

“The Road Less Travelled”

Matthew 7:13-14

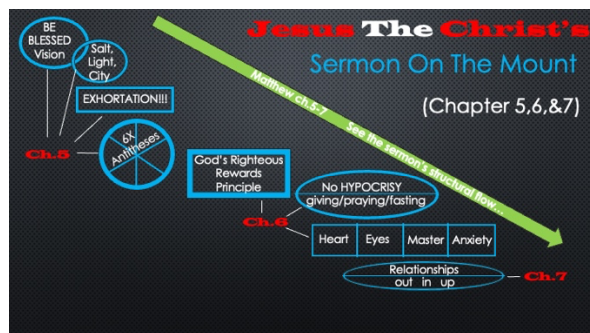
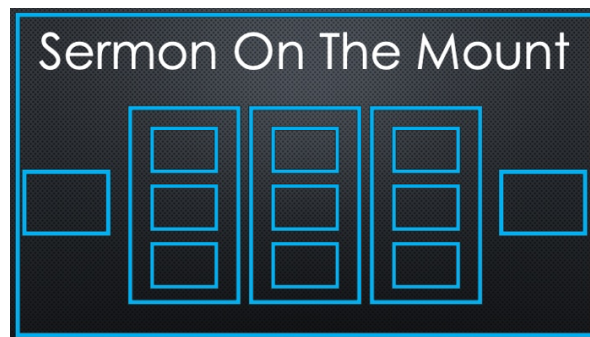
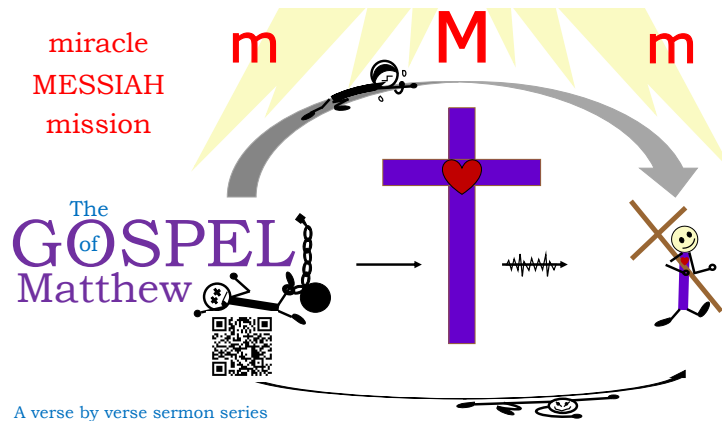
Matthew 7:13-14

INTRO: *If you were going to summarize Christ’s teaching in His Sermon On The Mount, how would you do it?*

THEN... WHAT WOULD YOU SAY?

PRAYER

CONTEXT:



Jesus The Christ's
Sermon On The Mount

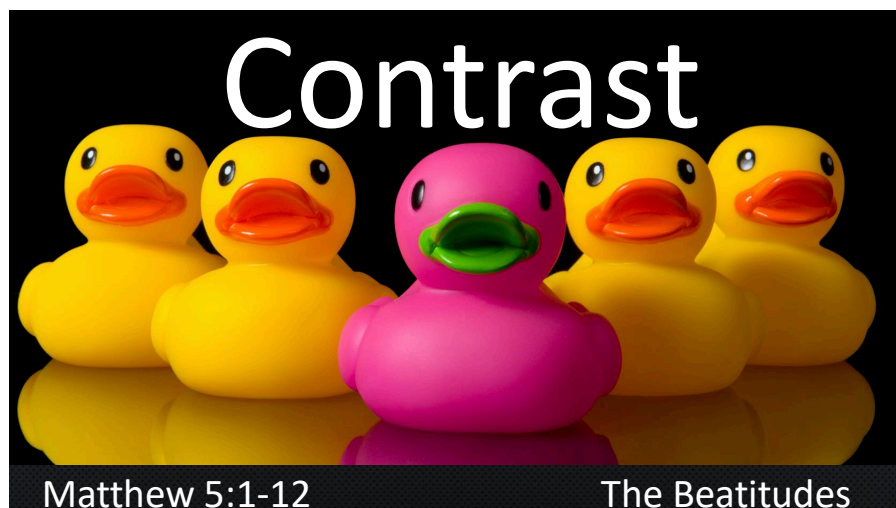
Matthew ch.5-7

It is One
God-breathed
chain of
strategic and
interlocking,
truth in love links, ALL
telling the One divine
design of The Gospel
of Jesus The Christ!

Revelation

Genesis

God's Word is
NOT
put together
like a sting of
independent
pearls...





BIG IDEA: The width of eternal life's narrow way is only as wide as Christ's cross.

PREVIEW:

1. Command & Commission
2. Contrast & Clarity
3. Consider & Commit

T/S:

CONCEPTUALLY SPEAKING, HOW IMPORTANT ARE FINISH-LINES & FINAL-STATEMENTS?

Have you ever finished a book, movie, story, lesson, etc. only to be let down and/or confused by the ending? Don't you hate that? If you do, this sermon and it's clear, "final contrasts" have you at heart... Jesus' teaching & preaching have you at heart!

Case in point, here comes Christ's closing crescendo to His famous Sermon On The Mount... Get ready, here comes His finale! Listen very closely and carefully to The Savior's summation statements to *"the most challenging & judgmental sermon ever preached..."* I personally plead with you to take note of **His timing, tone, teaching, truth, and TEST...** one big test that is made up of many metaphorical and missional tests – ALL united in their application of the one eternal test. **Is Jesus your LORD?** That final, definitive test ultimately describes and determines who a person really is, or better stated, which kingdom they serve and who sits on the throne of their lives. We know this to be true according to the teaching of our Creator (2 Timothy 3:16 & John 1:1-18), per this sermon, as well as the full-context and righteous interpretation of the entirety of Scripture. In short, **are you a foe (dross), a fan (silver), or a follower (the true gold) of Almighty God, The Lord, Jesus The Christ?**

HERE'S THE HOOK...

while I've listed **3 options**, in reality, there are **only 2 choices!**

TEXT: **Matthew 7:13-14**

13"Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. 14For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.

T/S: MacArthur quote

Here is the appeal to which Jesus has been moving through the whole sermon.

He gives the call to decide now about becoming a citizen of God's kingdom and inheriting eternal life, or remaining a citizen of this fallen world and receiving damnation. The way to life is on God's terms alone; the way to damnation is on any terms a person wants, because every way but God's leads to the same fate. Jesus has been giving God's standards throughout the sermon, standards that are holy and perfect and that are diametrically opposed to the self-righteous, self-sufficient, and hypocritical standards of man...

Many people admire the principles of the Sermon on the Mount but never follow those principles. Many people respect and praise Jesus Christ but never receive Him as Lord and Savior. Because they never receive the King and never enter the kingdom, they are as much separated from the King and as much outside His kingdom as is the rankest atheist or most unethical pagan.

Jesus' command is not simply to enter *some* gate but to enter **the narrow gate**.

I. COMMAND & COMMISSION

“ENTER” = imperative command

- Command to BEGIN a progression...
- **Call to ACTION!**
- **COMMISSION to JOIN JESUS!**
 - Enter **hope & healing...**
 - Enter **Him (“in Christ...”)**
 - Enter **holiness/righteousness**
 - Matthew 3:15
 - Matthew 5:17-20
 - Matthew 7:12 = *BE The Law of Christ!*
 - Enter **“hard”**
 - “hard” **TBD** (to be defined)
 - “hard” **TBD** (to be described)
 - “hard” **TBD** (to be discipled)
 - Matthew 28:18-20
 - Acts 1:8 & Titus 1:11
 - Acts 4 / Titus 2:15 / Jude
 - Hebrews exhortation(s)!
 - Revelation 2&3 & close!

JESUS IS the kingdom's ONLY Entry!
(John 14:6)

“GATE” = entry/initiation

A. Purpose = keep out... & filter-in...

- Keep/let people & problems out
- Keep & let people & promises in

B. Practicalities: Handles & Hinges

C. Power: Message, Meetings, Materials, Methods

D. Person

- JESUS IS The Gate/Door! (John 10:9)
- Each person enters personally...

E. Prioritize

- No experience without an entry (*1st things 1st!*)
- No end/finish without a start & entry (*Do it now!*)

F. Preparation

- *How* we come to a gate matters.
- *Why* we come to a gate matters.

“WAY” = engage/application

- A person’s micro choice or specific decision when deciding upon a next step or action...
- **The culmination of one’s choices**
- The map or blueprint that is/was utilized
- By contrast to the “planned path” (above)... in retrospect, **the actual track/path/road taken.**
- Defines/answers the question: *“How did we get here?”*
- **Diversity, options, & consequences are all core components of the Bible’s use of “way.”**
- **JESUS IS The Way!** (John 14:6)

II. CONTRAST & CLARITY



*(**Note** the use of “vs” as opposed to “or.” To be clear, Christ is contrasting kingdom family against kingdom fakes & foes.)*

- A. **Obedience** vs. Disobedience = love vs. hate...
- B. **Righteous Motives** vs. Wrong Motives = eternity
- C. **Get-to Attitude** vs. Have-to Grumbling = altitude
- D. Broad/Wide vs. **Narrow**
 - Gate = squeezing in or staying out...
 - Way = final destination...



E. Many/Masses/Majority vs. Few/Remnant

- STOP, look, & ask yourself what this means...
- STOP & consider *who is preaching/teaching?*
- Humpback's "bubble-net-feeding" on schools...

STOP & contrast Christ's Church
vs. the culture's crowds!

F. Easy vs. Hard

"EASY" = readily equipped

- Opposite of "hard" - not difficult...
- ***"Comes naturally... without much effort"*** (i.e. fish swim)
- Doable/Deliverable without excessive effort or excuse
- Justifier of high expectations
- Congruence = want & walk unify
- **When power & purpose unify**
- Being happy when filled with joy (Note: medical issues do exist.)
- *Where, when, & with whom one's equipping & equipment are overwhelmingly prepared for the task at hand...*

Christ-likeness is easy for faithful Christ-followers!

- Telling the truth is easy for Truth tellers!
- Loving God & neighbors is easy for all who love God & neighbors with all their heart, soul, mind & strength...
- Fishing for men is easy for real fishermen.
- Being sanctified is easy for all saved souls
- Righteousness is easy for those filled with Christ's righteousness.

“HARD” = difficult, ill-prepared

- Opposite of easy
 - Opposite in effort
 - Opposite in direction
 - UP hill vs DOWN hill
 - AGAINST vs WITH (“current”)
 - Current = momentum
 - Current = culture
 - Opposite in principle:
 - STAND vs Lay-Down/COMPROMISE
 - FIGHT vs FLIGHT
 - FLIGHT vs FIGHT
 - TRUTH vs LIE
 - LOVE vs HATE
 - FORGIVE vs BITTER
 - HUMBLE vs GRUMBLE
 - UNIFY vs DIVIDE
 - PERSEVERE vs QUIT
 - SERVE vs SERVED
 - HEAVEN vs EARTH
 - LONG-term vs SHORT-term
 - NARROW vs BROAD/WIDE

G. Death/Destruction vs. Life/Living

“DESTRUCTION” = evil end/destination

- **Hell is the eternal destruction!**
- **DIVINE DESTRUCTION IS UNTHINKABLE.**

- Never-ending torment
 - Every day's filled w/ weeping
 - Every day's gnashing teeth
 - Never-ending torture
 - Personal (no party, no friend)
 - Physical (just for starters)
 - Emotional (only anguish...)
 - Spiritual (try to imagine...)
- **THIS DESTRUCTION IS UNIMAGINABLE...**
- **HELL ON EARTH IS HORRIFIC MISNOMER!**

"LIFE" = eternal blessing/destination

- *"life"* means here the act of living
- *"life"* here = power to live
- *"life"* here = promised eternal life!
- *"life"* here = kingdom of heaven/God
- ***JESUS IS The LIFE!*** (John 14:6) Jesus IS Life!



III. CONSIDER & COMMIT

1. ALL roads lead to somewhere!
2. **THERE ARE ONLY 2 ROADS, NO OTHER OPTIONS!**
3. **CHOOSING NOT TO DECIDE IS A DECISION...**
4. Choosing not to make a commitment is a commitment.

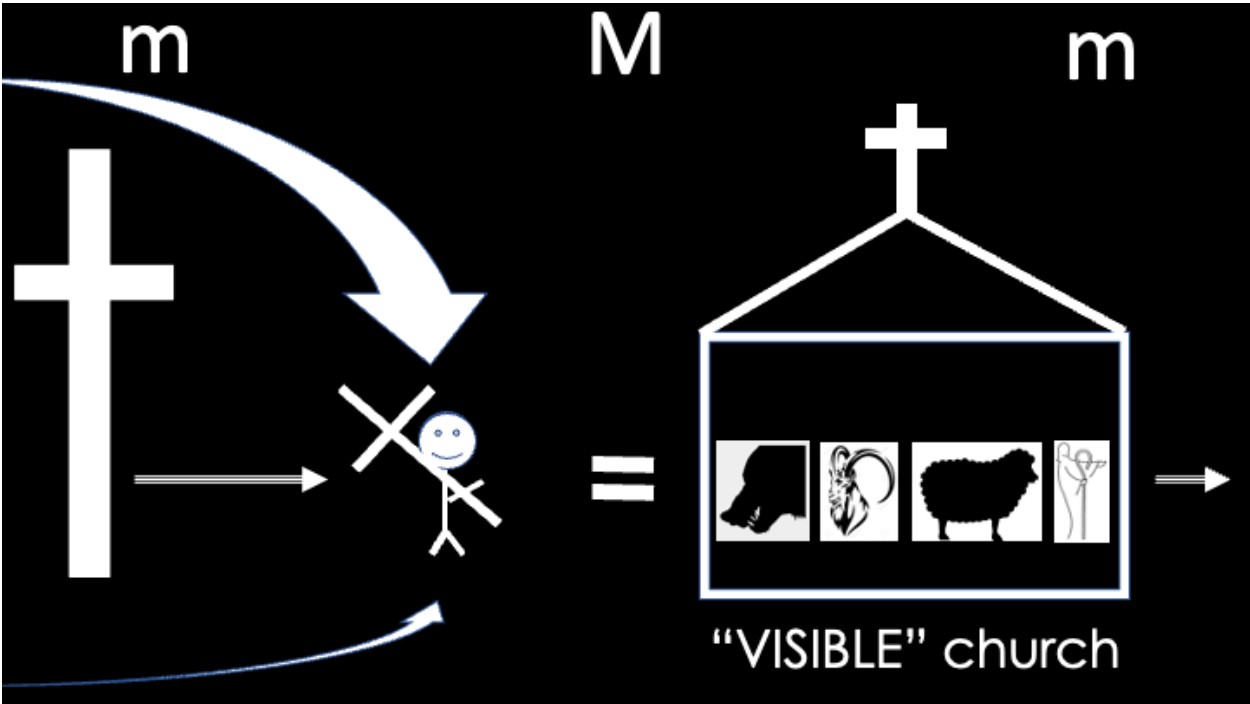
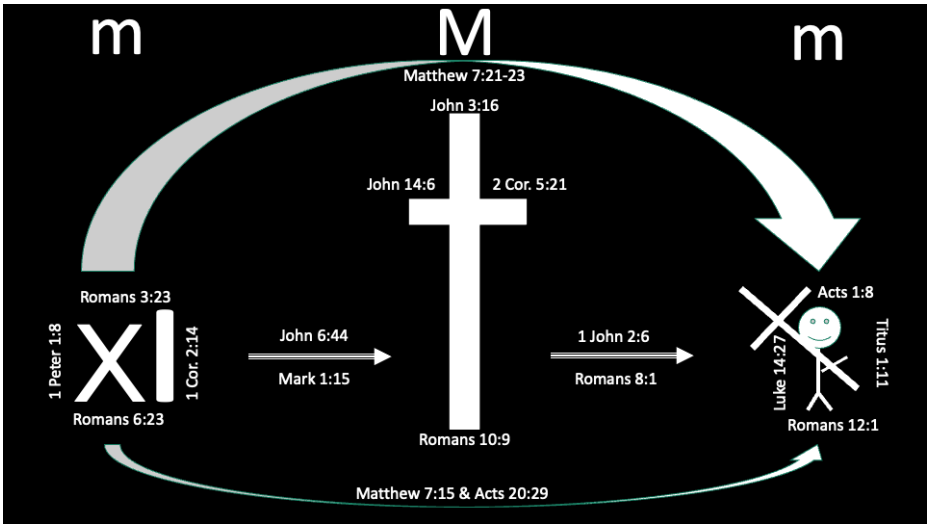
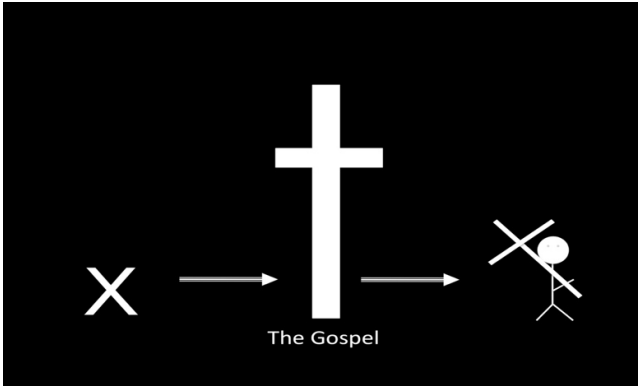
*Every choice, every decision... every topic, every truth...
has a gate, a way, & two guardrails...*

**DO YOU HAVE THE BIBLE'S TAKE ON CULTURE OR
DO YOU HAVE THE CULTURE'S TAKE ON THE BIBLE?**

*Do you have a "biblical worldview" OR do you have
the world's view on biblical truth (in love)?*

Before you answer:

- **HOW DO YOU KNOW?**
- What makes you so sure?
- **WHAT IS A/YOUR WORLDVIEW?**
- When was the last time you checked/confirmed?
- **"SO WHAT?" IF YOU DO?**
- "So what?" if you don't?
- **"SO WHAT?" IF YOU'RE NOT SURE?**
- "So what?" if you're in the middle?



ILLUSTRATIONS OF EXPLANATION: (2 gates/ways)

➤ Pilgrim's Progress

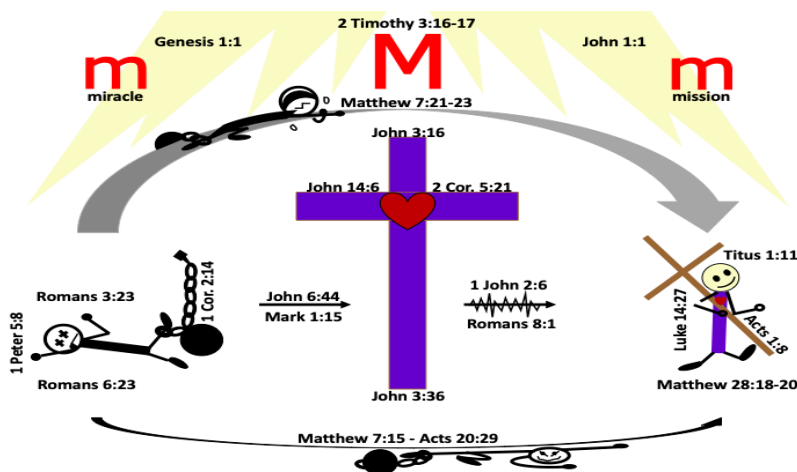
- Biblical worldview vs world-view of Bible
- Biblical measure of our culture vs our culture's view on the Bible...

➤ Robert Frost: *"The Road Not Taken"*

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

➤ Olympics

- Gold medal vs. Silver, Bronze, etc.
 - Golden Rule = gold, narrow gate...
 - Silver Rule = dross, wide gate/way



BIG IDEA: The width of eternal life's narrow way is only as wide as Christ's cross!

Here's another way of seeing & BE-ing The Contrast



One FAITH. One FAMILY. One FOCUS.

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and you will BE My witnesses (locally, regionally, and globally).” – Acts 1:8

One Question: **WHAT DO YOU WANT?**

One Offer: **COME AND SEE.**

One Promise: **TRUTH IN LOVE!**

Our Truth-in-Love Distinctives: **We are...**

1. Responding to grace & repenting of sin...
2. Trusting the Bible & obeying God's Word...
3. Growing in-Christ & living Spirit-led...
4. Praying for guidance & following by faith...
5. Dying to self & carrying our cross...
6. BE-ing the Church & loving one another...(truly loving one another)
7. Equipping the saints & exemplifying supernatural unity...
8. Ministering as ambassadors & discerning matters shrewdly...
9. Worshipping God vertically & experiencing Him horizontally...
10. Proclaiming the Gospel (no matter what) & fishing for men...
11. Making disciples-warriors & winning spiritual-warfare...
12. Loving our King & serving His kingdom!

REVIEW: *...we're in Christ's sermon's "final contrasts"*

Jesus has shifted from His sermon's broad teaching, to its narrow summary, to now His final exhortation!

CLOSE:

- Remember where we are & how we got here...
 - John 1:29/36 & 4:19
 - Matthew 3:15; 5:17-20
 - Matthew 7:12...
 - Christ's golden treasure & measure...

"Therefore, in everything... the Law & the prophets"

"Love God, Love People, Serve the World!"

- To please God is to love God (John 14:15).

TO PLEASE WIDE-WAY PEOPLE IS TO DAMN THEM.

- The energy of God's golden love engages, explains, equips, empowers, & exemplifies... in large part, by empathizing with & biblically exhorting others.

Let's finish with some God-honoring, Christ-like clarity:

(Use 3 different sized containers... narrow, **wide**, middle.)

Let's define & describe these categories, character traits, & characteristics biblically, culturally, & personally...
then we'll see where each road/way takes us.

	<u>NARROW</u>	<u>MIDDLE</u>	<u>BROAD/WIDE</u>
Bible	<i>God's Word</i>	<i>Good Book</i>	<i>Superstition</i>
Truth	<u>God & Word</u>	<u>Relative</u>	<u>Only Subjective</u>
Love	<i>God & Word</i>	<i>Emotional</i>	<i>Self-defined</i>
God	<u>Biblical Trinity</u>	<u>church god</u>	<u>No/wrong gods</u>
Jesus	<i>Christ / Lord</i>	<i>lord in name</i>	<i>"Good teacher"</i>
"Man"	<u>Depraved/Lost</u>	<u>Not perfect...</u>	<u>Basically good...</u>
Grace	<i>God's gift to give</i>	<i>Reward given</i>	<i>Luck / karma</i>
Mercy	<u>God's patience</u>	<u>Earned favor</u>	<u>Kindness</u>
Sin	<i>Inherent/Hell</i>	<i>Not that bad</i>	<i>Just a word...</i>
Confess	<u>Gospel required</u>	<u>Religious-step</u>	<u>Unnecessary</u>
Repent	<i>Gospel required</i>	<i>Mere Remorse</i>	<i>Unnecessary</i>
Restore	<u>Gospel exclusive</u>	<u>Man empowered</u>	<u>Man's option</u>
Authority	<i>2 Tim. 3:16</i>	<i>Personal choice</i>	<i>Self-willed</i>
Mission	<u>Glorify God!</u>	<u>Be moral & nice</u>	<u>Be happy</u>

Priorities	<i>Faithful Obey</i>	<i>Do mostly good</i>	<i>Self-rule</i>
Message	<u>m M m</u>	<u>Go to church...</u>	<u>Y.O.L.O.</u>
Methods	<i>Word, will, way</i>	<i>Religious Morals</i>	<i>Pragmatics</i>
Measures	<u>Word, will, way</u>	<u>Numbers</u>	<u>Feels/Looks</u>
Unity	<i>Miracle/Mission</i>	<i>Superficial</i>	<i>Utility</i>
Passion	<u>Hot/Cold</u>	<u>Lukewarm</u>	<u>No Matter</u>
Faith	<i>Fruit of Spirit</i>	<i>Conditional</i>	<i>Ungrounded</i>
Obey	<u>No matter what!</u>	<u>99% is okay</u>	<u>Unbiblical</u>
Hypocrisy	<i>Damnable</i>	<i>Manageable</i>	<i>Unmoved...</i>
Prayer	<u>To One true God</u>	<u>Powerless</u>	<u>Misguided</u>
Ministry	<i>BE His Hands</i>	<i>Busy Hands</i>	<i>Bad Hands</i>
Serving	<u>Christ-likeness</u>	<u>churchiness</u>	<u>Self-serving</u>
Worship	<i>Vertical Praise</i>	<i>churchy-singing</i>	<i>Self-worship</i>
Outreach	<u>Fish for men!</u>	<u>church programs</u>	<u>Recruiting</u>
Develop	<i>Sanctification</i>	<i>churchy trophies</i>	<i>Bigger/More</i>
Discipleship	<u>commanded</u>	<u>unnecessary</u>	<u>Brainwashing</u>
The Gospel	<i>Eph. 2:1-10</i>	<i>"be happy"</i>	<i>"Nonsense"</i>

NOW... WHERE DO THOSE 3 ROADS TAKE YOU?

The Narrow goes to heaven... through the rough neighborhoods of history & humanity!
Just ask the giants of Church history
& the martyrs of the kingdom.

- The heroes of Hebrews ch.11
- The 11 Apostles plus Paul & His helpers...
- Jim Elliot < 30 Charlie Kirk < 33
- Jesus The Christ < 40 years old...

Middle roads are on-ramps to Wide roads...
BOTH become ONE going down hill to HELL!

How obedient, narrow, counter-cultural, un-popular & hard
(hated, slandered, & persecuted) is your walk with Jesus?

Who or what ever led you to believe that a disobedient, wide-way, culturally attractive, popular & easy walk with Jesus was authentic?

I promise you... it was NOT Christ! (Luke 14:27)

PRAYER

WORSHIP:

First Things First & Walk With Jesus

STUDY NOTES:

◀ Matthew 7:13 ▶

Text Analysis

[Go to Parallel Greek](#)

Strong's	Greek	English	Morphology
1525 [e]	Εἰσελθατε Eiselthate	Enter	V-AMA-2P
1223 [e]	διὰ dia	through	Prep
3588 [e]	τῆς tēs	the	Art-GFS
4728 [e]	στενῆς stenēs	narrow	Adj-GFS
4439 [e]	πύλης· pylēś	gate.	N-GFS
3754 [e]	ὅτι hoti	For	Conj
4116 [e]	πλατεῖα plateia	wide [is]	Adj-NFS
3588 [e]	ἡ hē	the	Art-NFS
4439 [e]	πύλη pylē	gate	N-NFS

2532 [e]	καὶ kai	and	Conj
2149 [e]	εὐρύχωρος eurychōros	broad	Adj-NFS
3588 [e]	ἡ hē	the	Art-NFS
3598 [e]	ὁδὸς hodos	way	N-NFS
3588 [e]	ἡ hē	-	Art-NFS
520 [e]	ἀπάγουσα apagousa	leading	V-PPA-NFS
1519 [e]	εἰς eis	to	Prep
3588 [e]	τὴν tēn	-	Art-AFS
684 [e]	ἀπώλειαν, apōleian	destruction,	N-AFS
2532 [e]	καὶ kai	and	Conj
4183 [e]	πολλοί polloi	many	Adj-NMP
1510 [e]	εἰσιν eisin	are	V-PIA-3P

3588 [e]	οἱ hoi	those	Art-NMP
1525 [e]	εἰσερχόμενοι eiserchomenoi	entering	V-PPM/P-NMP
1223 [e]	δι' di'	through	Prep
846 [e]	αὐτῆς· autēs	it.	PPro-GF3S

◀ Matthew 7:14 ▶

Text Analysis

[Go to Parallel Greek](#)

Strong's	Greek	English	Morphology
3754 [e]	ὅτι hoti	For	Conj
4728 [e]	στενὴ stenē	small [is]	Adj-NFS
3588 [e]	ἡ hē	the	Art-NFS
4439 [e]	πύλη pylē	gate	N-NFS
2532 [e]	καὶ kai	and	Conj
2346 [e]	τεθλιμμένη tethlimmenē	compressed	V-RPM/P-NFS

3588 [e]	ἡ hē	the	Art-NFS
3598 [e]	ὁδὸς hodos	way	N-NFS
3588 [e]	ἡ hē	-	Art-NFS
520 [e]	ἀπάγουσα apagousa	leading	V-PPA-NFS
1519 [e]	εἰς eis	to	Prep
3588 [e]	τὴν tēn	-	Art-AFS
2222 [e]	ζωήν, zōēn	life,	N-AFS
2532 [e]	καὶ kai	and	Conj
3641 [e]	ὀλίγοι oligoi	few	Adj-NMP
1510 [e]	εἰσὶν eisin	are	V-PIA-3P
3588 [e]	οἱ hoi	those	Art-NMP
2147 [e]	εὕρισκοντες heuriskontes	finding	V-PPA-NMP

846 [e]	αὐτήν. autēn	it.	PPro-AF3S
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◀ 1525. eiserchomai ▶

Lexical Summary

eiserchomai: To enter, to go into, to come into

Original Word: εἰσερχομαι

Part of Speech: Verb

Transliteration: eiserchomai

Pronunciation: ay-ser'-khom-ahee

Phonetic Spelling: (ice-er'-khom-ahee)

KJV: X arise, come (in, into), enter in(-to), go in (through)

NASB: enter, entered, come, came, go, went, enters

Word Origin: [from [G1519](#) (εἰς - so) and [G2064](#) (ἔρχομαι - came)]

1. to enter
{literally or figuratively}

Strong's Exhaustive Concordance

arise, come into, enter into, go through.

From [eis](#) and [erchomai](#); to enter (literally or figuratively) -- X arise, come (in, into), enter in(-to), go in (through).

see GREEK [eis](#)

see GREEK [erchomai](#)

HELPS Word-studies

1525 eiserxomai (from [1519](#) /eis, "into, unto" and [2064](#)/erxomai, "come") – properly, come into, go (enter) into; (figuratively) to enter into for an *important purpose* – for the believer, doing so to experience *the result* of the Lord's eternal blessing.

NAS Exhaustive Concordance

Word Origin

from [eis](#) and [erchomai](#)

Definition

to go in (to), enter

NASB Translation

came (10), come (15), comes (3), coming (1), enter (66), entered (63), entering (6), enters (7), go (8), go* (1), gone (1), reached (1), started (1), went (8).

Topical Lexicon

Overview of Usage

Appearing one hundred ninety-four times, the verb translated “enter,” “go in,” or “come in” spans the entire New Testament narrative. It describes literal movement through a doorway, divine access to holy presence, acceptance into covenant blessings, and even the intrusion of sin and demonic forces. Its breadth allows Scripture to speak with one voice about who may approach God, how salvation is received, and what judgment awaits the unrepentant.

Physical Entry into Places

1. Everyday locations – homes, towns, synagogues, boats, tombs.
• [Luke 1:40](#); [Mark 11:11](#); [John 18:1](#).
2. Public institutions – the praetorium ([John 18:33](#)), courtrooms ([Acts 23:10](#)), prisons ([Acts 16:40](#)).
3. Geographic regions – Jesus enters Galilee ([Mark 1:21](#)) or disciples enter Macedonia ([Acts 16:10](#)).

These accounts ground the incarnation and apostolic mission in real space and time. The Gospel moves by footsteps through open doors.

Entry into Houses and Fellowship

Repeated instructions surround hospitality: “When you enter the house, greet it” ([Matthew 10:12](#)). The command assumes believers will cross thresholds to bring peace, teach, heal, and share meals. A refusal to enter ([Matthew 8:8](#)) or to allow another to enter ([Luke 11:52](#)) reveals faith or unbelief. Early churches met in homes ([Acts 18:7](#)), so entering became synonymous with fellowship in the body of Christ.

Entry into the Temple and Sacred Spaces

Jesus twice “entered the temple courts and drove out those buying and selling” ([Matthew 21:12](#); [Mark 11:15](#)). His authoritative entrance fulfills Malachi’s promise: “The Lord you are seeking will come to His temple.” Later Hebrews draws on Old Testament priestly imagery:

- “He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, not by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood” ([Hebrews 9:12](#)).
- “Jesus has entered on our behalf as a forerunner” ([Hebrews 6:20](#)).

Such verses connect the earthly temple to the heavenly reality, highlighting Christ’s unique access and the believer’s confidence to follow.

Entry into the Kingdom of God

Salvation language dominates Gospel exhortations:

- “Unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven” ([Matthew 5:20](#)).
- “It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God” ([Mark 10:25](#)).
- “I am the gate; whoever enters through Me will be saved” ([John 10:9](#)).

Entrance is granted through repentance, childlike faith ([Mark 10:15](#)), and new birth of water and Spirit ([John 3:5](#)). Acts reaffirms that “through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God” ([Acts 14:22](#)), merging present discipleship with future inheritance.

Entry into Rest and Promise

Hebrews applies Israel’s wilderness story: “We who have believed enter that rest” ([Hebrews 4:3](#)). The verb shows that faithful believers presently experience spiritual rest while anticipating consummation. Failure to enter ([Hebrews 3:18-19](#)) warns the church against unbelief.

Entry of Sin and Spirits

The same term pictures hostile invasion:

- “Sin entered the world through one man” ([Romans 5:12](#)).
- Demons enter a herd of pigs ([Mark 5:13](#)); an unclean spirit re-enters a swept house ([Matthew 12:45](#)).
- “Satan entered into Judas” ([Luke 22:3](#); [John 13:27](#)).

These references remind readers that gateways can open to righteousness or to evil.

Christ’s Entry and Messianic Mission

Key salvific moments are marked by Jesus’ entering:

1. Incarnational humility – He enters the world ([Hebrews 10:5](#)).
2. Prophetic ministry – He enters Nazareth’s synagogue to announce good news ([Luke 4:16](#)).
3. Triumphal approach – He enters Jerusalem amid prophetic acclaim ([Matthew 21:10](#)).
4. Passion – He enters Gethsemane ([Matthew 26:36](#)) and the praetorium ([John 18:33](#)).
5. Resurrection vindication – He enters locked rooms to reveal Himself alive ([John 20:19, 26](#)).
6. Heavenly exaltation – He enters the true sanctuary ([Hebrews 9:24](#)).

Each entrance unfolds redemptive history, assuring believers that the Captain of their salvation has opened the way.

Apostolic Ministry Patterns of Entry

Acts records Paul’s custom: “According to his custom, Paul went in to them, and for three Sabbaths he reasoned with them from the Scriptures” ([Acts 17:2](#)). Entering synagogues, marketplaces, and homes enabled proclamation. The sameness of vocabulary between Christ and His servants illustrates imitation of the Master’s itinerant compassion.

Eschatological Entry and Exclusion

Parables climax with either welcome or shut door:

- Wise virgins “went in with him to the wedding feast” ([Matthew 25:10](#)).
- The man without wedding clothes hears, “Friend, how did you get in here without wedding clothes?” ([Matthew 22:12](#)).
- New Jerusalem’s gates “will never be shut,” yet “nothing unclean will ever enter it” ([Revelation 21:27](#)).

Ultimate reality will manifest the moral decisions already revealed by who or what now enters hearts, homes, and holy places.

Theological Themes

- Access: God invites, but on His terms—repentance and faith in Christ.
- Authority: Jesus commands the gates of every sphere—cosmic, cultic, communal.
- Holiness: Entrance into God’s presence demands cleansing; Christ provides it.
- Mission: Gospel advance follows the pattern of entering new territory.
- Warning: Illicit entry by sin or false teachers threatens the flock.

Practical Ministry Applications

1. Hospitality: Receive messengers of the gospel; their entrance blesses households.
2. Evangelism: Boldly step into new contexts, trusting God to open hearts.
3. Personal holiness: Guard spiritual gateways; do not “give the devil an opportunity.”
4. Worship: Approach God with confidence, remembering Christ has already entered on our behalf.
5. Hope: Anticipate the unrestricted entrance into the eternal city promised to all who wash their robes in the blood of the Lamb ([Revelation 22:14](#)).

BY TRACING EVERY DOORWAY CROSSED—FROM BETHLEHEM TO THE HEAVENLY SANCTUARY—THE NEW TESTAMENT URGES BELIEVERS TO ENTER LIFE, REST, AND GLORY THROUGH THE ONE WHO FIRST ENTERED FOR THEM.

◀ 1223. dia ▶

Lexical Summary

dia: through, by, because of, for the sake of

Original Word: διὰ

Part of Speech: Preposition

Transliteration: dia

Pronunciation: dee-ah'

Phonetic Spelling: (dee-ah')

KJV: after, always, among, at, to avoid, because of (that), briefly, by, for (cause) fore, from, in, by occasion of, of, by reason of, for sake, that, thereby, therefore, X though, through(-out), to, wherefore, with (-in) In composition it retains the same general importance

NASB: through, because, sake, reason, sakes, account, means

Word Origin: [a primary preposition denoting the channel of an act]

1. through

{in very wide applications, local, causal, or occasional}

Strong's Exhaustive Concordance

through, on account of

A primary preposition **denoting the channel of an act**; through (in very wide applications, local, causal, or occasional) -- after, always, among, at, to avoid, because of (that), briefly, by, for (cause)... Fore, from, in, by occasion of, of, by reason of, for sake, that, thereby, therefore, X though, through(-out), to, wherefore, with (-in). In composition it retains the same general importance.

HELPS Word-studies

1223 *diá* (a preposition) – **properly, across (to the other side)**, back-and-forth to go all the way through, "successfully across" ("thoroughly"). **1223** (*diá*) is also commonly used as a *prefix* and lend the same idea ("thoroughly," literally, "successfully" *across to the other side*).

[**1223** (*diá*) is **a root of the English term *diameter*** ("across to the other side, *through*"). Before a vowel, *dia* is simply written *dí*.]

Topical Lexicon

Overview of Usage in Scripture

The preposition διὰ appears across every genre of the New Testament, functioning as one of the chief connectors between God's purpose and human experience. With the genitive it most commonly expresses "through" in the sense of agency or instrumentality; with the accusative it most often indicates reason, cause, or motive ("because of," "for the sake of"). The breadth of its 669 occurrences allows the reader to trace a unified biblical theology of divine action mediated to, in, and through creation.

Divine Agency and Creation

From the opening testimony of John—"Through Him all things were made" ([John 1:3](#))—*διὰ* marks the Son as the personal agent of creation. Paul echoes this cosmic scope: "All things were created through Him and for Him" ([Colossians 1:16](#)) and "From Him and through Him and to Him are all things" ([Romans 11:36](#)). The preposition thereby anchors a high Christology: the eternal Word is no mere helper but the divine channel through which the Father brings the universe into being and sustains it.

Christological Mediation

The incarnate ministry of Jesus is repeatedly defined with *διὰ*. He teaches that access to the Father is "through Me" ([John 14:6](#)). Redemption is accomplished "through His blood" ([Colossians 1:20](#)), reconciliation occurs "through the cross" ([Ephesians 2:16](#)), and believers are justified "through the obedience of the One Man" ([Romans 5:19](#)). The apostles thus employ *διὰ* to proclaim Christ as the exclusive mediator in every stage of salvation history.

Salvation by Grace through Faith

Paul's succinct gospel in [Ephesians 2:8](#)—"For by grace you are saved through faith"—places *διὰ* at the center of soteriology. Faith is not meritorious but the God-given conduit through which grace flows. [Romans 5](#) repeatedly intertwines grace, faith, and peace "through our Lord Jesus Christ" ([Romans 5:1–2, 9–11](#)). The consistent pairing of *διὰ* with *πίστις* (faith) highlights the instrumentality of trusting reliance rather than works.

Instrumentality of the Holy Spirit

While the Spirit Himself is rarely the direct object of *διὰ*, His ministry is often described through it. Prophecy comes "through the Holy Spirit" ([Acts 1:16](#)), love is "poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit" ([Romans 5:5](#)), and believers abound in hope "through the power of the Holy Spirit" ([Romans 15:13](#)). *Διὰ* underscores the Spirit's role as the operational means of applying redemption to the church.

Human Agency in God's Purposes

God frequently works through human servants. John the Baptist came "through the word of Isaiah the prophet" ([Matthew 3:3](#)), signs were done "through the apostles" ([Acts 2:43](#)), and the gospel spread "through the whole region" ([Acts 13:49](#)). Paul was appointed an apostle "through Jesus Christ and God the Father" ([Galatians 1:1](#)). The preposition reinforces both divine sovereignty and responsible human participation.

Cause, Motive, and Consequence

In the accusative, *διὰ* often conveys reason: persecution comes "because of My name" ([Matthew 10:22](#)); stumbling blocks exist "because of offenses" ([Matthew 18:7](#)); wrath falls "because of these things" ([Ephesians 5:6](#)). It can also indicate result: "because of

the transient joy” ([Hebrews 12:2](#)). Recognizing this nuance guards against misreading passages where διὰ points to underlying motives rather than means.

Suffering and Perseverance

Believers are called to endure “through many tribulations” ([Acts 14:22](#)) and are comforted “through Christ” ([2 Corinthians 1:5](#)). Their faith is proven “through fire” ([1 Peter 1:7](#)), they conquer “through the blood of the Lamb” ([Revelation 12:11](#)), and final victory is assured “through our Lord Jesus Christ” ([1 Corinthians 15:57](#)). Διὰ therefore frames both the pathway of suffering and the hope beyond it.

Prayer, Thanksgiving, and Worship

Access to God in prayer is “through Him” ([Ephesians 2:18](#)). Thanksgiving ascends “through Jesus Christ” ([Hebrews 13:15](#)) and grace abounds “through many to the glory of God” ([2 Corinthians 4:15](#)). Διὰ ties every expression of worship to the mediatorial work of Christ, shaping doxology that is Trinitarian and Christ-centered.

Eschatological Fulfillment

Prophecy is fulfilled “through the prophet” ([Matthew 1:22](#); 2:15), the mystery of the inclusion of the Gentiles is revealed “through the gospel” ([Ephesians 3:6](#)), and the new creation will be populated with nations walking “through its light” ([Revelation 21:24](#)). The preposition links God’s past promises to their future consummation, displaying the continuity of His redemptive plan.

Pastoral and Practical Applications

1. Ministry Perspective: Every gift, opportunity, and result is “through God,” fostering humility ([1 Corinthians 3:5](#)).
2. Evangelism: The gospel reaches others “through our word” ([2 Corinthians 5:20](#)), encouraging believers to see themselves as vessels rather than sources.
3. Suffering: Trials come “for the sake of” Christ ([Philippians 1:29](#)); understanding the cause clarifies the purpose and strengthens endurance.
4. Assurance: Since salvation is secured “through faith” and “through His blood,” confidence rests in divine provision rather than human effort.
5. Worship: Continuous gratitude offered “through Jesus Christ” safeguards services from self-reliance and centers them on grace.

Select Key Passages

[John 1:3](#); [John 14:6](#); [Romans 5:1–2](#); [Romans 11:36](#); [1 Corinthians 8:6](#); [2 Corinthians 5:20](#); [Galatians 3:26](#); [Ephesians 2:8](#); [Colossians 1:16–20](#); [Hebrews 13:15](#); [1 Peter 1:3–7](#); [Revelation 12:11](#).

Through its multifaceted usage, διὰ reveals the unbroken chain of divine initiative, Christ's mediation, Spirit-empowered application, and human response. Recognizing this connective thread deepens exegesis, clarifies doctrine, and enriches practical ministry.

MacArthur Commentary:

Which Way to Heaven?

(7:13–14)

Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide, and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and many are those who enter by it. For the gate is small, and the way is narrow that leads to life, and few are those who find it. (7:13–14)

Here is the appeal to which Jesus has been moving through the whole sermon.

HE GIVES THE CALL TO DECIDE NOW ABOUT BECOMING A CITIZEN OF GOD'S KINGDOM AND INHERITING ETERNAL LIFE, OR REMAINING A CITIZEN OF THIS FALLEN WORLD AND RECEIVING DAMNATION. THE WAY TO LIFE IS ON GOD'S TERMS ALONE; THE WAY TO DAMNATION IS ON ANY TERMS A PERSON WANTS, BECAUSE EVERY WAY BUT GOD'S LEADS TO THE SAME FATE.

Jesus has been giving God's standards throughout the sermon, standards that are holy and perfect and that are diametrically opposed to the self-righteous, self-sufficient, and hypocritical standards of man—typified by those of the scribes and Pharisees. He has shown what His kingdom is like and what its people are like—and are not like. Now He presents the choice of entering the kingdom or not. Here the Lord focuses on the inevitable decision that every person must make, the crossroads where he must decide on the **gate** he will enter and the **way** he will go.

Our lives are filled with decisions—what to wear, what to eat, where to go, what to do, what to say, what to buy, whom to marry, what career to follow, and on and on. Many decisions are trivial and insignificant, and some are essential and life-changing. The most critical of all is our decision about Jesus Christ and His kingdom. That is the ultimate choice that determines our eternal destiny. It is that decision that Jesus here calls men to make.

In perfect harmony with His absolute sovereignty, God has always allowed men to choose Him or not, and He has always pleaded with them to decide for Him or face the consequences of a choice against Him. Since mankind turned their backs on Him in the Fall, God has bent every effort and spared no cost in wooing His creatures back to Himself. He has provided and shown the way, leaving nothing to man but the choice. God made His choice by providing the way of redemption. The choice is now man's.

While Israel was in the wilderness the Lord instructed Moses to tell the people, *"I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. So choose life in order that you may live, you and*

your descendants, by loving the Lord your God, by obeying His voice, and by holding fast to Him” (Deuteronomy 30:19–20).

After Israel came into the Promised Land, Joshua confronted the people again with a choice: of continuing to serve the Egyptian and Canaanite gods they had adopted or of turning to the Lord who had delivered them from Egypt and given them the land promised to Abraham.

“Choose for yourselves today whom you will serve,” Joshua pleaded (Josh. 24:13–15).

On Mount Carmel the prophet Elijah asked the people of Israel, **“How long will you hesitate between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him”** (1 Kings 18:21).

The Lord commanded Jeremiah to set the choice again before His people: **“Thus says the Lord, ‘Behold, I set before you the way of life and the way of death’ ”** (Jer. 21:8).

In John 6:66–69, Jesus called for a choice: “As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew, and were not walking with Him anymore. Jesus said therefore to the twelve, ‘You do not want to go away also, do you?’ Simon Peter answered Him, ‘Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life. And we have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God.’ ”

That is the call that God has been making to men since they turned away from Him, and it is the supreme appeal of His Word.

The Ways, by British poet John Oxenham,

*To every man there openeth
A Way, and Ways, and a Way,
And the High Soul climbs the High Way,
And the Low Soul gropes the Low,
And in between, on the misty flats,
The rest drift to and fro.
But to every man there openeth
A High Way and a Low,
And every man decideth
The Way his soul shall go.*

IN THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT JESUS PRESENTS STILL AGAIN THAT GREAT CHOICE OF CHOICES. THIS SERMON THEREFORE CANNOT BE SIMPLY ADMIRERD AND PRAISED FOR ITS ETHICS. ITS TRUTHS WILL BLESS THOSE WHO ACCEPT THE KING BUT WILL STAND IN JUDGMENT OVER THOSE WHO REFUSE HIM. THE ONE WHO ADMIRES GOD'S WAY BUT DOES NOT ACCEPT IT IS UNDER GREATER JUDGMENT, BECAUSE HE ACKNOWLEDGES THAT HE KNOWS THE TRUTH.

Nor does this sermon apply only to the future age of the millennial kingdom.

The truths Jesus teaches here are truths whose essence God teaches in the Old Testament and throughout the New

Testament. They are truths for God's people of every age...

The decision about the **gate** and the **way** has always been a **now** decision.

The choice is between the one and the many—the one right and the many wrongs, the one true way and the many false ways. As John Stott points out, in Matthew 7:13–14 “Jesus cuts across our easy-going syncretism” (*Christian Counter-Culture* [Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1978], p. 193). There are not many roads to heaven, but one. There are not many good religions, but only one. Man cannot come to God in *any* of the ways that man himself devises, but only in the one way that God Himself has provided.

The contrast Jesus makes is not between religion and irreligion, or between the higher religions and the lower ones. Nor is it a contrast between nice and upright people and vile and degraded ones. It is a contrast between divine righteousness and human righteousness, *all* of which is unrighteousness. It is a contrast between divine revelation and human religion, **between divine truth and human falsehood, between trusting in God and trusting in self. It is the contrast between God's grace and man's works.**

**THERE HAVE ALWAYS BEEN BUT
TWO SYSTEMS OF RELIGION
IN THE WORLD.**

One is God's system of divine accomplishment, and the other is man's system of human achievement. One is the religion of God's grace, the other the religion of men's works. One is the religion of faith, the other the religion of the flesh. One is the religion of the sincere heart and the internal, the other the religion of hypocrisy and the external.

Within man's system are thousands of religious forms and names, but they are all built on the achievements of man and the inspiration of Satan. Christianity, on the other hand, is the religion of divine accomplishment, and it stands alone.

Even the law given through Moses, though divine, was not a means of salvation but rather a means of showing man's need for salvation. "By the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight," Paul explains; "for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin" (Rom. 3:20). The law came to show us our sinfulness and guilt before God, and to show us that we are incapable in ourselves of keeping God's perfect law.

BUT WHEN SELF-RIGHTEOUS, EGO-CENTERED MAN SAW THAT HE WAS SINFUL BY THE LAW'S STANDARD, HE SIMPLY SET THE LAW ASIDE AND DEvised STANDARDS OF HIS OWN. HE INVENTED NEW RELIGIONS THAT ACCOMMODATED HIS SHORTCOMINGS AND THAT WERE HUMANLY ACHIEVABLE. BY MEETING HIS OWN ATTAINABLE STANDARDS, MAN THEREFORE CONSIDERED HIMSELF RIGHTEOUS.

That is what the rabbis and scribes had done in regard to their traditions. They lowered God's standards, raised their own estimates of themselves, and felt they had achieved a righteous standing with God (Rom. 10:3). And that is exactly the type of self-ascribed righteousness that Jesus declares will never bring a person into the kingdom of God (Matt. 5:20).

From here through the rest of the sermon (vv. 13–27) Jesus repeatedly points out two things: the necessity of choosing whether to follow God or not, and the fact that the choices are two and only two.

THERE ARE TWO GATES, THE NARROW AND THE WIDE; TWO WAYS, THE NARROW AND THE BROAD; TWO DESTINATIONS, LIFE AND DESTRUCTION; TWO GROUPS, THE FEW AND THE MANY; TWO KINDS OF TREES, THE GOOD AND THE BAD, WHICH PRODUCE TWO KINDS OF FRUIT, THE GOOD AND THE BAD; TWO KINDS OF PEOPLE WHO PROFESS FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST, THE SINCERE AND THE FALSE; TWO KINDS OF BUILDERS, THE WISE AND THE FOOLISH; TWO FOUNDATIONS, THE ROCK AND THE SAND; AND TWO HOUSES, THE SECURE AND THE INSECURE. IN ALL PREACHING THERE MUST BE THE DEMAND FOR A VERDICT. JESUS MAKES THE CHOICE CRYSTAL CLEAR.

In verses 13–14 Jesus deals with the first four of those contrasts: the two gates, the two ways, the two destinations, and the two groups.

THE TWO GATES

Enter is in the aorist imperative tense, and therefore **DEMANDS A DEFINITE AND SPECIFIC ACTION.**

The command is not to admire or to ponder the **gate** but to **enter** it.

MANY PEOPLE ADMIRE THE PRINCIPLES OF THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT BUT NEVER FOLLOW THOSE PRINCIPLES. MANY PEOPLE RESPECT AND PRAISE JESUS CHRIST BUT NEVER RECEIVE HIM AS LORD AND SAVIOR. BECAUSE THEY NEVER RECEIVE THE KING AND NEVER ENTER THE KINGDOM, THEY ARE AS MUCH SEPARATED FROM THE KING AND AS MUCH OUTSIDE HIS KINGDOM AS IS THE RANKEST ATHEIST OR MOST UNETHICAL PAGAN.

Jesus' command is not simply to enter some gate but to enter the narrow gate.

Every person enters one gate or the other;

that is unavoidable. Jesus pleads for men to enter the *right gate*, God's gate, the only gate that leads to **life** and to heaven.

Jesus has repeatedly shown the narrowness of God's internal standard of righteousness, in contrast to the broad and external standards of Jewish tradition.

**THE PATH TO THAT NARROW WAY OF
KINGDOM LIVING IS THROUGH THE NARROW
GATE OF THE KING HIMSELF.**

"I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me"
(John 14:6).

When we preach, teach, and witness that Christ is the only way to God, we are not proclaiming our own view of right religion but God's revelation of truth. We do not proclaim the narrow way simply because we are already in it, or because it happens to suit our temperament, or because we are bigoted and exclusive. **We proclaim the narrow way because it is God's way and God's only way for men to find salvation and eternal life.** We proclaim a narrow gospel because Jesus said, *"I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he shall be saved"* (John 10:9).

We proclaim a narrow gospel because *"there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved"* (Acts 4:12), and because *"there*

is one God and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. 2:5).

We proclaim a narrow gospel because that is the only gospel God has given and therefore the only gospel there is.

THE PERSON WHO ENTERS THE NARROW GATE MUST ENTER ALONE. WE CAN BRING NO ONE ELSE AND NOTHING ELSE WITH US.

Some commentators suggest that a turnstile represents the idea implicit in **narrow gate**. A turnstile allows only one person through at a time, with no baggage. People do not come into the kingdom in groups, but singly.

The Jews had the mistaken notion that they were all in God’s kingdom together by racial salvation, signified by circumcision.

Furthermore, God’s gate is so narrow that we must go through it naked. It is the gate of self-denial, through which one cannot carry the baggage of sin and self-will. When we sing, “Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to Thy cross I cling,” we are testifying to the way of the gospel.

The way of Christ is the way of the cross, and the way of the cross is the way of self-denial.

“If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever wishes

to save his life shall lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake shall find it” (Matt. 16:24–25).

Jesus confronted the rich young ruler who sought eternal life and presented a test of his willingness to submit to His lordship: “One thing you still lack; sell all that you possess, and distribute it to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me” (Luke 18:22). As his response proved, that man’s desire to rule his own life and to hold on to his earthly wealth prevented his entering the kingdom, because “when he had heard these things, he became very sad; for he was extremely rich” (v. 23). He also gave evidence of self-righteousness and self-deceit in denying his true state of sin (v. 21), because if he had in his heart truly kept all the commandments as he claimed, he would surely have kept the greatest commandment—which is to love God with all one’s heart, soul, and might (Deut. 6:5; cf. Matt. 22:37). Thus he would have followed Christ with total commitment. **THE ISSUE WITH THAT YOUNG MAN WAS VERY SIMPLY A MATTER OF LORDSHIP.** Jesus confronted him on the matter of life control. One who comes to salvation yields control to Christ whether that means he gives up all or is allowed to keep all and receive more. Salvation turns sovereignty over to Christ.

To love God with everything we have is to jettison self—self-confidence, self-achievement, self-righteousness, and self-satisfaction. *“Unless you are converted and become like children,” Jesus said, “you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 18:3).* The mark of a child is dependency, utter dependency for everything he has. Saving faith is not merely an act of the mind; it counts the cost (Luke 14:28); it is also a stripping of the self and crying, as did the tax-gatherer in the Temple, “God, be merciful to me, the sinner!” (Luke 18:13).

Easy believism is not
scriptural believism.

The **narrow gate** means that those who enter do so stripped of all they possess, rather than adding Jesus to their accumulated treasures.

SALVATION IS THE EXCHANGE OF ALL THAT WE ARE FOR ALL THAT HE IS (see Matt. 13:44–46).

And as He did for Job, the Lord will give back much more.

The narrow gate demands repentance.

Many Jews believed that simply being a Jew, a physical descendant of Abraham, was sufficient for entrance into heaven. Many people today believe that being in a church qualifies them for heaven. Some even believe that simply being a human being qualifies them, because God is too good and kind to exclude anyone.

God does offer the way to all, and His greatest longing is that everyone enter, because He does not desire “for any to perish but for all to come to repentance” (2 Pet. 3:9). Paul preached “repentance toward God” (Acts 20:21) as Jesus had preached it (Mark 1:14–15). John the Baptist readied a people for the Lord by repentance (Luke 3:1–6). The way of repentance, of turning from our own way and our own righteousness to God’s, is the only way to enter His kingdom and therefore the only way to keep from perishing.

Charles Spurgeon said,

“You and your sins must separate or you and your God will never come together.

No one sin may you keep; they must all be given up, they must be brought out like Canaanite kings from the cave and be hanged up in the sun.”

THE REPENTANT LIFE WILL BE A CHANGED LIFE.

The primary message of John's first epistle is that the truly redeemed life will manifest itself in a transformed

life, in which confession of sin (1:8–10), obedience to God's will (2:4–6), love of God's other children (2:9–11; 3:16–17), and practice of righteousness (3:4–10) are normal and habitual.

“By this is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples” (John 15:8). Anything less is damning demon-faith (James 2:19) that is orthodox but fruitless.

Those who preach a gospel of self-indulgence preach an utterly different gospel than Jesus preached.

The gate of pride, of self-righteousness, and self-satisfaction is the wide gate of the world, not the narrow gate of God.

Most people spend their lives rushing around with the **crowds**, doing what everyone else does and believing what everyone else believes. But as far as salvation is concerned, **THERE IS NO SECURITY IN NUMBERS.**

If every person in a group is saved it is because each of them individually comes into the kingdom by his own decision, energized by the Holy Spirit, to trust Christ.

TWO WAYS

The two gates lead to two ways.

The gate that is wide leads to the way that is broad; and the narrow gate, which is small, leads to the way that is narrow.

The narrow way is the way of the godly, and the broad way is the way of the ungodly—and those are the only two ways in which men can travel.

The godly person delights “in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night. And he will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in its season,” whereas the ungodly “are like chaff which the wind drives away” (Ps. 1:2–4).

The way that is broad is the easy, attractive, inclusive, indulgent, permissive, and self-oriented way of the world.

There are few rules, few restrictions, and few requirements. All you need do is profess Jesus, or at least be religious, and you are readily accepted in that large and diverse group.

Sin is tolerated, truth is moderated, and humility is ignored.

**GOD’S WORD IS PRAISED BUT NOT
STUDIED, AND HIS STANDARDS ARE
ADMIRERD BUT NOT FOLLOWED.**

This way requires no spiritual maturity, no moral character, no commitment, and no sacrifice. It is the easy way of floating downstream, in *“the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience”* (Eph. 2:2).

IT IS THE TRAGIC WAY “WHICH SEEMS RIGHT TO A MAN,” BUT WHOSE “END IS THE WAY OF DEATH”
(Prov. 14:12).

A West Indian who had chosen Islam over Christianity said his reason was that ***Islam “is a noble, broad path. There is room for a man and his sins on it. The way of Christ is too narrow.”*** It seems that many preachers today do not see that issue as clearly as that unbelieving Muslim.

THE WAY THAT IS NARROW, HOWEVER, IS THE HARD WAY, THE DEMANDING WAY, THE WAY OF SELF-DENIAL AND THE CROSS.

Stenos (narrow) comes from a root that means “to groan,” as from being under pressure, and is used figuratively to represent a restriction or constriction. It is the word from which we get stenography, writing that is abbreviated or compressed.

The fact that few are those who find God's way implies that it is to be sought diligently.

"And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart" (Jer. 29:13).

No one has ever stumbled into the kingdom or wandered through the narrow gate by accident.

When someone asked Jesus, "Lord, are there just a few who are being saved?" He replied, "Strive to enter the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able" (Luke 13:23-24). The term *agōnizomai* ("strive") indicates that entering the door to God's kingdom takes conscious, purposeful, and intense effort. That is the term from which we get *agonize*, and is the same word Paul uses to describe an athlete who agonizes ("competes") to win a race (1 Cor. 9:25) and the Christian who "fights the good fight of faith" (literally, "struggles the good

struggle,” 1 Tim. 6:12). The requirements for kingdom citizenship are great, demanding, clearly defined, and allow for no deviation or departure. Luke 16:16 says, “Everyone is forcing his way into [the kingdom],” implying conflict and effort (cf. Acts 14:22).

The kingdom is for those who come to the King in poverty of spirit, mourning over their sin, and hungering and thirsting for His righteousness to replace their own (Matt. 5:3–4, 6). It is for those who want the kingdom at any cost, who will sell all they have to buy that great treasure and that great pearl (Matt. 13:44–46). It is not for those want a cheap and easy way to assure heaven, while continuing to live their own selfish and worldly lives on earth.

Jesus only saves those for whom He becomes Lord.

Sadly, most people think that heaven can be obtained on much easier terms than those prescribed by Christ.

William Hendriksen comments,

The Kingdom then is not for weaklings, waverers, and compromisers.... It is not for Balaam, the rich young ruler, Pilate and Demas.... It is not won by means of deferred prayers, unfulfilled promises, broken resolutions and hesitant testimonies. It is for strong and sturdy men, like Joseph, Nathan, Elijah, Daniel, Mordecai and Peter ... Stephen ... and Paul. And let us not forget such valiant women as Ruth, Deborah, Esther and Lydia. (*Exposition of the Gospel According to Matthew* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1973], p. 490)

As Paul expresses it in **Romans 7:14–25**, it should be the desire of our hearts as Christians to fulfill every command and requirement of our Lord, even though we know that we will fail. But we also know that “if we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). And the gracious God who saved us because we could not fulfill His law in our own power knows that, even after salvation, we still cannot fulfill His law in our own power. The great difference is that **in Christ we not only have a Savior but a burden bearer.** He helps us carry all our burdens, including the burden of obedience. “Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me,” Jesus says, “for I am gentle and humble in heart; and you shall find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My load is light” (Matt. 11:29–30).

GOD’S WAY OF SALVATION IS REMARKABLY SIMPLE, BUT IT IS NOT EASY.

We can give nothing or give up nothing that will earn us entrance into the kingdom, but if we long to hold on to forbidden things it can keep us out of the kingdom.

That is another reason why **few are those who find it.**

We can pay nothing for salvation, yet coming to Jesus Christ costs everything we have.

“If anyone comes to Me,” Jesus says, “and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple. Whoever does not carry his own cross [a willingness even to die if necessary] and come after Me cannot be My disciple” (Luke 14:26).

THE LORD GOES ON TO SHOW THE SERIOUSNESS OF DECIDING TO FOLLOW CHRIST. *“For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate the cost, to see if he has enough to complete it?... Or what king, when he sets out to meet another king in battle, will not first sit down and take counsel whether he is strong enough with ten thousand men to encounter the one coming against him with twenty thousand?”* (vv. 28, 31).

The person who says yes to Christ must say no to the things of the world, because to be in Christ is to rely on His power rather than our own and to be willing to forsake our own way for His.

It can cost persecution, ridicule, and tribulation.

In His last instructions to His disciples, Jesus several times reminded them of the price they would pay for following Him: *“Because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A slave is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you” (John 15:19–20); “They will make you outcasts from the synagogue” (John 16:2); “Therefore you too now have sorrow” (16:22); and “In the world you have tribulation” (16:33).*

When we identify ourselves with Jesus Christ we declare war on the devil, and he declares war on us.

THE ONE WHOM WE FORMERLY SERVED NOW BECOMES
OUR GREAT ENEMY, AND THE IDEAS AND WAYS WE
ONCE HELD DEAR NOW BECOME OUR GREAT
TEMPTATIONS AND PITFALLS.

With the warnings about suffering the Lord also gives promises that our hearts will rejoice (John 16:22b) and that we are to take courage because He has overcome the world (16:33b).

But He promises to enable us to **prevail over** those times of suffering, **not to escape** them.

TWO DESTINATIONS

Both the **broad** and the **narrow** ways point to the good life, to salvation, heaven, God, the kingdom, and blessing—but only the **narrow** way actually leads to those. There is nothing here to indicate that the **broad way** is marked “Hell.”

THE POINT OUR LORD IS MAKING IS
THAT IT IS MARKED “HEAVEN” BUT
DOES NOT LEAD THERE. THAT IS THE
GREAT LIE OF ALL THE FALSE
RELIGIONS OF HUMAN ACHIEVEMENT.

The two very different destinations of the two ways are made clear by the Lord (cf. Jer. 21:8). *The broad ... leads to destruction, whereas only the narrow ... leads to life.*

**Every religion except
Christianity, the only religion
of divine accomplishment,
follows the same spiritual way
and leads to the same spiritual
end, to hell.**

There are many of those roads, and most of them are attractive, appealing, and crowded with travelers. But not a single one leads where it promises; and not a single one fails to lead where Jesus says it leads—to **destruction**.

Apōleia (**destruction**) does not refer to extinction or annihilation, but to total ruin and loss (cf. Matt. 3:12; 18:8; 25:41, 46; 2 Thess. 1:9; Jude 6–7). It is not the complete loss of being, but the complete loss of well-being. It is the destination of all religions except the way of Jesus Christ, and it is the destiny of all those who follow any way but His. It is the destination and destiny of perdition, hell, and everlasting torment. “The way of the wicked will perish” (Ps. 1:6).

But God’s way, the **way** that is **narrow**, leads to eternal **life**, to everlasting heavenly fellowship with God, His angels, and His people. Everlasting **life** is a quality of life, the life of God in the soul of man (see Ps. 17:15). “In My Father’s house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would

have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also” (John 14:2–3).

TWO GROUPS

Going into the two gates, traveling down the two ways, and heading for the two destinations we find two groups of people. Those who go in through the **wide gate** and travel the **way** that is **broad** toward the destination of **destruction** are many. The many will include pagans and nominal Christians, atheists and religionists, theists and humanists, Jews and Gentiles—every person from whatever age, background, persuasion, and circumstance who has not come to saving obedience to Jesus Christ.

In the day of judgment many will claim to be followers of Christ, but “many will seek to enter and will not be able,” Jesus warns. “Once the head of the house gets up and shuts the door, and you begin to stand outside and knock on the door, saying, ‘Lord, open up to us!’ then He will answer and say to you, ‘I do not know where you are from.’ Then you will begin to say, ‘We ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught in our streets’; and He will say, ‘I tell you, I do not know where you are from; depart from Me, all you evildoers’” (Luke 13:24–27). “Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness’” (Matt. 7:22–23). Those particular ones who are excluded will not be atheists or rank pagans, but nominal Christians who professed to know and trust Christ but who refused to come to Him on His terms—through His **gate** and by His **way**.

The group that goes through the **narrow gate** and travels the **narrow way** and is destined for **life** is **few** in number. When Jesus said, “Do not be afraid, little flock” (Luke 12:32), the word He used for “little” was *mikros*, from which we get our prefix *micro*, meaning something small. “Many are called, but few are chosen,” He says in another place (Matt. 22:14).

Believers are not **few** in number because the gate is too **narrow** or too **small** to accommodate more. There is no limit to the number who could go through that gate, if they go through in God’s way, in repentance for their sins and in trust in Jesus Christ to save them. Nor is the number few because heavenly space is limited. God’s grace is boundless, and heaven’s dwellings are limitless. Nor is the number few because God desires that most people perish. He earnestly desires “for all to come to repentance” (2 Pet. 3:9).

A letter written to a Melbourne, Australia, daily newspaper expresses clearly the attitude of a person on the broad road to destruction.

After hearing Dr. Billy Graham on the air, viewing him on television and reading reports and letters concerning him and his mission, I am heartily sick of the type of religion that insists my soul (and everyone else’s) needs saving—whatever that means. I have never felt that I was lost. Nor do I feel that I daily wallow in the mire of sin, although repetitive preaching insists that I do.

Give me a practical religion that teaches gentleness and tolerance, that acknowledges no barriers of color or creed, that remembers the aged and teaches children of goodness and not sin.

If in order to save my soul I must accept such a philosophy as I have recently heard preached, I prefer to remain forever damned.

Every person who *will* come to Jesus Christ *can* come to Jesus Christ. “All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out,” Jesus assures us. “For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him, may have eternal life; and I Myself will raise him up on the last day” (John 6:37, 40).¹

The Road Not Taken

[Robert Frost](#)

1874 –1963

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

¹ John F. MacArthur Jr., [Matthew](#), vol. 1, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1985–1989), 449–458.