

Elder Vernon Johnson

Numbers

Twelve and Seventy

Twelve Gates, Twelve Angels, Twelve Tribes, Twelve Foundations

Rev. 21:12 "And had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: 13 On the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates. 14 And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb."

During biblical days, the walls of a city were built for protection. They served as an obstacle against invading armies. If the city was built on the side of a hill or mountain and then had high walls, the enemy was at a great disadvantage in trying to gain access to the city and overthrowing it. The higher and thicker the walls, the greater protection they provided. The following verses show the utility of walls as means of protection for the city:

1. 2 Sam. 11:20 "And if so be that the king's wrath arise, and he say unto thee, Wherefore approached ye so nigh unto the city when ye did fight? knew ye not that they would shoot from the wall? 21 Who smote Abimelech the son of Jerubbesheth? did not a woman cast a piece of a millstone upon him from the wall, that he died in Thebez? why went ye nigh the wall? then say thou, Thy servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also."

2. 2 Sam. 20:15 "And they came and besieged him in Abel of Bethmaachah, and they cast up a bank against the city, and it stood in the trench: and all the people that were with Joab battered the wall, to throw it down."

3. 2 Chr. 26:6 "And he went forth and warred against the Philistines, and brake down the wall of Gath, and the wall of Jabneh, and the wall of Ashdod, and built cities about Ashdod, and among the Philistines."

4. Neh. 1:3 "And they said unto me, The remnant that are left of the captivity there in the province are in great affliction and reproach: the wall of Jerusalem also is broken down, and the gates thereof are burned with fire."

The gates of the city had two main functions. They were a point of entry and exit to the city and by them access to the city was controlled. The second function of the gate is that it served as the place of city government and of official business transactions. The following verses show forth this second function:

1. Gen. 23:10 "And Ephron dwelt among the children of Heth: and Ephron the Hittite answered Abraham in the audience of the children of Heth, even of all that went in at the gate of his city, saying, 11 Nay, my lord, hear me: the field give I thee, and the cave that is therein, I give it thee; in the presence of the sons of my people give I it thee: bury thy dead."

Gen. 23:17 "And the field of Ephron, which was in Machpelah, which was before Mamre, the field, and the cave which was therein, and all the trees that were in the field, that were in all the borders round about, were made sure 18 Unto Abraham for a possession in the presence of the children of Heth, before all that went in at the gate of his city."

2. Gen. 34:20 "And Hamor and Shechem his son came unto the gate of their city, and communed with the men of their city, saying, 21 These men are peaceable with us; therefore let them dwell in the land, and trade therein; for the land, behold, it is large enough for them; let us take their daughters to us for wives, and let us give them our daughters. 22 Only herein will the men consent unto us for to dwell with us, to be one people, if every male among us be circumcised, as they are circumcised. 23 Shall not their cattle and their substance and every beast of theirs be ours? only let us consent unto them, and they will dwell with us. 24 And unto Hamor and unto Shechem his son hearkened all that went out of the gate of his city; and every male was circumcised, all that went out of the gate of his city."

3. Deu. 21:19 "Then shall his father and his mother lay hold on him, and bring him out unto the elders of his city, and unto the gate of his place; 20 And they shall say unto the elders of his city, This our son is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton, and a drunkard. 21 And all the men of his city shall stone him with stones, that he die: so shalt thou put evil away from among you; and all Israel shall hear, and fear."

4. Deu. 22:15 "Then shall the father of the damsel, and her mother, take and bring forth the tokens of the damsel's virginity unto the elders of the city in the gate: 16 And the damsel's father shall say unto the elders, I gave my daughter unto this man to wife, and he hateth her; 17 And, lo, he hath given occasions of speech against her, saying, I found not thy daughter a maid; and yet these are the tokens of my daughter's virginity. And they shall spread the cloth before the elders of the city. 18 And the elders of that city shall take that man and chastise him; 19 And they shall amerce him in an hundred shekels of silver, and give them unto the father of the damsel, because he hath brought up an evil name upon a virgin of Israel: and she shall be his wife; he may not put her away all his days."

5. Deu. 22:24 "Then ye shall bring them both out unto the gate of that city, and ye shall stone them with stones that they die; the damsel, because she cried not, being in the city; and the man, because he hath humbled his neighbour's wife: so thou shalt put away evil from among you."

6. Deu. 25:7 "And if the man like not to take his brother's wife, then let his brother's wife go up to the gate unto the elders, and say, My husband's brother refuseth to raise up unto his brother a name in Israel, he will not perform the duty of my husband's brother. 8 Then the elders of his city shall call him, and speak unto him: and if he stand to it, and say, I like not to take her; 9 Then shall his brother's wife come unto him in the presence of the elders, and loose his shoe from off his foot, and spit in his face, and shall answer and say, So shall it be done unto that man that will not build up his brother's house."

7. Josh 20:4 "And when he that doth flee unto one of those cities shall stand at the entering of the gate of the city, and shall declare his cause in the ears of the elders of that city, they shall take him into the city unto them, and give him a place, that he may dwell among them. 5 And if the avenger of blood pursue after him, then they shall not deliver the slayer up into his hand; because he smote his neighbour unwittingly, and hated him not beforetime."

8. Ruth 4:1 "Then went Boaz up to the gate, and sat him down there: and, behold, the kinsman of whom Boaz spake came by; unto whom he said, Ho, such a one! turn aside, sit down here. And he turned aside, and sat down. 2 And he took ten men of the elders of the city, and said, Sit ye down here. And they sat down. 3 And he said unto the kinsman, Naomi, that is come again out of the country of Moab, selleth a parcel of land, which was our brother Elimelech's: 4 And I thought to advertise thee, saying, Buy it before the inhabitants, and before

the elders of my people. If thou wilt redeem it, redeem it: but if thou wilt not redeem it, then tell me, that I may know: for there is none to redeem it beside thee; and I am after thee. And he said, I will redeem it."

9. Ruth 4:11 "And all the people that were in the gate, and the elders, said, We are witnesses. The LORD make the woman that is come into thine house like Rachel and like Leah, which two did build the house of Israel: and do thou worthily in Ephratah, and be famous in Bethlehem: 12 And let thy house be like the house of Pharez, whom Tamar bare unto Judah, of the seed which the LORD shall give thee of this young woman. 13 So Boaz took Ruth, and she was his wife: and when he went in unto her, the LORD gave her conception, and she bare a son."

"And had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel." There is a similar passage in the book of Ezekiel: Ezek. 48:31 "And the gates of the city shall be after the names of the tribes of Israel: three gates northward; one gate of Reuben, one gate of Judah, one gate of Levi. 32 And at the east side four thousand and five hundred: and three gates; and one gate of Joseph, one gate of Benjamin, one gate of Dan. 33 And at the south side four thousand and five hundred measures: and three gates; one gate of Simeon, one gate of Issachar, one gate of Zebulun. 34 At the west side four thousand and five hundred, with their three gates; one gate of Gad, one gate of Asher, one gate of Naphtali. 35 It was round about eighteen thousand measures: and the name of the city from that day shall be, The LORD is there."

Each gate had a name of a tribe of Israel so that there being twelve tribes of Israel, there were twelve gates. We would expect that each tribe would enter the gate with that tribe's name. We would not expect someone to enter by another tribe's name.

Twelve is a representative number and, both in Ezek. 48:31-35 and in the 12 stones on the breastplate of the high priest, was used to represent the twelve tribes of Israel. Thus, not just the twelve sons of Israel were represented, but all the descendants of those twelve sons were represented also. Thus, all Israel was represented. Therefore, in Ezekiel chapter 48 if you were not a part of the twelve tribes of Israel you did not have lawful access or entry to the city. Entry was therefore restricted to the children of Israel.

Rev. 21:12 is not considering the twelve tribes of natural Israel, but points us to the spiritual Israel of God. Entry to the city (church) is restricted to only those who compose spiritual Israel, i.e., are born of the Spirit of God as the Lord said in John 3:3 "Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" and in John 3:5 "Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." Only those born of the Spirit have the capability of entering into the church "kingdom of God."

"And at the gates twelve angels" Once again we point out that the word angel means messenger. There was a messenger at each gate. The church has gospel messengers who preach the everlasting gospel of Jesus Christ. They point the Lord's born again people to what they need to do to enter into the Lord's church here in time:

1. We have already noted that one must be born again in order to enter the kingdom of God. This is God's work and he does it at his appointed time, without the means or help of man.

2. John the Baptist said in Matt. 3:1 "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand," and the Lord said in Matt. 4:17 "Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." John also said, "Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance." Thus, repentance is necessary to gain entrance to the city.

3. One must hear and believe the gospel before he can gain entrance to the church:

- A. Lk. 16:16 "The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it."

- B. Rom. 10:13 "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. 14 How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? 15 And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!"

- C. Mk. 16:15 "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. 16 He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."

4. Once must also confess the Lord in order to gain access to the church:

A. Acts 8:36 "And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? 37 And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

B. Rom. 10:9 "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."

C. Lk. 12:8 "Also I say unto you, Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God:"

5. One must be baptized in water in order to enter the church:

A. Mk. 16:16 "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."

B. Acts 2: 38 "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. 39 For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. 40 And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation. 41 Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls."

C. Acts 8:12 "But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women."

D. Acts 9:18 "And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized."

"And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb." The church (the wall) is founded on the work of the apostles of Jesus Christ: Eph. 2:19 "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; 20

And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; 21 In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: 22 In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." The Lord used the apostles and prophets to lay the foundation on which the church is built upon.

From the above we know what we are built upon. However, this also teaches us that we are not only built upon a foundation, but that we are also built up as a wall. Remember the wall is the protection for the city and the higher and thicker it is the more protection it provides for the city. The wall consists of the Lord's obedient disciples. According to Col. 2:7 we are to be "rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving." The stronger each member is, the stronger the whole wall is.