

ENTER HIS GATES

The Sheep Gate reminds us that Jesus is the Lamb of God.

Neh 3:1 “Then Eliashib the high priest rose up with his brethren the priests and built the Sheep Gate; they consecrated it and hung its doors.”

The Sheep Gate was the first gate to be restored after the city was destroyed, and it was rebuilt by the High Priest and his fellow priests.

This was the only gate that was consecrated (set apart as holy), as it was used for bringing in sacrifices for the temple.

Jews would commonly enter the temple area through the Sheep Gate to purchase a sheep for sacrifice if they were not bringing their own.

It was called the Sheep Gate because it was the entrance for sheep entering into the Temple compound from the sheep markets (where lambs were sold for sacrifice in the Temple) and the sheep pool (later known as Pool of Bethesda), where sheep were washed for sacrificing.

Thousands of years later, when Jesus was on earth, He always entered Jerusalem via the Sheep Gate (except for the Triumphal Entry). The Sheep Gate also led to Golgotha, the path Jesus took to the crucifixion.

Just outside the Sheep Gate is the Via Delorosa.

Everything begins and ends with at the Sheep gate.

John 10:9

Before we can do anything to please God we must come through the Gate of the Sheep.

John 14:6

“Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”

The Sheep Gate is the first of the gates mentioned in Nehemiah 3. The rebuilding of the Sheep Gate was accomplished under the authority of the high priest and his fellow priests. The Sheep Gate was one of the closest gates to the temple;

The Lamb—God’s Prescribed Substitute

In order to approach God, the Jews had to first make a sacrifice for their sins as prescribed by the Law. Rams and lambs were the animals most often associated with such offerings.

As Abraham walked up Mount Moriah with his son Isaac, he told him, “God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering.” As Abraham was about to sacrifice Isaac, the Angel of the Lord stopped his hand and there, close by, Abraham noticed a ram caught by its horns in a thicket (Genesis 22:8, 13). God had required a sacrifice on which Abraham placed great value—his beloved son, Isaac, the one through who God had promised he would create a nation. Then God provided a substitute for Isaac.

This “lamb as substitute” principle was in force throughout the Old Testament until the Lord Jesus fulfilled the type.

He was manifested as the “Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29).

Jesus Christ—the Lamb of God

Just as the application of the blood of the lamb began Israel’s journey to freedom, our acceptance of the Lamb’s blood begins our journey to freedom; thus the Spirit of God moved Nehemiah to begin his record of the repair of Jerusalem’s gates with the Sheep Gate.

The Christian life begins when a person recognizes the Lord Jesus as the Lamb whom God provided to give his life as our substitute.

He was the perfect Lamb “without spot or blemish.” On the basis of his sacrifice, God accepts all who acknowledge they are sinners and who place their faith in Christ.

Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God (John 1:12-13).

God judged Christ for our sins. His death on the cross paid for them.

We receive salvation and new life and we become members of Christ’s body, the church, when we personally confess that Christ died in our place. There is no other way to be saved. There is no other way to receive eternal life or enter into the abundant life the Lord offers.

Jesus calls this way “the narrow way.”

“Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.” Matthew 7:13-14.

Jesus could have called ten thousand upon ten thousand angels to stop it, but He didn’t.

The eye of the needle mentioned in the book of Matthew was one of several gates that provided passage through the city of Jerusalem’s massive walls.

The *Needle Gate* was used when the city’s main gates were closed at night and used for people entering the city “after hours.”

It was designed for security reasons so that enemies could not simply ride into the city on their camels and attack. The gate was so small that a man would have to unload his camel of all that it was carrying and then carefully lead his camel through this small gate. It was a slow and quite

difficult task. You can see that it would be difficult for a camel to get through that door, but not impossible.

It's important to look at things in context, so here's that famous parable revisited and the event that led up to Jesus using that parable.

Understand that Jesus did not dislike the young rich man in the parable for being materially wealthy but he did sense his emptiness and search for a greater purpose, even after following all the rules (much like how a number of successful young executives feel today).

So, Jesus told the young man that, to enter the Kingdom of Heaven, he needed to disentangle himself from his wealth first like you would have to unload all that was on a camel's back to get through the eye of the needle.

Unfortunately, the young rich man in the parable was not willing to unload his back and he missed out on what his heart was looking for.