

THE NARROW VERSUS THE WIDE GATE

Matthew 7:12 essentially concludes the Sermon on the Mount, but what follows in 7:13-27 are four warnings given to those listening, showing the importance of applying it. These four warnings present four contrasts.

Matt. 7:13-27 – FOUR WARNINGS

Two ways (vv. 13-14).

Two trees (vv. 15-20).

Two professions (vv. 21-23).

Two builders (vv. 24-27).

Matthew 7:13 (NKJV)

13 “Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it.

Christ makes a contrast between the narrow gate and the wide gate. The gate is the entryway that puts you on the path to your destination. The people hearing the message of Christ were at a crossroads. The teachings of Christ and the Person of Christ go together. To accept or reject the one is to accept or reject the other.

“Just as a tree is known by its fruit, so the gate is known by the way.”

– ***Stanley Toussaint***

The “gate” is mentioned first, as this is the starting place representing the place of conversion. This is the place of decision. The way is the course that is followed once the choice is made.

Christ invites people to enter by the narrow gate. The narrow gate is Christ Himself. The narrow gate is Christ’s message of repentance and faith. That is the way in. It is narrow in that you can’t add anything to it. It is narrow in that one must enter all by themselves with nothing but faith alone. In John 10:9, Jesus said, “I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved...”

Acts 4:12 (NKJV)

12 Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”

1 Timothy 2:5 (NKJV)

5 For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus,

The narrow gate is Christ and His gospel message ALONE. The response that gets you in is repentance and faith ALONE.

“The person who enters the narrow gate must enter alone. We can bring no one else and nothing else with us. ... 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.” – **John MacArthur**

In contrast to the narrow gate is the wide gate. It involves the broad way that leads to destruction. This way calls for no repentance. One can hold on to all sorts of legalism, ritualism, pride, and self-effort – which is the way of the scribes and Pharisees. But that way ends in destruction.

“In light of the whole sermon, it was obvious that Jesus was comparing the wide gate and the broad road to the outward righteousness of the Pharisees. If those listening to Jesus followed the Pharisees’ teachings, their path would lead to destruction. The narrow gate and road referred to Jesus’ teaching, which emphasized not external requirements but internal transformation.” – **The Bible Knowledge Commentary**

“The two ways would be compared to the two forms of righteousness which He has been contrasting throughout the discourse. Repentance is the narrow gate through which Christ invited His audience to enter. The narrow way represents the restrictions laid upon one who walks in the way of true righteousness, which the King has just outlined. The broad way is the natural walk of all flesh, characterized oftentimes by Pharisaic hypocrisy and outward righteousness.” – **Stanley Toussaint**

The word “destruction” (Gk. *apoleia*) does not refer to annihilation or extinction but rather to utter ruin and loss. It is the loss of well-being in a place called “hell” or “the lake of fire”.

Notice Christ said, “**there are MANY who go in by it.**” This is the hypocritical religious way that is so popular, and which Christ has repeatedly mentioned. By far the majority of religious people, including nominal Christians, are on this broad way that leads to eternal destruction.

Matthew 7:14 (NKJV)

14 Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.

In contrast to the broad way that leads to destruction is the narrow gate which leads to the difficult way that leads to life. There are relatively FEW who find it. There is always a remnant, but only a remnant – never a BIG PICTURE majority. Most people are going to hell!

“The narrow gate leads to a ‘difficult’ (Gk. thlibo) way. This word ‘difficult’ almost always refers to persecution. ... So this text says that the way of discipleship is ‘narrow,’ restricting, because it is the way of persecution and opposition – a major theme in Matthew (see on 5:10-12, 44; 10:16-39; 11:11-12; 24:4-13).” – **D.A. Carson**

Acts 14:22 (NKJV)

22 strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, **“We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.”**

The narrow way is the difficult way because on the way, one can expect to encounter persecution and abuse because of their faith. It’s not the easy way, but it is the way that leads to life. And according to Jesus, there are FEW who find it.

“Did your profession of faith in Christ cost you anything? If not, then it was not a true profession. Many people who “trust” Jesus Christ never leave the broad road with its appetites and associations. They have an easy Christianity that makes no demands on them. Yet Jesus said that the narrow way was hard. We cannot walk on two roads in two different directions, at the same time.” – **Warren Wiersbe**

“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). – **John MacArthur**

There are relatively FEW who are saved. However, we note that in heaven, according to Revelation 7:9, there is “a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues”. So, FEW is to be understood in a relative sense.

Sometimes Christians are derogatorily called “narrow-minded”. But in truth, according to Jesus, it is only the narrow gate that puts you on the difficult way, which is the way to life. This is the Jesus way, and it is the only way. The early Christians were called those of “the way” (Acts 9:2; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14, 22).

“There is a narrow way that runs from earth to Heaven, and there is a broad way that runs from earth to Hell. But there is no road that runs from Hell to Heaven (Luke 16:26). The broad road intersects the narrow road at just one place: Calvary. At the cross one can leave the broad road, accept Christ as Savior, and start along the narrow way.” – **John Phillips**

The book of Psalms begins with Psalm One, which has as its theme: “Two men, two ways, two destinies”. This is the ultimate issue. It all comes down to the Jesus way versus any and all other ways. Only the Jesus way will get you to heaven.

“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.”

- **John Oxenham**

Jesus ALONE is the door!

Jesus ALONE is the way, the truth, and the life!

Enter by the narrow gate!