

The Portcullis

Background

Again I don't recall the date. I think it was in the mid-1990s. I do remember that it was during the worship at Stanton Road Baptist Church in Luton, Bedfordshire.

The Portcullis

I saw in my mind's eye a medieval castle surrounded by a moat and drawbridge, but I also knew that it was the current day.

Sounds of partying came from the interior – people were having a great time. The drawbridge was down, and a number of people were approaching the castle gates. As my viewpoint shifted, I could see people inside enjoying picnics and playing games on a grassy area (it reminded me of Warwick Castle but that may be irrelevant).

The newcomers obviously wanted to go in and join the party, but when they got to the entrance the portcullis was down. They could see the people inside but couldn't pass through.

They called to the people inside who came to the gateway and greeted the visitors. Everyone was very friendly, but nobody made any effort to raise the portcullis. They chatted and shook hands through the grill, even passed them refreshments but still the barrier blocked the way in.

Eventually the visitors went home disappointed that they were left outside.

My interpretation

The castle represented the Kingdom of God. A lot is happening that is attractive to outsiders, especially when they see the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

The portcullis represents barriers that prevent people coming into the Kingdom. These may be cultural, preconceived ideas or their past experience of church.

In a real castle, the portcullis could only be raised from the inside, by the people it is protecting. As Kingdom people, is there a spiritual portcullis that we need to raise? Or do we want to remain secure in our own little spiritual stronghold?

Pete Bennett
mid-1990s?