49:16, the Lord says, *Your walls are continually before me.* These walls represent our soul. God will use the rubble of our lives to rebuild our mind, our emotions and our self-control. In order to build these walls, the Holy Spirit works in two phases. First, He evaluates our lives and brings us to a point where we can admit to our problems. He then begins the process of reconstruction.

Nehemiah not only rebuilt the walls, but he also reconstructed the gates of the city. The word for gate in Hebrew is *sha'ar* which means “to split open” or “to reason, calculate or measure.”¹ Literally it means “to pierce the darkness.” The gate of a city was the opening through which light could shine through.

Gates represent our place of access to God. It is the place which reveals either the light of heaven or the darkness of earth. The gate of our soul is our place of breakthrough. God will only come into our lives in power and authority when our gates are set in order.

The purpose of gates was for controlled access. The gates of the city were considered the weakest part of the city wall and were the focus of the enemy’s attacks. Defensive guard towers were often constructed to prevent the enemy from barraging a city.

God wants us to guard the gates of our city because the place of our access to God is also the place where we are the most vulnerable. Our enemy knows our limitations and will take advantage of these known weaknesses. The gates of the city were always closed at night. This reminds us that during our darkest times we must continually guard our relationship with the Lord.

As the gate of a city was a focal point, so our place of access to God is also imperative to our walk with Him. Let’s explore what happened at the ancient city gates.

Read Ruth 4:1-7 and Genesis 23:10-11. What happened at the city gate?

DID YOU KNOW?
Many Christian leaders teach that Nehemiah completed the entire project of rebuilding Jerusalem in just 52 days based on Nehemiah 6:15. However, the Jewish historian, Josephus tells us that the full completion (i.e., reinforcing it, finishing the battlements, gates and fortifications) occurred two years and four months from the start of the project.¹³

DIG DEEPER

Read the story of Jacob's dream of the heavenly ladder in Genesis 28. Note that he calls the place where God gave him that dream, "the Gate of Heaven." Gates represent places of access.

DID YOU KNOW?

In Greek, there are four different words for "word." The Greek word "rhema" refers to a spoken word which is heard. This is the Word that God speaks directly to your heart.¹⁴

Purchases and transfers of property were made at the city gate. It is where legal exchanges were made. We must build up the gates of our lives if we want to take back what the enemy has plundered in the city of our lives.

Read 1 Kings 22:10 and Nehemiah 8:1-3,8. What important spiritual events happened at the city gate?

The gate was the place where God's Word was revealed. Prophetic utterances were given at the city gate. Ezra explained the Law at the Water Gate of the city. If we want to hear the *rhema* word of God, we must build up and protect our city gates.

Read Isaiah 60:18. What does the prophet call the gates? From this title, what do you believe occurred at the city gates?

Praise and celebration took place at the gates. True praise comes when the gates of our lives have been not only built, but also secured. Our enemy knows that praise is a powerful weapon and that God sits enthroned upon the praise of His people (cf. Psalm 22:3).

Read Matthew 16:18. What did Jesus say about gates in this verse?

Gates also represent authority. Jesus said that the gates of Hades will not overpower His Church. Hades was the place of the dead. The greatest

weapon the devil has to use against us is the threat of death. The gates of Hades represent the authority of the underworld. Victory over our enemy will only come when the gates of our soul have been built up and our authority in Christ is secured.

Beginning next week, we will examine each of the gates that Nehemiah rebuilt in the city of Jerusalem. Each gate represents an aspect of our spiritual life which we must allow the Holy Spirit to reconstruct so that we can walk in the fullness of His Spirit.

SELAH!

The Holy Spirit has two phases of reconstruction of our soul. The first is to admit we have an issue. The second is to allow Him full access to make the necessary changes. Which of these do you find more difficult? Why?

At the gates of our lives, both God and the devil can “breakthrough.” Guard towers were built to protect the gates of the city. What can you do to ensure that the gates of your soul are protected from the enemy’s influence?

We discussed several reasons why the gates of a city were necessary. Which of these functions do you think are most important to your life? Why?

Gates represent authority. What do you find yourself doing that is giving the enemy more authority over your life? How can you prevent this from happening?

REMEMBER!
The gate of our soul is our place of breakthrough. God will only come into our lives in power and authority when our gates are set in order.

ENDNOTES

¹ R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer Jr., Bruce K. Waltke *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament Volume 2* (Chicago, IL: Moody Bible Institute 1980) 945-946

¹² "Shin (letter)" *Wikipedia Free Encyclopedia* [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shin_\(letter\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shin_(letter))
Accessed 11.16.2016.

¹³ John Bright *A History of Israel, Third Edition* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1981)
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¹⁴ Donna Buritsch Brayerton *Walking in Wholeness and Holiness* (Carney's Point, NJ: Grace Christian Fellowship of South Jersey, 2016) 89