

Ezekiel 48:31

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

Analysis

The gate naming—"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"—commemorates all twelve tribes. Each tribe receives recognition through named gates, preventing tribal hierarchy or favorites. The Hebrew שַׁעֲרִים (she'arim, 'gates') serve both functional (access) and symbolic (identity) purposes. The equal gate distribution (three per side, four sides, twelve total) ensures comprehensive representation. Reformed theology sees this as picturing the church: built on twelve apostles (Ephesians 2:20), twelve tribes spiritually constituting spiritual Israel (James 1:1, Revelation 7:4-8), and New Jerusalem having twelve gates named for twelve tribes (Revelation 21:12-13). All God's people receive honor and access.

Historical Context

The twelve-tribe system structured Israelite identity despite historical complexities (Joseph split into Ephraim and Manasseh, Levi landless). The exile scattered tribes, raising questions about future restoration. Ezekiel's vision promises comprehensive restoration—all tribes represented. The gate names ensured memorial perpetuity—future generations would remember tribal heritage. Nehemiah's rebuilt gates had functional names (Sheep Gate, Fish Gate) versus tribal names, but the principle remains: gates memorialize and provide access. Revelation's New Jerusalem combines tribal gates (Revelation 21:12) with

apostolic foundations (Revelation 21:14), uniting Old and New Testament saints. The equal representation prevents sectarian divisions—all God's people equally honored.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. Do you honor all God's people (various gifts, backgrounds, denominations) or favor your particular group?
2. What does equal gate distribution teach about preventing hierarchies and favorites in God's kingdom?
3. How do you maintain identity (tribal gates) while pursuing unity (single city)?

Interlinear Text

וְשַׁעַר	וְשַׁעַר	וְשַׁעַר	וְשַׁעַר	וְשַׁעַר	וְשַׁעַר
And the gates	of the city	H5921	shall be after the names	of the tribes	of Israel
H8179	H5892		H8034	H7626	H3478

וְשַׁעַר	שְׁלוֹשָׁה	צָפֹנָה	וְשַׁעַר	רְאוּבֵן	אֶחָד
And the gates	three	northward	And the gates	of Reuben	one
H8179	H7969	H6828	H8179	H7205	H259

וְשַׁעַר	יְהוּדָה	אֶחָד	וְשַׁעַר	לֵוִי	אֶחָד
And the gates	of Judah	one	And the gates	of Levi	one
H8179	H3063	H259	H8179	H3878	H259