

The North Gate and the South Gate

A SERMON – Preached on Sunday Morning, May 27th, 1866, by

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"Likewise the people of the land shall worship at the door of this gate before the Lord in the Sabbaths end in the new moons. – Ezekiel xiv. 3

Some have thought that instead of this vision, extending from the fortieth chapter down to the end of the book, being intended to represent the gospel dispensation, it is intended to represent what the Jews shall be as to their condition when they again return to their land. But then the word of God assures us that the Jews can never again be anything with God except by Jesus Christ; for it has been, 1800 years ago, sounded in their ears, that there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby they must be saved but the name of Jesus, and that God's order is that they are to obtain mercy through that mercy which is held fast by the Gentiles. God's mercy rolled like a mighty tide into the Gentile world; it has been rolling on ever since, and is still rolling on to take up sinners, turn them into saints, support them through all their troubles, and present them triumphant at the last. This is the mercy into which the Jew, when he is converted, is to come. And give me a truly converted Jew, one that is brought to know Jesus Christ, will ask that Jew, Shall you ever again want the ceremonies spoken of by Ezekiel? shall you ever again want the marble tables, and the sacrifices there spoken of, or the various descriptions of the land of Canaan? His answer would be, No; what, then, is the conclusion? The conclusion is-, that this description, though given in Old Testament language, and given as a representation of a national establishment, is intended to represent the gospel dispensation; and we must do with this vision of Ezekiel just as we must do with the ceremonial law in spiritualizing the same; This vision of Ezekiel, as you are aware, ends with the declaration, "The name of the city from that day shall be, Jehovah-shammah, the Lord is there." compare this with the latter part of the book of Revelation, and you will see what harmony there is between the two; for in the close of the vision with which John was favored he says, "I saw no temple therein; for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city of God hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it; for the glory of the Lord did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." Thus, then, Jesus Christ is the antitype of the whole. Before I enter upon the concluding remarks I have to make upon this text, having already had one discourse upon it on Sunday morning week last, I may, in order to show you the propriety of taking a spiritual view of this subject, just remind you of the words of the apostle Paul, in the 2nd chapter of the Colossians, where he says, "Let no man judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days, which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ,"-that is, the substance is o-Christ. Then we are justified in taking that view of them which the Lord there leads us to take. Besides, you and I shall soon have done with holy days, and with Sabbaths, and with new moons, and old moons too; therefore what we want is a person

who can bring unto us the substantial meaning, the reality of these things, and that person is the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now I have this morning two more things to notice in connection with our text. First, the order of the worship. Second, the times of the worship, the Sabbaths and the new moons.

First, then, the order of the worship. I will not again go over the ground I traversed in the previous sermon, for you can read it for yourselves; but will at once proceed to notice that there are four things implied in the order of the people coming to worship the Lord. He that came in at the north gate was to go out by the south gate; and he that came in at the south gate was to go out at the north gate. Now there appears to me to be four things implied in this order, taking the north there, as we shall do presently, to mean tribulation, and the south to mean consolation. Now the gate stood about midway in the court, and just inside the gate there was the altar, and just beyond the altar there was the temple, and in the inner part of the temple there was the holy of holies. Now he that went in at the south gate was to go out at the north gate. Thus you will perceive that such a thing could not be done without passing the altar. The altar of sacrifice stood nearly in the center, and any one coming in at the south gate had to go all across the court, and out at the north gate, and must therefore pass the altar; or else one might go a little way in and go back again, but the Lord would not allow any going back. Now you see what a field this opens up to us; and it opens up to us this one theme, that all our coming to God and all our profession is vain if we are not brought to Jesus Christ, if we stop short of Jesus Christ. You will therefore see, if they had stopped short of this gate where the altar was, that would have typified stopping short of the Lord Jesus Christ. And hence, when the fire descended upon the sacrifice, there never was such a thing known as for one stray spark to fall upon any one of the people. The fire fell upon the sacrifice, and upon the sacrifice only, and the escape of the people was entire. Now, then, when we were awakened up to see something of that fire of God's wrath revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, we felt at the same time that we had nothing to call our own but ungodliness and unrighteousness, and that there was a fire awaiting us, as far as our desert was concerned, that could not be quenched, and a worm that could not die. Now, then, the Lord, in dealing with his people, will not allow them to stop short of Jesus Christ. Oh, how hard many a seeking sinner has worked to be good, and to make himself holy, and to make himself righteous. And where a man becomes religious merely by the evil spirit going out; when Satan goes out of a man he takes the key of that man's heart with him, and he can come back and re-enter that man in some other shape more suited to the man's taste. But where the work is of God, where Satan is cast out of the soul, where the stronger than he comes and drives him out of the soul, and God is the teacher, that man may try to make himself better, but the Lord will so thwart him in his schemes and plans, that every confidence and hope in self shall be thrown down, and he shall be brought to trust in Christ alone. But where Satan is not cast out, where it is not the work of the Lord, that man reforms, and he makes his reformation a part, and a great part too, of his salvation. He goes on, and settles down in something short of the substitutional perfection of Christ, in something short of God's order of things, in something short of the mercy-seat, and of that official blessedness which the great High Priest of our profession hath, by his sacrifice, to pronounce upon every poor and needy sinner. He settles down in some error or another; there is sure to be some creature-doing about it, and he settles down in enmity against the real truth of God, and his enmity against the real truth of God is greater now than it was when he made no profession at all. It was so in the Saviour's day; those who were professors, Pharisees, Sadducees, they were the first to revile, the first to reproach him. Hence the apostle saith, "Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it." Now what made the apostle say that? Why, because he saw the leaven of self-righteousness working. And the apostle was grieved to his very soul when he saw those to whom he had preached, and thought and hoped that they were brought to Christ understandingly and savingly - when

he saw another class of teachers come and say in his absence, " Well, what the apostle Paul saith is very well-oh yes, we are not come to oppose that, but you must also be circumcised, and keep the law; you must add that to it. The apostle, as far as he has gone, is very well, but he has not reached the whole gospel." This was what the false teachers of old did. Now, then, if you want to know the meaning of your troubles-that your heart is so hard, that you are beset with such blasphemous and such infidel thoughts, that you are not able to pray, nor read, nor hear, nor walk, as you could wish, when you rise in the morning, and beg of God to be with you all the day, you sometimes go away and forget all about it, full of the world and self, and cannot help it. You have determined to walk straight, and perhaps the stronger your determination is to walk straight, the more crooks you make that very day. What is all this for? Why, it is to hide pride from man; it is that thou might see the naughtiness of thine heart; it is that thou should see what a poor creature thou art. And thou will say to thyself, What ever shall I do? I never can appear before a heart-searching God in this state, in this condition. I am anything but Christian; I am a sinner of the deepest dye; I am a wretch deserving the lowest hell. What is to be done? What is all this for? This is all to sweep away your false confidences, that you may have no confidence anymore but in that sacrifice that received all the wrath that received all the fire all the curse; that is the end of sin, the end of wrath. And who would prize the end of sin that is not conscious of his sinful condition? Who would prize this order and this way of worshiping God that does not know his need of the same? Thus, then, mere professors may go on without that discipline that makes them feel their need of the perfection of Christ; But if thou art taught of God, the Lord will, in his dealings with you, drive you out of every other refuge. And you will sometimes get priding yourself before men; They must think me an exceedingly pious person; they must think me a most excellent person; I am sure so-and-so must think me a most excellent person. And you become persuaded at last - when you get so character-proud - that all men speak well of you, and think well of you, and applaud you. By-and-bye you shall make some mistake, and one ungodly man shall lift up his eyes and hands and say, why, who would have thought it? and another man will say, Who would have thought it? And you will be as mortified as can be to think that they will not think so well of you now, nor speak so well of you. Now this is the way in which the Lord often stops his people from glorying in the flesh and in man. There was a young man, and his acquirements in human learning were very great- none like him,-and for consistency of walk there was hardly a man in the country could equal him. And he would think; Oh dear me, what a nice man I am I should imagine that he thought so,-what a good man I am! No one to equal me. All at once, without any premeditation, he saw a certain sight -an Egyptian smiting a Hebrew, one of his brethren; he set to, took the sword out of the Lord's hand, cut the Egyptian down, and killed him. Who killed the Egyptian? Who would you think? Oh, not Moses; he is the meekest of all the men on the earth-not Moses. But so it was. The most consistent man in all the world; it was that very man. Why, what ever will he do? Run away. I am sure the Lord will not take care of him. But the Lord did take care of him, as we see. And Moses dwelt for forty years in the wilderness: when the Lord reappeared to him he was not over-eager to go back to Egypt. If it had not been for that mistake that I made I should not have minded, but things are different now, and I should not like to go. He made all sorts of excuses. By-and-bye the Lord whispered in his ear, "They are dead that sought thy life." "Oh, then I will go." What a mercy for us that our God is not tied to the little prejudices, and little partialities, and little likes and dislikes, or great likes and dislikes, of the creature! I was going to say, he would rather break your neck than ruin your soul; and however sharp the discipline, however mysterious the work, however wondrous the way to Christ, if you are one of his, you shall be brought. You shall have no other refuge, you shall have no other hope, and you shall feel that if he receives such a wretch as you are, there must be infinite efficacy in his blood; that if you gain access to God, it must be by the perfection of mediation indeed. Thus, then, all these rough dealings, even these stumbles, all these trials of the people of God, are to bring them to the right gate, to bring them to Christ. Christ is the door, Christ is that sacrifice that cleanses from all sin. I have no doubt it was some feeling of this kind the apostle had when the messenger of Satan came to him, and made him speak and do, for aught I know; some things he would not; and he besought that

this messenger, whom he called a thorn, might be sent away. But what is the answer? "My grace is sufficient for thee." And in what way is God's grace sufficient for us but by Jesus Christ? If God's grace came to us in any way but by Jesus Christ, it must come to us conditionally, and then it could not come to us at all; or, if it did, it could not stop, because we should soon fail in the conditions. But if it is to reign through Christ's righteousness, and if it is to come to us by his righteousness, then hereby we are to be humbled and mortified, the grace of God magnified, the Christ of God glorified, the truth honored, and his covenant made enduring. If this be the end, then. We may well say,-

"How harsh soe'er the way;
Dear Savior, still lead on"

This, then, appears to be one object of coming in at the south gate, and going out at the north gate--that they should not stop short of the place of worship, that is, of the gate Christ Jesus, or the door Christ Jesus, or the sacrifice Christ Jesus. I would not be harsh, but nine-tenths of what in our day passes for gospel is, to the man who knows the law of God, and knows what he is by that law,-nine-tenths of it is trash of trash; it is but chaff, and "what is the chaff to the wheat?" says the Lord. Now, then, come, some of you little ones, what do you say to this? Well, I think I can hear one saying, if it is by faith in the end of all my sin and wretchedness faith in the ability of Jesus Christ, then I really feel a hope that I shall get to heaven. Of course you will. Mr. Hart is neither presumptuous nor extravagant, but perfectly scriptural, when he says,-

"The poorer the wretch the welcomer there!

What say you to this? I hear one saying, If I am to be justified freely by his grace, by a righteousness which is the free gift of the Father, wrought out fully by the Savior, revealed by the Holy Spirit, if I can escape condemnation only by the divine and eternal righteousness of Jesus then I can appear righteous before God if that be the way. Bless the Lord that has brought you so far, that has so humbled you. And if you are reproached for these things, never mind; take that as a sign that you are not of the world, for the world would love its own, such a love as it is. Now that is a self-evident truth, then-that they do not stop short of Christ. But all men do if they are not taught of God. When the Lord asked his disciples, "Whom do men say that I, the Son of man, am? Now I wonder if any one human opinion did come up to what he was. "And they said, some say that you are John the Baptist, some Elias, and others Jeremias; but that is coming very far short of the whole truth: "or one of the prophets;" so he was, but that was very far short. And even Peter was but a babe; he could hardly reach it. "But whom say ye that I am?" Why, I can just get far enough, Lord, to see "thou art the Christ the Son of the living God. Well, Peter, you have got the truth so far, and you could not have even got that if my Father had not revealed it unto you, "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee." You see what the flesh and blood opinions are,-how they all come short; and Peter's is hardly all the way. Well, then, says Peter, I will watch over this matter, there is something more yet. I have owned him as the Christ the Son of God; I don't know that I have gone far enough yet. So presently, after the Saviour had risen from the dead, and reappeared to his disciples when they were assembled together, you can almost see Peter nudging Philip and James, and saying, I wonder what Master Thomas will say now? I wonder if he will speak as well as I did. When this Jesus, our hope for time and eternity, asked me what my opinion was, I said he was the Christ, the Son of the living God. I wonder whether Thomas will go so far as this. Thomas bursts out, "My Lord and my God." Eternal Deity overwhelmed him with the glory of his presence. Ah, says Satan to Peter, you see one extreme leads to another. Thomas could not believe at all before; now he believes too far. But if he had, the Saviour would have told him so. "Thomas, because thou hast seen thou hast believed." Do not let the devil persuade you that you have believed too much, you have not believed too much, for I am Lord and I am God; I am one with my Father; it is not robbery for me to be equal with him. Thus Thomas's unbelief, as well as

Peter's stumble, were both to humble the creature and bring them to Christ. So, then, you see that all men are sure to stop short of the real truth concerning Christ unless they are taught of God. I dare not stop now, because the deity of the Saviour is not my subject this morning, but I do not wonder at the many beautiful allusions in the writings of the apostle Paul, how he gloried in the deity, and the eternal, personal, underived divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ. This, then, we shall not stop short of Christ – all to bring us to Christ. God in Christ and nowhere else, is reconciling us to himself. God in Christ, and nowhere else, imputes our trespasses not to us, but to Christ. God in Christ and nowhere else, imputes righteousness to us without works. I do not think I shall go too far if I say there is no affliction any Christian has that this is not the object of that affliction. The loss of a wife, a husband, child, a parent, a friend, or of property, -let it be whatever it may - the Lord steps in, "Am not I better unto thee than ten sons?" Am not I the pearl of great price, better unto thee than thousands of gold and silver? Yea, death itself is a step, and a mighty step too, to bring us into full possession and enjoyment of Christ Jesus the Lord; our God in Christ and Christ in God. That is one reason, then, of not going back; you see there is no going back, sure to go across the court. Well, say you suppose they went across the court, and did not stop-just looked round and gave a transitory view, and went off. That would show what they were; we shall have that to notice presently.

Then again, their coming in at the south gate, and going out at the north gate, I think was intended to represent the various dealings of the Lord with his people. You shall find one Christian coming in at the south gate, seem drawn along just as described in Hosea, "I drew them with cords of a man," the man Christ Jesus, "with bands of love." "Draw me we will run after thee." The Lord doth in some begin the work in this way, and they are drawn along, and brought into the enjoyment of truth; pardon scaled home, love is shed abroad, Christ is precious, and they are as happy as they can be. They know as yet but little of their own hearts, they know as yet but little of the weakness of human nature, the wiles of Satan, the perplexities of life. They therefore intend to be shining Christians; they intend to surpass everybody. As for that pining old Christian, I would not be like him for all the world. As or that doubting old lady there, I would not be like her for the world. If I should live to be as old I shall be something wonderful. They come in at the south gate.

Storms, darkness, clouds-whatever is the matter? How different I am from what I was! Where is the blessedness I knew?" when his candle shined upon my head, and when by his light I walked through darkness; when I washed my steps with butter;" when my soul made me like the chariots of Ammi-nadib? I bounded along then. But now all is cold, dark dead, miserable. Whatever is the matter? You thought you would have only the one gate; but you must have the two; and you will have the worst first or the best first, just as the Lord plans, for there is no exception to the rule; all the mighty multitude came out of great tribulation. Now these that go in at the south gate, and go out at the north gate it is my comfortable lot to be very friendly with such. Some of these are among my best hearers. How is that, say you? Why, because while they began with a fourteen-ounce-to-the-pound gospel-only two ounces short, that is pretty fair; but now nothing but the sixteen ounces will do. Or to use the simile of this same book, Oh, I am so comfortable; an ankle-deep gospel will do for me now; I do not like going too deep. So they go on, and go on, till necessities abound, and they are lad to read that the river could not be passed over, that the waters are risen, waters to swim in. Ah, if the gospel waters were not risen high enough to reach all my sins, and drown them, there could be no hope for me. Therefore I will say, Give me as much as you can of two things;-give me as much as you can of Jesus Christ in his substitution, adaptability to my necessities and give me as much as you can of the immutability of God. So that if we come in at the South gate we go out at the north gate, where we meet with storms, and trials, and troubles, which humble us, and make us rejoice in the provisions of the gospel. Then of course there are others come in at the north gate; then they have their worst troubles at the first. I have had my share of troubles, in soul and

circumstance, one way and the other, but I have never had such troubles since as I had when the Lord brought me in by this north gate. I have never, with all I have suffered since, been so miserable as I was when I walked the streets, and expected every moment the earth would open up and swallow me up, or some judgment cut me off. Not all the angels in heaven nor men on earth could persuade me but that I was lost, lost, and lost forever; and nothing but the terrors of hell and the impossibility of returning kept me from rushing into eternity. I was worn to a skeleton; could just crawl along, and that was all. I believe I should have died if that conflict had continued. I shall never forget it, and no one can describe what it is but those that have been under it. "Thy wrath lieth hard upon me; thine arrows stick fast in me." I thought it was this that I was an unusual sinner, yet outwardly I had not been; but when a sinner is thus convinced, no one appears so bad as himself, and that God must have two hells for him. This is the north gate. But my dear old favorite chapter, the 54th of Isaiah, the 8th verse, took me out of that gate. I shall never forget it. Keep still! I could not keep still; started out of doors at six o'clock on Sunday morning, and began to tell of these things. And the minister heard of it three weeks after, and called me up, and said, how dare you go and preach without the church sending you out? Oh, said I, what church? The church of the Lord. Well, what church sent the apostle Paul out? Well, but you are not the apostle Paul. O, but what church sent Timothy out? The apostle Paul. Paul sent Timothy, and you may send me if you like. Why, he said, I am not going to send you out. However, he said, come and exercise your gift. Gift? I said, I have no gift"; I may have some grace, but I have no gift. I am not going to be a minister; do not be afraid; I am not going to set up in opposition to you. Well, he said, listen to me, and come and preach before the church. And so I did, and they said, we won't send him out, but we won't stop him for the simple reason that they could not. Contain myself I could not. I was so filled with eternal things that I spoke out of my own soul. I never used a note since I began, and I would rather not go on at all than wriggle along like a crab. Bless the Lord, the gospel of the 54th of Isaiah has been my dwelling-place ever since; very comfortable and happy there. Ah, says one, there are other scriptures besides that. Yes, but there is none to pull that down; Ah, says one, we must have more law. No, says the apostle Paul, "the law" which was 400 years after, "cannot make the promise of none effect." The law is not against the gospel, nor the gospel against the law; for what is the gospel but the declaration of Christ as the end of the law; as being made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that they might receive the adoption of sons? So I never can have much trouble again as I had then. Now I mention this just to show the variety of the experience of the people of God-yet all leaning to Christ; if your experience stops short of the Savior in what he is, then it is wrong.

Then the third reason of this order of things was that the people might know more of the city. Go out at the north gate, you get into some of the streets on that side; go out at the south gate, you get into some of the streets on that side. Why, a Christian ought to know his way about Zion. You ought to know every street. Some do not; some little ones in Zion have hardly heard of Election Street; would not go there forever so. But when they get into the north gate, they will say, "What shall I do? Electing grace will show God's decree, and they will then say, Election Street is my native street. And so the other streets. It will extend your acquaintance with the streets of Zion: the city of Zion; and to take away the simile, it will extend your acquaintance with the various truths of the everlasting gospel that you will not be shut up merely in one corner.

And then, fourthly and lastly, upon this point, to test their sincerity. If we are sincere, we look forward, and we would suffer any trouble, let it be what it may, rather than go away from him who is the way, the truth, and the life, rather than give up his blessed truth. And we are not only prone to rebel at troubles, but we are incapable or appreciating the comforts of the gospel, if the Lord is not pleased so to teach us as to enable us to appreciate them. How often is it that we make ourselves miserable in meditating upon some small matter in temporal circumstances, which cannot last long alter all and seem to forget the

fountain that ever flows, and seem unable to appreciate the consolations of the everlasting gospel. There is peace there, life there, light there, assurance there, blessedness there, when there is no comfort perhaps anywhere else. Therefore the sincere worshippers will abide by the Lord's order, and look to him for protection, and consolation, and salvation, and everything they need. Oh, it is a great thing to feel at home, to feel that you are so at home in these things that, grace keeping you, you would not depart from them.

But just a word upon the times of the worship, the Sabbaths and the new moons, and then I close. This worship was to be on the many Sabbaths and the many new moons, typifying, of course, one thing. Christ is the antitype of the many sacrifices, of the many priests, and of the many kings; we must therefore, taking the words spiritually, in the Christian sense, take the one Sabbath-that this worship, this serving of the Lord, is to be on the Sabbath, on the Sabbath day at the end of the week days. The gate was to be shut, as we have before said, on the working day, open on the Sabbath day, to denote that none but Christ, the end of the law, can open the way of access to God. We have boldness by the blood to enter into the holy of holies. Now a false religion has no true Sabbaths. In the last verse of the 13th of the Revelation, where a false religion is set forth by three sixes - number 666, - do not read it "Six hundred threescore and six," but read it by the sixes-666. And that is a false religion; and why is that set forth by three sixes? Because there is no Sabbath. Why, according to Popery you are to work six days here, and then go to purgatory and work six more, and then go to hell and work six more. It is all work; their religion has no Sabbath. So the number of the man of sin is three sixes, to denote it is all works. But the people of God, - there is a rest, a keeping of the Sabbath, that remains to the people of God. They are brought to the end of works, and brought in to that rest which the Lord Jesus Christ is for them. It is on the ground, then, of the perfection of his work, and by the rest that we have by him, that we worship the Lord our God. I hardly know how to handle this part, there is something so beautiful in the thought, not one of your sins can come into this mystic Sabbath. You may feel them, and feel guilty by them; but just as you realize what Christ has done, you realize release from them, you realize release from guilt, and from fear, and from terror, for it shall not come nigh thee; and no weapon formed against thee, as thou stand here, by the perfection of Christ, before God, shall prosper; every tongue that may rise against thee there thou may condemn, because thy righteousness is of the Lord. This is thy heritage. So, then, a true religion brings us to the end of works, brings us into rest, whereas a false religion is all works, and of course delusion. The new moon, of course, you are not at all at a loss to know the meaning of. The new moon will point out the new covenant, the new life, the new state of things we have in the end, by Christ Jesus.

Now I have one more word to say I must not close without saying, and regret that I have not time to say something upon that. This gate at which the people were to worship was to be shut at the evening, not to be shut until the evening. So the evening of the world will come, when the gate of mercy shall close, and close forever. Happy they who are brought then to accept the Lord while he may be found.