

I am the gate (I am the door) – John 10:1-10

I am the gate for the sheep (10:7 NIV)

I am the door of the sheep (10:7 KJV)

I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved (10:9 KJV)

I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved (10:9 KJV)

Gates and doors

In most modern Bibles the translation reads as ‘the gate’. In more traditional versions such as the King James Version, the term is translated as ‘the door’. It really isn’t a contradiction as the context is the same. A gate or a door has two purposes as described in the passage. One purpose is to keep people out. At night I’m sure we all lock the doors to our house. In this way a door is used to keep people out. It keeps out people who we don’t want wondering into our house, people who should not be there. The same is true of gates. At the front of church we have gates. Now if you come to Ashurst Drive on a weekday morning, you will usually see the gates at the front shut with a chain around them. This is to keep cars out. Why? Because we have children from the preschool coming in and we want to keep them safe. And that’s the real reason we lock our doors as well isn’t it? It’s to protect the people inside.

Apparently shepherds in the Bible times used to put the sheep in a pen at night. This is what this passage refers to. It could be a cave or more often it would simply be an enclosure built somewhere in the field. It would have a wall either built with stones or made from branches and it would be completely closed except for one entrance where the sheep went in and out. Usually the entrance would not have a gate across it but would simply be a gap. But at night when the sheep were in the pen, the shepherd himself would lie across the entrance. So the shepherd himself became the gate. By lying across the entrance the shepherd could keep close watch on the sheep and protect them from wild animals or sheep rustlers.

However, a door or gate is different to a wall. A wall would probably be more effective at keeping something out so if this is what Jesus was driving at then he may have said “I am the wall”. But a gates’ main purpose is to allow people to pass through it. It provides a gap in the wall, a legitimate way through. If someone wants to come into your house, you would expect them to come in through the door wouldn’t you? You wouldn’t expect a visitor to come in through the window. If someone came into your house through the window you

would probably call the police. The window is not the proper way into the house, the right way in is through the door.

Jesus is the gate (or door)

Jesus is talking to the Pharisees about being blind. (see John 9:35-41). And the Pharisees seem to prove his point when Jesus gives them this illustration and once again they just don't understand what he means. So Jesus spells it out to them and in verse 7 says "I am the gate" or in the KJV "I am the door". But a gate or door to what? Jesus makes this clear too, in verse 9 he says "whoever enters through me will be saved". So it doesn't take a genius to work out that Jesus is the gate to salvation, our salvation. This is what John has been trying to let us know all the way through this gospel.

The Jews had long understood that the Messiah would bring salvation. The coming of the Messiah was something they looked forward to. They thought of course that the Messiah would be a mighty warrior that would get rid of the Romans. There are several prophecies in the Old Testament that refer to the Messiah. So it seems that from the Jews point of view, it was the post of Messiah was the key, that was the gate. Whoever held the post of Messiah was therefore the gate to salvation. By saying he was the gate, Jesus was also revealing himself as the Messiah. His references to those climbing in another way, who he calls thieves and robbers refers to the false Messiahs that came before him. There were several who claimed to be the Messiah but they were false. They had no interest in the sheep for a start; they were only interested in their own fame and glory. But perhaps more importantly, it is God who decides who fills this post. Verse 3 says "The watchman opens the gate for him". God the father appointed Jesus to be the saviour of the world. He is the 'anointed one' and therefore the one and only true Messiah and the only way to salvation is to go through him.

That's not a very popular view you know. There are plenty of people who still believe that you can get to heaven by some other means. One of the most popular views is that you can get to heaven by good works. But the Bible tells us clearly that no one hits the standards that God requires. For example Romans 3:23 says "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God". Therefore none of us will ever be able to make it on good deeds. Another view is that because God is a God of love he will simply let everyone in. I'm afraid that isn't true either. Again the Bible clearly says that not everyone will get in, in fact it goes as far as to say only a few find the way in (Matthew 7:13-14).

Enter through the gate

So we know that Jesus is the gate. The only way for us to be saved is to go through Jesus, he alone is the door to salvation, he alone is the gateway.

Have you found the gate yet? And if you have found the gate, have you entered through it? If you have accepted Jesus as your saviour then you can be certain of your salvation. If you haven't then please do think about it seriously. Jesus is the ONLY way to be saved. God's desire is for you to be part of the sheepfold. To those who believe in him, Jesus opens the gate. Through the gate is green pasture, a safe place in Jesus sheepfold. Enter through the gate and in Jesus words, you will "have life, and have it to the full".

If you're not sure how to go through the gate then talk to me or anyone you know who has made that decision to follow Jesus. I would love to talk to you about how you go through the gate and be certain of your salvation. Because going through this gate gives life, and not just life after death, but life for today. That is God's desire for us but it can only be achieved by going through the gate.