

Psalm 118:19

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Open to me the gates of righteousness: I will go into them,
and I will praise the LORD:

Analysis

Open to me the gates of righteousness: I will go into them, and I will praise the LORD. This verse shifts from battlefield to temple—from military victory to worship celebration. The psalmist arrives at Jerusalem's gates seeking entrance to worship. Pitchu li sha'arei tzedek (open to me gates of righteousness). Sha'arei tzedek (gates of righteousness) could mean gates leading to righteous worship, gates through which the righteous enter, or gates of the righteous city (Jerusalem). Temple gatekeepers controlled access, ensuring ceremonial purity (Psalm 15, 24:3-6).

The confident declaration: **I will go into them, and I will praise the LORD** (avo vam odeh Yah). Avo (I will enter) expresses determination. Odeh (I will praise/give thanks) comes from the same root as verse 1's hodu (give thanks)—the psalm's opening and closing frame thanksgiving. Entry into God's presence results in praise. Access to worship spaces isn't casual entitlement but precious privilege. The righteous long to enter God's courts (Psalm 84:1-2, 10), while the wicked are excluded. The question isn't merely physical entry but spiritual fitness: "Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in his holy place?" (Psalm 24:3).

Historical Context

Jerusalem's gates held both practical and symbolic significance. Physical gates controlled access to the city and temple precincts. Priests served as gatekeepers,

examining pilgrims for ceremonial cleanliness. Major festivals brought enormous crowds—thousands of pilgrims converging on Jerusalem for Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles. Psalm 118, as part of Hallel liturgy, would be sung as pilgrims approached and entered the city. Some scholars suggest verses 19-27 represent processional liturgy: pilgrims request entry (v. 19), gatekeepers respond (v. 20), pilgrims testify (vv. 21-25), priests bless entering worshipers (vv. 26-27). Jesus's triumphal entry fulfilled this imagery—crowds singing Hallel psalms as He approached Jerusalem (Matthew 21:9). Christ's crucifixion and resurrection opened access to God's presence: the temple veil tore (Matthew 27:51), and believers now enter God's presence boldly through Christ's blood (Hebrews 10:19-22).

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. What does it mean to seek entry through 'gates of righteousness' when Christ is the door (John 10:9)?
2. How should believers approach worship gathering—as casual routine or precious privilege requiring spiritual preparation?
3. In what ways has Christ's death and resurrection opened access to God's presence previously restricted by ceremonial law?

Interlinear Text

לְיִפְתְּחוּ שְׁעָרֵי אֶלְעָזָר אָבָא בְּמִזְבֵּחַ
Open to me the gates of righteousness I will go
H6605 H8179 H6664 H935
אֶלְעָזָר יְהָוָה
into them and I will praise the LORD
H3034 H3050

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 26:2 (Righteousness): Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may enter in.

Revelation 22:14 (Parallel theme): Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.

Psalms 100:4 (Resurrection): Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name.

Isaiah 38:22 (References Lord): Hezekiah also had said, What is the sign that I shall go up to the house of the LORD?

Isaiah 38:20 (References Lord): The LORD was ready to save me: therefore we will sing my songs to the stringed instruments all the days of our life in the house of the LORD.

Psalms 95:2 (Parallel theme): Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms.