

~ The Christian life isn't about comfort and ease. No, it's about war. The Bible gives many correlations and metaphors of what our Christian lives are likened to; some examples are athletes, farmers, workmen, vessels of honor, and even slaves. And soldiers. As such, we are to stand for God and for the cause of Christ. The only command we are given is to stand – but soldiers do fight in wars. It is spiritual warfare, and our only weapon is the Sword of the Spirit — the Word of God. So, standing and soldiering is the main business we are to be about in our service of the Lord – according to Nehemiah, that is.

This Spiritual Safari isn't a popular expedition to join; because the Word of God and the Lord Jesus Christ are not popular when taught properly, correctly and completely. But, if you desire for the Holy Spirit to speak directly to your heart, then you'll want to travel along with us from here to Revelation. God is going to talk to us through Nehemiah as we embark along a path of spiritual warfare and learn how we are commanded to be actively standing for God while engaged in battle.

Christians are found in all walks of life, to be sure; and some are directly on the front lines – placed there strategically by the Lord for the safety of other believers. They may be policemen, firemen, doctors – and even lawyers or politicians; but our main defense is established by the man who actually believes God; one who actually studies the Scriptures and furthers that Gospel. A man who is Spirit-filled and Spirit-led — and an expert in teaching the Word of God in an educated, sincere and systematic manner.

Proclaiming the good news of the Gospel of the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ according to Scripture is the only target against which all of Satan's heavy artillery is aimed. Satan hates me, friends – you may be absolutely sure about that – and, if you are learning something in this safari, the devil hates you, too. Let us pray the Lord will

open our eyes to the marvelous reality, truth and wonder found only in His Word; and protect us from a virtual onslaught of attacks that will come from the enemy.

In our last few reports, we have been riding with Nehemiah as he made his survey of progress in rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem. We have been going from gate to gate – in and out – and we have considered seven of the ten gates thus far. This report will bring us to gate eight. At the time in history that we are studying, the remnant of the children of Israel have returned from the Babylonian captivity to a heavily burned out and destroyed city. Ezra has already restored the temple; but the walls of the city are in terrible disrepair. If you have not read our last few reports and their corresponding portions of Scripture, I suggest you go back and read those before this; if you do, these reports will mean so much more to your heart.

Apparently, the only gate not destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar was the water gate, which we also examined in our previous report. The water gate speaks of the Word of God; and it did not need repair. It remained intact – which is highly unusual; but that tells us that the Word of God doesn't need any repairs. Everything else needs repair — but not Scripture. We have too many people trying to prove the Bible is the Word of God; and even more trying to prove it isn't. Well, our safari doesn't offer apologetics to prove anything. If you aren't a believer, then you likely haven't read this far. I have already reached a very definite and dogmatic conclusion that what we are considering is the actual Word of God. I don't *THINK* it is – I *KNOW* it is; and I *KNOW* what this thing called the Bible can do for us today in our lives. I discovered all of that a *LONG* time ago, friends. So, I just give it all away now, and the Spirit of God takes care of what and whom He has chosen.

That makes the water gate a very important gate. Jesus tells us we are clean through the washing of the Word which He has spoken unto us. Water *ALWAYS* represents the Word of God, spiritually speaking, in Scripture. See, the Word of God is a cleansing agent. The Psalmist asked, “... *wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his ways?*” Well, the only way we can ever get cleaned up in this life is by taking heed to the *ENTIRE* collection of Holy Writ. So, that brings us to the horse gate....

***28 From above the horse gate repaired the priests, every one over against his house.***

~ Horses, in the Bible, speak of war; and they are always ridden by warriors. Notice the priests were the ones who lived next to the horse gate, too. In the books of Zechariah and Revelation, we find symbolic horses; and they are always associated with warfare. The red horse speaks *SPECIFICALLY* of the act of war. Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a little donkey; which was the preferred transportation of kings. Most people seem to think Jesus rode a donkey because He was meek and lowly – but that’s not the picture presented in Scripture. Kings rode donkeys *PARTICULARLY* if they were coming in peace. The horse gate speaks spiritually of the soldiering service of a believer today. Paul told us we are to walk worthy of this high calling in the second part of Ephesians. That’s also where we are told to put on the whole armor of God. Of course, we don’t fight against flesh and blood, but we war against spiritual forces constantly. We may be seated in the Heavens, but our feet must be planted firmly down here on the ground; if we are properly placed Christians, that is.

See, we have an open door *BUT* there are many adversaries. I never exactly realized how many enemies I really had until I began publishing this so-called Spiritual Safari. Those who should be supporting the Word of God have no interest in this ministry. They claim to be Christians; so, one would assume that if they didn’t have anything good to contribute, then they wouldn’t have anything bad to say. I suppose I am just gullible and naïve in that connection. I have *TEN TIMES* more critics than I have supporters. Actually, the number of critics is higher than that. Well, I was told to take the “*sword of the Spirit*” – and handle it competently. So, that’s what I attempt to do.

Paul told Timothy to “.... *endure hardness as a good soldier of the Lord Jesus Christ.*” That tells me I am going to have battles to fight and, once again, the Bible is dead accurate in that regard. If you aren’t in a battle, then I have bad news for you: you aren’t standing for the Lord; because that would be impossible. The battle waxes hot today all over the world. If you make a stand for Christ, someone is going to try to cut you down.

MANY of God's children – including the one writing to you – are having some real struggles....

***<sup>29</sup> After them repaired Zadok the son of Immer over against his house. After him repaired also Shemaiah the son of Shechaniah, the keeper of the east gate.***

~ Alright, we now come to the very interesting east gate, and it is one that fills us with anticipation and excitement. This gate was the first one opened every morning. We should note that Zadok was a priest, too; and Shemaiah was a prophet. Naturally, the east gate was on the east side of Jerusalem. Today, this gate is sealed. Many believe this is the gate the Lord Jesus will enter through when He returns to establish His kingdom on earth; and that's a possibility — but Scripture doesn't say that. Scripture says He will enter in through the golden gate – which is in the temple; not in the wall of the city – and leads directly to the Holy of Holies.

The east gate was the first gate opened each morning as the sun rose. After the long night had ended, and the watchmen completed the fourth watch, the city could be opened for business. The nights were disturbing for many people because, if an attack were to be attempted, it would only happen under cover of darkness. I don't think many people slept well in ancient times. Well, the first glimmer of light in the east caused the watchman to declare safety in a new day, and everyone in the city heaved a sigh of relief.

All believers should be gathered at the east gate today, spiritually speaking. There is a glimmer of light in the east from a new day on the horizon; and the sun will be coming up soon. Then, the east gate will be opened. However, before the sun fully appears, the bright and morning star appears as the Lord Himself descends from Heaven with a shout as the voice of the archangel. The trump of God will lead the dead in Christ to rise first and, if we are still alive, we'll be caught up in the air to meet Him. The Greek word is "*harpazo*." It means "*caught up*." A synonym for "*caught up*" is rapture – so, "*rapture*" is a viable Bible word. Anyone saying the Bible doesn't teach the rapture is simply arguing semantics – and we're not going to do that on this safari.

Scripture says Christ is going to take His own out of the world before the sun comes up. When – we don't know – Jesus doesn't even know. Only God the Father knows when that day will arrive. The Lord is definitely coming, though —and the next event in the plan and program of God is the rapture of the True and Living church. So, we ought to be gathered at the east gate looking for our Blessed Hope. We live in a dark day, of course; and that glimmer of light is the only thing that brings anyone hope....

***<sup>30</sup> After him repaired Hananiah the son of Shelemiah, and Hanun the sixth son of Zalaph, another piece. After him repaired Meshullam the son of Berechiah over against his chamber.***

~ Meshullam, whom only the Lord God knows, repaired just a little piece of wall where he lived. See, friends, you may not be able to witness to the entire world – and you may not even reach your neighborhood – but, you can sure reach your family and close friends by giving them the Word of God. It's sure wonderful to have some family members who are actually saved. See, it's *OUR* responsibility to get the Word of God to our family! Once we do that, then it becomes *THEIR* responsibility as to what they are going to do with it. After we tell someone of the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, whatever happens next is between them and the Lord. I know a lot of people feel their business is to get people saved – but that's *NOT* our business; because we can't save them anyways. Our business is to sow the seed of the Word of God – period. When you reach that conclusion, your Christian life will become much more meaningful to you....

***<sup>31</sup> After him repaired Malchiah the goldsmith's son unto the place of the Nethinims, and of the merchants, over against the gate Miphkad, and to the going up of the corner.***

~ “Miphkad” means “review” or “registry.” Any stranger coming to Jerusalem had to have a visa, in essence; they would have been stopped at this gate for the purpose of being registered. They would have to come through this gate for a review of whom they were and where they were from. Further, the Israeli army, after fighting a battle, always returned through this gate. Remember, this is where David reviewed all of his

soldiers returning from war against Absalom. David's men loved him, and David loved them; and those men would have gladly laid their lives down for King David. As they entered the city after the battle, David thanked each of them personally for their unselfish loyalty and acts of bravery.

We're told that immediately before the rapture begins, we will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. That's going to be wonderful, I agree – but – something is going to take place at that time which should make most of us examine our lives a bit more thoroughly today; and that something is that we will appear before the judgment seat of Christ to account for our lives and to determine whether we will receive a reward – or not.

**2 Corinthians 5:** <sup>10</sup> *For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.* <sup>11</sup> *Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences ~*

Of course, that is *NOT* the Great White Throne unbelievers will appear at for judgment. This is the judgment of *believers*, my friends. If you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, then you are going to appear there someday. Salvation is *NOT* in question at this time; *REWARDS* in Heaven are what will be in question. This means we should keep busy because we're all going to be required to turn in a report to God. That's the reason I am writing these reports that most dismiss as unimportant. Well, my beloved, we'll see how important these really are someday, I *PROMISE* you that. Do you give the Lord sixty seconds out of every minute? Do you give Him sixty minutes out of every hour? Do you give Him twenty-four hours each day, every day of your life? If not – I have some very bad news for you: you're coming up for judgment very fast — and you're going to find yourself short on talents.

Under the Mosaic Law, Israel was only required to give God one day per week. Well, God wants it *ALL* today; whether you're washing dishes or digging a ditch. God's going to take an inventory of your life; and He is going to see how you lived down here during those down times. That's when you're going to come through the gate of Miphkad. We're going to see heavily scarred and unknown warriors to whom David is going to call

them to the side and say, “... *I have a reward for you!*” Most people think the preachers, missionaries, music directors and Sunday school teachers are going to have the greatest reward; well, I think the best rewards are going to go to some completely unknown saints. Those are the people who are *REALLY* and *TRULY* living for God in this age, my friends. This can be a wonderful gate, or your gate of sorrow and shame – but not both. John said, “... *many shall be ashamed at His appearing.*” We can all just write that down, too.

***<sup>32</sup> And between the going up of the corner unto the sheep gate repaired the goldsmiths and the merchants.***

~ So, our Spiritual Safari has been through ten gates, and we return to the sheep gate where we first began riding with Nehemiah. We have been all the way around the walls of the city of Jerusalem. The sheep gate speaks of the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ; as we saw very clearly two reports ago. We begin with the cross of Christ and we stop at the cross of Christ. The *ONLY* thing that is important is the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord, friends! As we end this leg of our expedition, let’s just stand here at the sheep gate — the cross of Christ for a moment — and I’ll tell you a little story as we close this report.

There was a great Scottish preacher holding meetings in London a very long time ago. A young man came to speak to this preacher one night after a service. This preacher had a deadline to catch a train so the two walked together towards the tracks. The young man said, “... *the things you have said are not clear to me. I have listened to you carefully, but I don’t think I fully understand you about being saved.*” The preacher continued walking a little ways and asked if the young man had a Bible. The young man said he did not own one, so the preacher gave him his Bible. The preacher instructed the young man to turn to Isaiah chapter fifty-three verse six and said, “... *when you read the first ‘all’ bow down low. When you reach the last ‘all’ then stand up straight and you’ll come out correctly.*” So, the preacher got on the train and left the young man standing there with his Bible more puzzled than ever. Then, the young man moved over and under a streetlight and turned to that passage.

**Isaiah 53:**<sup>6</sup> *All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all ~*

Is that a picture of you today, my friends? Do you see that you are commanded to trust Christ? All your sins were put on the Lord Jesus Christ when He died on the cross. Can you now stand up straight? Well, the next night, the preacher was waiting for this young man, but he was not there. Being a Scotchman, he wanted his Bible back! At the last minute, the young man walked in, so the preacher asked him, “.... *did you do what I told you to do?*” The young man replied, “.... *yes, I did.*” So, the preacher asked what happened. The young man answered, “.... *I now know that Jesus is my Savior and I have trusted Him.*” Have you been through the sheep gate? Throughout eternity and throughout this so-called safari, we’re going to talk about the sheep gate – and we’ll return to it again and again and again — something else you can just write down ~

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