

Two kinds of Streets

In this meditation, we will be discussing "TWO KINDS OF STREETS"

Our

text is drawn from Revelation 21:21 and Revelation 11:8. The

first

of these two verses deal with 'the street of pure gold'; the second

is a reference to 'the street of the great city'. The two kinds of

streets are thus introduced to us in this manner.

To begin, let us take a reading of the two verses and then proceed

to

discuss our subject.

"And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; every several gate was

of

one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were

transparent glass." (Revelation 21:21)

"And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city,

which is spiritually called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord

was

crucified." (Revelation 11:8)

You will recall that when we came to Revelation 4:1 in our

meditation, we answered to that invitation to come up hither. And

from a heavenly viewpoint, we are made to see two sets of

contrasting

pictures. We saw two kinds of women, two kinds of cities (the

great

city and the holy city). Then we saw two kinds of Lambs, the first

given to us in Revelation 13, and the other in Revelation 14.

Next,

we find 'two kinds of streets'.

There is a divine purpose behind bringing before us the spiritual

realities symbolised by these pictures. God encourages His people

to

a life of faithfulness. Faithfulness brightens and enables the

believer to overcome in all things. The future glories associated

with faithfulness are graphically illustrated in one set of

pictures.

To understand what lies ahead of a consistent walk with God will

provoke the believer to live a life that is well pleasing in the

sight of God, despite all difficulties. In the same vein, the Lord warns against unfaithfulness. Unfaithfulness results from habitual disobedience. The prospects of the terrible judgements that will ultimately attend those who choose the evil course are enough warnings to dissuade any from settling for unfaithfulness. The allurements that captivate a soul are also painted in very sharp pictures. It is impossible to miss what the Lord is emphasising in all of these.

So let us search out what is indicated in the first kind of street.

Now, you will notice, if you are curious enough, that Revelation 21:21 said the 'street' of the city was of pure gold. Not the 'streets', but the 'street'. Remember that we are talking of the heavenly Jerusalem. The plural form of the word 'street' will make more sense, naturally speaking, if a city is being described. We know that the smallest cities have more than one street. This observation forces us to look more closely at this verse of scripture to discover to ourselves what the divine intention is. God's domain is certainly ultra glorious. However, it is not what is being described here.

We know that the saints of God in every generation have rejoiced in their spirits as they read through Revelation chapter 21. They understood this chapter in a literal way, imagining as physical structures what is described in it. However, this passage of scriptures relate to the spiritual realities of our glorious inheritance in Christ.

Gold is made up of earth. Though precious it is nevertheless corruptible. The Apostle Peter tells us very clearly that God has begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven.

Gold as used in our passage is symbolic. When the context so allows, gold may be seen as typifying divine things. Now, a street is essentially a carriageway for human and vehicular traffic.

So, the street of gold is a divine street, a divine carriageway. It

is designed to be a thoroughfare for God and man. When properly constructed, it will serve this stated purpose conveniently.

Let us look at a few incidences in scriptures to firm up this conviction. When John (the Baptist) came into the scene just before the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ began, he said, "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord, make His paths straight". So, the way, paths, are figures of the street the Lord travels on to meet the people. They also stand for the pathway the Lord's people take in their journey to meet with Him. This highway, this carriageway is something constructed in the heart of man. You will recall that when John (the Baptist said,

".....prepare ye the way of the Lord, make His path straight. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain.....",

he was preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.

So all of these activities were to take place in the hearts of men.

So, the street of this holy city is made of gold. It is the street that the believer must travel upon to come to life.

Turn with me in your Bibles to Matthew 7, we will be taking the 13th and 14th verses. We are going to show that we are travelling in one or the other of the two kinds of streets.

"Enter ye in at the straight gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be who go in thereat: Because straight is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." (Matthew 7:13, 14.)

So, there is the broad way and there is the narrow way. The narrow way from the human viewpoint may seem difficult and calls for self-denials. But it is the pathway to glory, honour, immortality and life. Heaven's view of the narrow way is most gratifying: a

street of pure gold transparent as glass.

Come with me to Luke 3. We are still looking at the street of pure gold. Remember the gold in scriptures is used to symbolise the divine nature. Jesus calls the street that we must travel in to crystallise the divine nature the narrow way. We want to see how John described this street. On it the Lord travels to meet His people in blessings. The Redeemed also travels on it to meet with the Lord in fellowship and worship. (Luke 3:1-4)

"Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar,
Pontius
Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrach of Galilee,
and his brother Philip, tetrach of Trachonitis, and Lysanias the
tetrach of Abilene. Annas and Caiphaz being the high priests, the
word of God came unto John, the son of Zacharias in the wilderness.

And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the
baptism
of repentance for the remission of sins; As it is written in the
book
of the words of Esaias, the prophet, saying, The voice of one
crying
in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord (or prepare ye
the
street of the Lord). The Lord is coming but prepare ye the way of
the Lord, make His paths straight.

It was something the people were to understand and respond to. So,
the summary of the ministry of John (the Baptist) is given to us
here
in few words. He was also to turn the hearts of the fathers to the
children, the hearts of the children to the fathers, and these ones
made just to the pure worship of the Living God (Malachi 4:6).

So, the activities we are about to read from verse 4 of Luke 3
relate
to transformation that will take place in the sphere of our hearts.

Just as in the natural terrain, a path may have valleys, hills,
mountain ranges, rough and crooked places, so we are shown in this
figurative language that this is the same way that man's heart is.
If God is going to get something across to His people, the
difficulties His people may experience in receiving that word
relate
to their heart condition. Remember the parable of the Sower. He

went forth sowing. And the work was made easy or difficult depending on the terrain in which the word of God (the seed) was sown (Luke 8:5-15). Come back to verse 4 of Luke 3, we read,

"As it is written in the book of the words of E-sai'as the prophet, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord, Make His path straight. Every valley shall be filled.."

In a normal road construction, if there is depression, approved soil material is taken to fill it to the desired level. So the first figure, 'valley', is descriptive of discouragement and despondency.

We are further told,

"..Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth. And all flesh shall see the salvation of God."

Here then is the description of how the street of pure gold is put together. It has to do with overcoming moral vices. What things to overcome are listed in various scriptures one of which is Galatians 5:19-21. II Corinthians 6:14-7:1 is another good passage . Note the two-fold description of that which must be set aside: filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit. Remember that from Revelation 3:12, we know that participation in the New Jerusalem is a promise made to the overcomer. Or putting it more correctly, as we overcome, increasingly, there is found in our lives, the gloriously virtues seen in the heavenly bride, the New Jerusalem.

In our passage, Luke 3:1-5, we have seen that the valley will stand for depression, discouragement and all such attitudes. If we allow life circumstances to overwhelm us, we become discouraged and are not

able to give ourselves to times of devotion and fellowship with God.

That is the valley condition. It will be filled with strength and hope when the heart is turned to God in steadfast faith. Faith is nourished in the environment of God's Word and Spirit. We come to this means of grace as we seek Him in prayers and worship being careful to submit to His lordship in all things.

Depressions, fears, worries are more a mark of the carnal minded than

of the spiritual. It is when the believer does not see or understand

God clearly that he lives in depression. What the carnal mind focuses upon may be factual, drawn from witnesses of the five senses.

However, the report of the word of God transcends the witness of the

senses. Worry and fears are spiritually filthy things that must be cleansed from our hearts. An individual that allows the Lord to carry out in him a whole lot of cleansing and purification inevitably

has a life of faith that is robust.

He says, ".fear thou not for I am with thee, be not dismayed for I am

thy God." (Isaiah 41:10). When we fear, we are saying in effect that

He is not our God. When we live in discouragement and despondency, we are saying the Lord is not with us. So, every valley shall be filled. If the Lord's people are going to concentrate on the things

that belong to their perfection, they must learn not to give their strength to brooding over some misfortunes or hard circumstances.

They are rather required to lift up their hearts unto the Lord in faith. And the Lord who desires them to come to Him in this manner will fill their valleys.

Next he says, ".every mountain shall be brought low.". The mountain

either of difficulties or of pride may obscure the things of God or hinder our having a proper view of God. We are into serious business

with the Lord when we understand that He must have His way in our lives. There is no way other than what is presented to us in our passage (Luke 3:1-5). Do we desire to be the Lamb's wife, the Holy City? Then God's street must be built for the city to appear

ultimately in us.

What has been said in the foregoing, may be easily deduced from a faithful consideration of the divine thought expressed in Isaiah 62:8-12. In the Lord's economy, it takes the street of the Lord to be in place for the city of God to be constructed. **FIRST A STREET, THEN A CITY.**

So, we are told, ".every mountain and every hill shall be brought low. And the crooked places shall be made straight.". Ordinarily, something crooked (a crooked way) is difficult to traverse. The reference is to dishonesty, pretentious living, and hypocrisy. And sometimes, when you look at some believers, you may not be able to tell where they are heading for. While one footstep is pointing to the east, the other seem pointed to the north. You cannot tell where they are going by looking at the footprints. The Lord will have us maintain a holy attitude, a pure spirit in following Him. It would then be clear to us and to others what our tomorrow would be. So, it says, ".the crooked places shall be made straight.". This agrees with what is said of the street of the Holy City. It is as transparent glass (Revelation 21:21). You can see through. A believer who is upright, sincere and properly focused in his walk with God is a delight. Looking at his life, you can see the government of God and the rule of heaven. Dishonesty is a mark of the beast, not of the believer in Christ Jesus.

And he says, ".the rough places shall be made smooth.". A rough personality is inimical to gospel interest. Spirituality is all about developing a smooth personality. Men on a spiritual pilgrimage to the celestial city have enough hassles to cope with in the world. They would be better assisted when they meet with fellow pilgrims endowed with such graces of the spirit as are indicated in Colossians 3:10-17. Distemper, quick-temper, fierce anger, aggressive temperament are rough attributes. And of course these are things that combine to give domineering posture to an individual. You know, when we have rough edges, people cannot come to us or else they are pricked. In preparing the way of the Lord, we need to make the rough places smooth. A smooth personality is one over whom Jesus is Lord.

Such is taking on the sweet, lamb-like nature of our Redeemer. So, that is the street of gold.

It is a street in as much as we travel thereon to meet with the Lord and God journeys thereon to meet with us. The Lord's way leads on to divinity. Will you crystallise the divine nature? Then you must walk in the footsteps of Jesus. We must walk as He walked. We must follow the narrow way that leads to life.

What this narrow way means in essence, warrants a further study. For our present purpose, we consider the foregoing adequate. Now let's get introduced to the other kind of street.

You will recall in the reading of Matthew 7:13, we are told that ".broad is the way that leads to destruction.". Many persons are travelling along that way. Let us turn to Revelation 11:8 and Revelation 20:9. In the second passage, it is said of certain persons that they went up the breadth of the earth. The phrase "breadth of the earth" is misleading since the original Greek word carries the idea of a street. They went on "the street of the earth". So, there is a "street of the earth", and then there is a "street of heaven".

Men still in flesh and blood can choose one or the other of these two streets to travel upon. As a man lays his bed, so he shall lie on it. Cast in the heart of man is some kind of street. As he becomes more and more consistent in the way he lives his life, it becomes evident what kind of street is in the making. A street of mud or street of gold. On which of these is your journeying?

Now, come with me to Revelation 11:8. We are told that certain dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city. What is the great city? The great city is Babylon. Greatness is something that is behind much of what is done in the city of man. Babylonian set-ups are always described by the word "great". In contrast what things motivate the Lord's people in their devotion and service are such that please God. Men who love Him desire to be holy even as He is holy. "Holiness becometh thy house O Lord my God" is a familiar

phrase in the Psalms. They are satisfied with whatever gives God pleasure. God makes them holy; they become of that Holy City.

Sodom and Egypt in history are known for lewdness and everything vile. The city called great is characterised by moral depravity. Unrestrained passion and evil lust thrive in such an environment. The street of earth, of the great city is laid upon the foundations of sin and uncleanness. Men are grown in the works of the flesh and excusing in them the vilest affection. The sad thing about this situation as set forth in our passage is that it is all happening in the street of religion. Those described once had their beginning in God.

The warnings in scriptures are mainly addressed to the Lord's people.

A noble vine may degenerate into something wild. In Jeremiah's day, he had to contend with the spiritual declension of the children of Israel. Things got so bad that the Lord sacked that entire nation, sending them to captivity. These things are written for our admonition. And in Revelation 18, the possibility of a whole lot of deviation from the way of truth is again brought before our view. This calls for continuous self examination. Let us read the first four verses:

"And after these things, I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lighted with his glory.

And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird.

For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies.

And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be Not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive

not
of her plagues."

A careful study of these four verses will reveal Babylon as the ultimate end of a course of unfaithfulness. A congregation of people once of the Lord may degenerate to what is here called Babylon. It becomes the habitation of devils, and a hold of every foul spirit and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird.

Quite often, failures are blamed upon Satan, devils and demons. But the truth is that except there is found in a person's life the things that attract the activities of these evil entities, they never find an entrance. And that is why the key to true deliverance is repenting from those things that provide an entrance to evil spirits. So, there is no where in scriptures that God blames the devil for the fall of any individual.

When He rebukes and judge sin, God does so showing that the individuals themselves have say in the matter. They could possibly deliver themselves from the ugly situation. So, to say that this great city has these characteristics is to say that those travelling on the street of this great city also have certain character traits that attract these demonic spirits. Galatians 5:19-21 lists character traits which when found in an individual pictures him as travelling on the street of the great city, the broad way that leads to destruction.

The Bible says, ".there is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof is destruction.". And, remember the emphasis in all of these meditations is that there is a word the Lord is speaking to His people. We are called, saved, washed, cleansed from our sins and His Spirit comes to dwell in us. But if in the passage of time any gives up the life of following after God, allowing the growth in Him of moral vices he is assuredly travelling on this "street of the great city".

Now let's turn to Galatians 5:19-21:

"Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, emulation, wrath, strife, sedition, heresies, envying, murders, drunkenness, revelling, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God".

So, these character traits found in part or wholly in an individual identify him as travelling on the street of the great city. We have taken this discussion in a simplified manner, and the question you and I need to answer is "What street are you and I travelling on?" Are we travelling on the street of gold, clear as crystal, transparent as glass, or are we travelling on the street of the great city, the broad way that leads to destruction? May the Lord help us to answer appropriately. The journey on the one leads to life while on the other leads to destruction.

In closing, we shall identify the things which, if found in the believer, shows him as preparing always to walk in and along the street of pure gold. We can call walking in the narrow way a life of consecration. What is consecration? Matthew 16:24 calls us to a life of consecration. There are two elements involved in the life of consecration. There, it says, ".except a man denies himself and take up his cross and follow me, he is not worthy of me.". So, negatively, the life of consecration requires a man to practice self denial. And positively, the life of consecration requires a man to follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth.

A full consideration of what the life of consecration entails is to be taken in another meditation. For now, it is sufficient to ask us, "On what street are you travelling?" "On what street am I travelling?". The Bible says:

"God is not mocked for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. He that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption, but he that soweth to the spirit, shall of the spirit reap life everlasting."

May we allow the Spirit of the Lord to assist us choose the one and reject the other, to love righteousness and hate iniquity, and to follow on. It is narrow, not many persons are found on it, but the Lord our God shall help us. What seem to us to be narrow is from the divine standpoint, a street of gold. Before you come to that celestial glory, learn to travel on the pathway that accords to that glory, in Jesus name. Amen.

Beloved Brethren, this far has the Lord helped us. In our next meditation, we shall be considering "THE TWO KINDS OF LAMBS" . We do covet your prayers. We encourage you to keep on going on as the Lord in His mercies continue to increase your faith as He adds more grace to your spiritual elbows.