

April 1998

“Open to me the gates of righteousness: I will go through them, and I will praise the Lord. This is the gate of the Lord, through which the righteous shall enter” (Psalm 118:19-20).

This is one of those psalms in which the Messiah’s work of redemption is intermingled with the reception of its benefits by those for whom He suffered. Verses 22 and 23 are two of the most quoted Old Testament references to Christ in the New Testament, appearing not less than six times in all three of the synoptic gospels plus Acts, Ephesians and I Peter. The phrase in verse 26 “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord” appears 5 times in the Gospels in reference to Jesus.

Jesus, not David, is the man who was surrounded, pressed, by “all nations”. Not literal peoples, but the sins of those peoples, which the Lord imputed to the Sin Bearer, closed in upon him and demanded His death. He was the one who was “pushed”, assaulted by the prince of darkness with the intent to make him fall, to destroy him, but the Lord made that very assault of Satan the occasion of Christ’s victory over sin and death, and Satan’s ruin. Jesus was “chastened severely”, the chastisement of our peace was upon Him (Is.53: 5), He bore the penalty for our sins, but the faithful Father did not give His Son over to final death, but raised Him triumphant over hell and the grave.

Jesus has done what His fallen people could never do. He has taken on sin and put it away forever (Heb. 9:26). In doing that He has opened the gates of righteousness which hopelessly locked out poor sinners, and bade them enter in! So cries the prophecy of Isaiah 26:2-3: *“Open the gates that the righteous nation which keeps the truth may enter in. You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on you”*. That “righteous nation” is the church of the living God.

It is the Lord’s to open the gates of righteousness, to make them enterable. That is something that man cannot do. It is only by the right hand, the arm of the Lord. *“He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor; Therefore His own arm brought salvation for Him; and His own righteousness, it sustained Him* (Is. 59:16). It is the Lord’s alone to satisfy God’s holy law. You and I can never do that. It is the Lord’s alone to fulfill perfect righteousness. We will fall miserably short. It is the Lord’s alone to break the tyranny and bondage of sin. We are the devil’s lawful captives, and it will take a stronger than he to set us free from slavery to him. The Lord has done that. He has made it possible to enter those gates of righteousness.

It is ours to enter in. Our prayer should be “open to **me**.” Salvation must become more than a general and objective thing. We must personally enter in. That is, we must choose to be and to do righteousness. We may, for He has made it possible. The righteous, the truly justified **will!** They will do so in

humility and meekness, praising and glorifying the Lord. The voice of rejoicing is in the tents of the righteous!

- *C. M.*