

Which Way to Heaven?

Scripture: Matthew 7:13–14

Code: 2252

INTRODUCTION

In Matthew chapter 7, the Sermon on the Mount that Jesus began in chapter 5 comes to a great climax. That climax is stated in verses 13 and 14; the remainder of the sermon in chapter 7 is simply an expansion of those two verses. Let's read them: "Enter in at the narrow gate; for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be who go in that way; because narrow is the gate, and hard is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."

A. The Choice

That is a provocative statement by our Lord. It is the point that He was emphasizing in the first part of His masterful sermon. He brings the whole sermon to the climax of a decision. In verses 13 14, He talks about two gates that bring an individual to two roads that lead to two destinations populated by two different crowds. The Lord focuses on the inevitable decision that has to be made regarding what He had already spoken about in the Sermon on the Mount. Someone appropriately has said that all of life concentrates on man at the crossroads. That is true. From the time we are old enough to make independent decisions, life becomes a matter of constant decision making. Every day of our lives we make decisions about all kinds of things. We decide what time we will wake up, what we will eat, where we will go, and what we will do. We choose roads all the way through life, so it is fair to say that life consists of man at the crossroads. Ultimately and inevitably, there is a final choice you must make about where you will spend eternity. That is what our Lord speaks of in Matthew 7:1314: the ultimate choice.

God has always made the effort to bring men to making that ultimate choice. There is always an option, so there is always a choice. The ultimate choice is what God is most concerned about. For example, God has offered that choice through ...

1. Moses

God confronted the children of Israel through Moses in Deuteronomy 30. He said this: " ... I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore, choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live" (v. 19). God gave to the people of Israel the ultimate choice: life and good, or death and evil. He called them to make a decision for one or the other.

2. Joshua

Through Joshua, whom the people had followed into the Promised Land, the Israelites were given a choice: " ... choose you this day whom ye will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served ... but as for me and my house, we will serve the +LORD" (Josh. 24:15).

3. Jeremiah

God told Jeremiah, " ... unto this people thou shalt say, Thus saith the +LORD, Behold, I set before you the way of life, and the way of death" (Jer. 21:8).

4. Elijah

When Elijah was on Mount Carmel in 1 Kings 18:21, he called for the Israelites to make a decision: "How long halt ye between two opinions? If the +LORD be God, follow Him; but if Baal, then follow him...." The ultimate choice is in view here.

5. Jesus

In John 6 we read that many people followed Jesus and called themselves His disciples (as implied by verses 60-61). But in verse 66, we read that many of them turned their backs on Him and no longer followed Him. Verses 67-68 say, "Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered Him, Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." Peter articulated his choice. Some people walked away from Jesus, and others stayed with Him. Simeon said of Jesus, "... Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel ..." (Lk. 2:34). Jesus is the crux of every man's destiny. The choice is made at the crossroads of Christ: Choose life or choose death. Essentially, that is what Jesus is saying in Matthew 7:13-14. The choice is clear cut. There are only two choices: the narrow way or the wide way. There are no other alternatives.

B. The Contrast

1. Defined

Let me add a footnote: The contrast is not between religion and paganism. Many people have interpreted Matthew 7:13-14 that way: They say that the narrow way is the way of Christianity, which goes to heaven; and that the broad way goes to hell. However, Jesus is not contrasting Christianity to openly immoral masses that are merrily on their way to hell. He is contrasting two kinds of religion. Both roads are marked, "This is the way to heaven." Satan doesn't mark the broad way, "This is the way to hell." That wouldn't be very deceptive. We are not looking at a contrast between righteousness and obvious unrighteousness, but between divine righteousness and human righteousness. Matthew 7:13-14 compares true divine religion to false human religion. For example, the problem of the Pharisees was that they "trusted in themselves that they were righteous" (Lk. 18:9). That was their religion, but it was inadequate. Every man makes a choice. Either you think you're good enough on your own or through your system of religion to make it to heaven, or you know you're not good enough and cast yourself on the mercy of God through Christ. Those are the only two systems of religion in the world. Jesus is saying, "There are two roads marked to heaven. One is the narrow road of divine righteousness, the other is the broad road of human righteousness." However, the Jewish leaders taught that a person could make it to heaven by his own efforts. That's why it was shocking when the Apostle Paul said, "... by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in [God's] sight" (Rom. 3:20). He said in verse 19 that the law came "that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God." The law shows man his sinfulness. But when self-righteous, egocentered man saw that he was sinful by the standards of the law, he didn't want to face his wickedness. Instead, he set the law aside, reinvented a new system that accommodated his shortcomings, and affirmed in his own mind that he was righteous. His righteousness became dependent on human achievement. The Lord's purpose in preaching the Sermon on the Mount was to break the back of that kind of system. He showed that human achievement does not work.

2. Demonstrated

The Pharisees never got the message. Listen to the prayer of a Pharisee in Luke 18: "... God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are I fast twice in the week; I give tithes of all that I possess" (vv. 11-12). Not once did he express a need to God. He didn't think he had any needs because of how good he thought he was. Near him was a man that pounded on his breast and said, "... God be merciful to me a sinner" (v. 13). Jesus said that man went home justified, not the Pharisee (v. 14).

3. Declared

Jesus wants to bring man to the point where he realizes that in his flesh, he is utterly incapable of pleasing God. He wants man to be in desperation with a broken spirit, meek and mournful, crying out for righteousness from God. The Jewish leaders thought they were on their way to heaven, but Jesus forced them to reconsider and make a decision. Every one of us has to make that decision. As we come to Matthew 7:13-14, the choice is crystallized. There are two gates: the wide and the narrow.

There are two ways: the broad and the narrow. There are two destinations: life and destruction. There are two groups of travelers: the few and the many. In the rest of Matthew 7, we see more contrasts. In verses 16-20, there are two kinds of trees: the good and the corrupt. There are two kinds of fruit: the good and the bad. Verses 24-27 say that there are two builders: the wise and the foolish. There are two foundations: the rock and the sand. There are also two houses, and two elements to the storm. So, a clearcut decision is the issue at the climax of the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus does not want bouquets for His ethics. He does not want people to postpone applying the requirements; He wants a response from people. He forces us to make a decision. There are four contrasts I want you to see in Matthew 7:13-14. The first one I want you to look at is ...

I. THE TWO GATES

In verse 13, Jesus said, "Enter in at the narrow gate; for wide is the gate ... that leadeth to destruction ...," and in verse 14, He said, "... narrow is the gate ... which leadeth unto life" He mentioned the narrow gate twice, and the wide gate once. There are only two gates. Both roads say they point to salvation and God; both of them say they point to the Kingdom, glory, and blessing. Both roads say they point to heaven, but only one goes there. One road is the route of self-righteousness, and the other is the way of divine righteousness. Before you get on a road, you have to go through one of the gates. So, we'll discuss the gates first.

A. The Narrow Gate

Because the crux of interpreting Matthew 7:13-14 is in understanding the narrow gate, I want to focus on it and develop the concept that is involved in it. The first thing I see about the narrow gate as I look at verse 13 is that ...

1. You Must Enter

a. The Command from Jesus Jesus said in verse 13, "Enter in at the narrow gate" There is a sense of urgency here in this aorist imperative. It demands action right away. "Enter now," He said. "This is the time to enter that is what God is calling for. You must do that. It is not an option; it is a command." b. The Challenge to the Jews The Lord Jesus had been teaching his Jewish listeners about a very narrow way of life. Their way of life tolerated sin. They had all kinds of laws and standards beyond those of God. They had invented a manmade system. Jesus told them, "You've got to get rid of that system. This is the way." He narrowed down the way a person should live so that by the time He came to Matthew 7:12, He had presented a very confined approach to living to the glory of God. His audience understood that He was talking about a narrow, prescribed way. According to the end of chapter 7, Jesus "taught them as one having authority ..." (v. 29). He didn't merely quote all the teachings of the Jewish rabbis; He explained the specifics of God's law. Compared to the Judaistic system, Jesus' way was very narrow. He said that they must enter the narrow way if they wanted to be in His Kingdom. He demanded immediate action. He gave an absolute command without an alternative. It is not enough to listen to the preaching about the gate or to admire the ethics Jesus taught; you've got to enter the gate. Jesus said that you cannot enter the Kingdom unless you come on the terms He described. You must abandon your self-righteousness. You must see yourself as a beggar in spirit (Mt. 5:3), mourning over sin (v. 4), meek before a holy God (v. 5), and hungering and thirsting for righteousness (v. 6). You have to enter on His terms. Hell will be full of people that admired the Sermon on the Mount. You must enter the gate.

Second ...

2. You Must Enter the Narrow Gate

Jesus said there is a wide gate, but He doesn't tell you to enter it, because it leads to destruction (Mt. 7:13). If you are going to be in the Kingdom, you have to go through the narrow gate. You can't just admire it.

a. The Basis of Salvation Denounced The gate to the Kingdom is very narrow. People say, "Christianity doesn't leave room for anyone else's view of salvation." That is exactly right. It is not because Christians are selfish or egotistical; God has only given one way for man to be saved. If God said there were forty eight ways to be saved, I would preach all fortyeight! But there aren't fortyeight ways to salvation.

b. The Basis of Salvation Defined In Acts 4:12, we read, "Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." Jesus said, "I am the bread of life ..." (Jn. 6:35), and "I am the way, the truth, and the life ..." (Jn. 14:6). In John 10, He said that He is "the door of the sheep" (v. 7), and that "he that entereth not by the door ... but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber" (v. 1). First Timothy 2:5 tells us, "... there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man, Christ Jesus."

c. The Basis of Salvation Determined Christ is the only way to salvation. The way is narrow. There are no alternatives. You must enter by an act of the will and an act of faith; you have to enter on God's terms through God's prescribed gate. Christ is that gate (Jn. 10:9). He is the only way. Holy God has the right to determine the basis of salvation, and He has determined that it is through Jesus Christ alone.

Third ...

3. You Must Enter the Narrow Gate Alone

That fact is implied in the text. The word "narrow" in verses 13-14 gives the idea that the gate is very narrow. In fact, some Bible commentators say that the best contemporary expression of it would be to think of a turnstile. A person has to go through a turnstile alone; The passageway through a turnstile is very narrow; its metal arms don't allow more than one person through at a time. Zoos, train stations, and airports have turnstiles. If a group of people are in a hurry to go in or out, they can't go through together. They have to go through one at a time. That's the way it is with the narrow gate. People don't come into the Kingdom of Christ in groups. The Jewish people thought that they were all on the road to heaven together because of their Abrahamic heritage and circumcision. There are some people who are sure they will go to heaven because they think their whole church will go to heaven together. But groups can't go through the turnstile to heaven. People have to go through on an individual basis. Salvation is individual; people have never been saved in pairs. Sometimes one person's belief will influence another person to believe, but salvation is still exclusive and personal. That can be hard for us, because our lives are usually spent doing things with a crowd. We do what other people do, and belong to part of a group or system. Yet Christ said, "To come into My Kingdom, you're going to have to make a decision by yourself." To a Pharisee, that meant having to say goodbye to his friends and leaving the legalistic system of religion he had adhered to. There is a price to pay. For the Jewish people, it isn't enough to claim Abrahamic heritage or depend on circumcision. It isn't enough for a person to say, "I was born in a Christian family, and have gone to church all my life." People don't come into the Kingdom in groups; they come in by an individual act of faith. You must enter the narrow gate, and you must enter it alone.

a. The Difficulty Recognized It is very difficult to enter the narrow gate. I know that shocks some people, because we always hear that it is easy to become saved. Some say all you have to do is just believe, sign a card on the dotted line, walk the aisle, raise your hand, or go to the prayer room. The problem is, when people think they'll become saved by doing those things, they aren't on the right road because they didn't go through the narrow gate. It's very difficult to become saved. Let me show you why:

- 1) Searching Wholeheartedly The last part of Matthew 7:14 has this to say about the narrow gate and the narrow way: "... few there be that find it." That implies that people aren't even going to know about the narrow way unless they are looking for it. God said through an Old Testament prophet, "... ye shall seek Me, and find Me, when ye shall search for Me with all your heart" (Jer. 29:13). Nobody ever slipped and fell into the Kingdom of God. I don't believe it's easy to be saved. That's cheap grace or easy believism. That's the revivalist approach: Raise your hand, walk the aisle, sign the card, and you're in. Matthew 7:14 says, "... few there be that find it." Therefore, you have to search for the

narrow way. Let's take that a step further: 2) Striving Wholeheartedly Look with me at Luke 13, and I'll show you something that will really shock you. In verse 22, we read that Jesus "went through the cities and villages, teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem." From verse 23, we learn that the people who were with Him realized that not everyone was responding to His teaching. (It's always hard for us to understand why people don't respond to Christ.) One of the people with Him said, "Lord, are there few that be saved?" The person who asked that question observed that not many people were responding to Christ. The answer our Lord gave implied why indeed few become saved. He said, "Strive to enter in at the narrow gate ..." (v. 24). The word "strive" is the Greek word *agonizomai*, which means "to agonize." It is used in 1 Corinthians 9:25 to speak of an athlete agonizing to win a victory. That concept is spoken of in Colossians 4:12 with the words "laboring fervently" and in 1 Timothy 6:12 with the word "fight." In other words, the Lord said that going through the narrow gate is agonizing. It demands fervent striving. He continued in Luke 13:24, "... for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able." So, it is difficult to be saved for two reasons: First, you've got to seek the narrow way; second, even though many are seeking, once they find out what it costs to enter, they won't be willing to do it. b. The Diligence Required You don't become a Christian just because you walked an aisle; you don't become saved in a cheap and easy way. Matthew 11:12 says, "... the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." It is those who earnestly strive to enter the Kingdom that get in. In Luke 16:16, the Lord said, "... the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it." That is not what we hear today, but that's what Jesus taught. The Kingdom is for those who seek it with all their hearts. It is for those who agonize to enter it. Their hearts need to be shattered over their sinfulness. The Kingdom is for those who mourn in meekness, hunger and thirst for righteousness, and long for God to change their lives. It's not for people who come along in a cheap way and want Jesus without altering their lifestyle. We can't sleep our way into the Kingdom; we have to make an earnest endeavor and display untiring energy. In fact, in John 16:33 Jesus said that "in the world ye shall have tribulation" It's not easy to become a Christian because Satan and his demons fight you. Satan has a fifth column in your flesh, which resists changing. In the power of God, we must overcome Satan and the flesh to enter the Kingdom. One of Satan's pervasive lies in the world today is that it's easy to become a Christian. But it's not! You have to go through the narrow gate by yourself, agonizing over your sinfulness. You have to be broken in spirit. Someone might say, "That sounds like the religion of human achievement you talked about earlier." No; it's when you come with a broken spirit and recognize that you cannot enter heaven on your own that Christ pours into you grace upon grace to strengthen you to enter the narrow gate. In your brokenness, His power becomes your resource.

Fourth ...

4. You Must Enter the Narrow Gate Unencumbered

a. Illustrated Have you ever noticed that you can't go through a turnstile with luggage? It's impossible. The narrow gate is the gate of self-denial. It does not admit superstars who want to carry in all their garbage. You need to strip off self-righteousness and sin, or you don't go through. The rich young ruler in Matthew 19 came to the gate. He found Jesus, and said, "Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?" (v. 16). The Lord went right to the heart of the problem and said, "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell what thou hast, and give to the poor ..." (v. 21). Jesus hit the rich young ruler right in the suitcase! He was trying to get through the narrow gate with the baggage of his riches. He also had the baggage of self-righteousness, because he told the Lord that he had kept all the commandments (vv. 17-20). The rich young ruler couldn't get through the narrow gate with his money and self-righteousness. Verse 22 says that "he went away sorrowful" He wasn't willing to deny himself and agonize over his sin. He didn't strip himself of his luggage. b.

Implemented If you didn't go through the narrow gate the way you are supposed to, then you're on the wrong road. It doesn't matter if the road says it goes to heaven or Jesus. There must be a jettisoning of self. The Lord said in Matthew 18:3, "... Except ye be converted, and become as little

children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." What characteristic does a little child have? Utter dependency. Someone once wrote, "Nothing in my hand I bring; simply to Thy cross I cling." Saving faith is not just an act of the mind; it involves stripping self in utter nakedness. It says, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner" (Lk. 18:13). I believe that in Matthew 7:13-14, the Lord is dealing with the danger of easy believism. Some people say, "Come to Jesus. It's so easy. Just believe and pray." There's nothing wrong with believing or praying, but those things do not bring true salvation when they occur in a vacuum. Becoming saved involves a difficult and radical admission that you are sinful and cannot commend yourself to God.

Fifth ...

5. You Must Enter the Narrow Gate Repentantly

You can't go through the narrow gate unless your heart is repentant over sin. You must turn from sin to serve the living God. When John the Baptist was exhorting people to receive the Messiah, many people came to be baptized because they wanted to have their sins cleansed. The Jewish people knew that preparing for the Messiah meant purging the heart of its sinfulness. Charles Hadden Spurgeon, a great nineteenth-century English preacher, 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 the Canaanish kings from the cave and be hanged up in the sun." You must turn from sin to God; there must be repentance in your heart.

Finally ...

6. You Must Enter the Narrow Gate in Utter Surrender

You have to come through the narrow gate in total abandonment to Christ. I do not believe that a person can be regenerate by adding Jesus Christ to his carnal activities. Salvation is not an addition to your life; it is a transformation of your life. The whole message of 1 John is that if you are truly redeemed, your life will manifest a transformation: You will confess sin, obedience will become a characteristic of your life, and you will manifest love. Salvation is marked by a changed life. Jesus said, "I can tell who My true disciples are, for they obey My Word" (Jn. 8:31). If you think you are a Christian but there is no sign of obedience in your life, then you are on the wrong road. Even if the road says it points to heaven and Jesus, without obedience, you are not on the right path.

The gate you must come through is very narrow. In contrast, there is ...

B. The Wide Gate

I don't need to say much about this; it's obvious by contrast. Everyone can go through the wide gate together. You don't have to go through alone. There is nothing individualistic about it. There is no self-denial expected. You can bring all the baggage that you want: your immorality, lack of repentance, and lack of commitment to Christ. The wide gate is the gate of self-indulgence. There are many people who claim to be Christians who are totally self-indulgent. I recently saw someone like that on television, and it made my heart grieve. Pride, self-righteousness, self-indulgence, and all kinds of sins are welcome on the broad road. But if you have those things in your life, then you are not on the narrow road, because you can't get through the narrow gate with baggage.

After the two gates, there are ...

II. THE TWO WAYS

What are the two ways? Matthew 7:13 mentions the broad way, and Matthew 7:14 mentions the hard or confined way. Psalm 1 talks about them: There is the way of the godly (vv. 13), and the way of the ungodly (vv. 45). Verse 6 tells the result of walking the ungodly way. The choices are the same as they have always been: You can either go the way of the godly, or the way of the ungodly.

Let's look now at ...

A. The Broad Way

Once you've come through the wide gate it's easy living. There is no precipice. There is plenty of room to stroll. There are no rules; no morality is particularly binding. There is room for diverse theology. There is tolerance of every conceivable sin, just as long as you "love" Jesus or are "religious." There are no boundaries. All the desires of the fallen heart are fed on that road. There is no need for a Beatitude attitude or a study of the Word of God. There is no need for internal moral standards. You can live with a mechanical kind of religiosity that is no more than hypocrisy. The wide way doesn't require you to have character; you can be like a dead fish floating downstream: you let the current do the work. Ephesians 2:2 calls that road "the course of this world" Proverbs 14:12 sums up the tragedy of the broad way: "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." The wide way has no standards except those made by men to fit into their comfortable system. But Psalm 1:6 warns, "... the way of the ungodly shall perish." In contrast to the wide way, there is ...

B. The Narrow Way

1. Defined

Verse 14 talks about the hard or narrow way. The best translation is "a constricted way." It literally speaks of being confined to a narrow path on a precipice. That's why in Ephesians 5:15 Paul said, "See, then, that ye walk circumspectly" You must walk with your eyes open; the path is narrow and it is hemmed in on both sides by the chastening hand of God. If you step off either side of the path, you will get rapped on your spiritual knuckles! The requirements are great, strict, and clear cut; there is no room for any deviation from them. You must desire in your heart to fulfill those requirements, knowing that if you fail, God will chasten you, lovingly forgive you, and set you on your feet again. You say, "If it's a hard, strict, and narrow way, then it might be something that I wouldn't want." However, the wonderful thing about walking the narrow path is that all the hardness of walking it is borne by Christ Himself. He said, "... My yoke is easy, and My burden is light" (Mt. 11:30). But still be aware of what you are asking for if you decide to walk on the narrow way.

2. Depicted

a. Counting the Cost In Luke 14:25-26, we read, "And there went great multitudes with Him; and He turned, and said unto them, If any man come to Me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple." Tell that to the next person you share the gospel with! He was saying, "If you want to be a Christian, then hate your father, mother, brother, and sister. You're going to have to step out of the crowd, and say goodbye to everyone you love or you can't be My disciple. Then you're going to have to pick up a cross and live a crucified life." Try preaching that at a revival, and see how many people come forward to accept Christ! Do you know who would come forward? The people who should come; the people who want to make the right kind of commitment. Jesus continued His line of thought with some illustrations. He said in verse 28, "For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost ...?" In other words, you shouldn't start building something without analyzing what it's going to cost you. Jesus added, "... what King, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand?" (v. 31). Verse 33 says, "So, likewise, whosoever he is of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, cannot be My disciple." b. Clarifying the Challenge Jesus drew a hard line. If you're not willing to say no to everything and to walk that narrow path, then you can't become a disciple of Christ. If you do walk the narrow walk, remember that it is God who enables you to do so. You can't walk that narrow path by yourself, but God will give you grace upon grace and His strength will pour through your weakness so that you can make it. If you're willing to live the way He wants you to, then you're coming to Him the right way. Remember that you will be persecuted and face tribulation. Jesus told His disciples that "the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service" (Jn. 16:2). You're going to spend your life running from

those who want to persecute you. The narrow way can't be walked upon with bare feet. It's not a luscious meadow. The road is hard. Jesus never presented Christianity as a soft option for the weakhearted. You declare war on hell when you go through the narrow gate and hell fights hard. You must live your life with a Beatitude attitude: you must constantly deal with your pride and selfish desires. Jesus said to Peter, "Follow Me. By the way, that will cost you your life" (Jn. 21:15-19). Are you coming on those terms? That's what the narrow way is like. It's hard, pressed, and confined. If you wander off the path, God will chasten you. You say, "But it sounds so hard!" No, it's not hard because Jesus shoulders the burden for you. When you make your choice about which way you want to go, keep in mind ...

III. THE TWO DESTINATIONS

According to Matthew 7, the broad way "leadeth to destruction" (v. 13), and the narrow way "leadeth unto life" (v. 14). Moses, Joshua, Jeremiah, and Elijah all spoke of the way of life and the way of death (see pp. xx). Psalm 1 said that the godly are blessed and "the ungodly shall perish" (vv. 1, 6). The word "destruction" in Matthew 7:13 refers to ultimate, eternal judgment in hell.

The Lord says that everyone ends up in one of two places. All the religions of the world (except the religion of divine accomplishment in Christ) will end up in the same place: "destruction." It's easy to go on the path that leads that way; you can take all you want with you. There are no standards. But when you reach the end of that path, things get rough. There are no restrictions and plenty of people along the way, but it ends in hell.

John Bunyan said that "the entrance of hell is from the portals of heaven." What a shock some people are going to get when they realize they are going to hell! On the other hand, the narrow way is going to open up into eternal bliss. The broad way narrows down into a terrible pit; the narrow way opens up into the fullness of an everlasting fellowship of joy with God that we can't even imagine. Eternal life isn't quantitative; it's qualitative. The choice is yours. Consider the destination of the way you choose; you will spend eternity there. How will men choose? That question is answered by the final point:

IV. THE TWO CROWDS

Matthew 7:13 says, "... broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be who go in that way." Verse 14 says, "... hard is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." That's amazing. Most people are on the road of human achievement. Most people are on the wrong road.

People often ask me, "Which do you think will have more people: heaven or hell?" Jesus gave the answer in Matthew 7:13-14. In the Old Testament, there was always a remnant of believing people. The one time in God's redemptive history that will be unique is the Tribulation. According to Revelation 7, there will be an innumerable multitude of Gentiles redeemed out of every nation, language, and people (v. 9). There will also be redeemed people from the nation of Israel (vv. 48; Rom. 11:26). There will be a massive response to the gospel during the Tribulation. Many people will respond to Christ. But for this age, the response to Christ is small because men would rather hold onto their own sin. Jesus said that men love their darkness (Jn. 3:19).

A. The Little Crowd on the Narrow Way

In Luke 12:32, Jesus looked at His disciples and said, "Fear not, little flock" The word "little" is the Greek word *micron*. We get the word *micro* from it, which means "something small." The same word is used in Matthew 13:32 of the mustard seed, which is the smallest of all seeds. There has always been only a few people who seek the way to heaven with all their hearts. There are very few people who agonize over their inability to enter heaven, and are willing to count the cost of walking the

narrow way. In fact, Jesus said in Matthew 22:14, "For many are called, but few are chosen."

B. The Large Crowd on the Broad Way

It's easy to choose the broad way; you just go with the crowd. You can try to add Jesus to your life, feel religious, and go to church. You can join a system of religion that says it points to heaven, and never deny yourself. Either way, you will end up with disaster. In Luke 13, Jesus said, "Strive [or `agonize'] to enter in at the narrow gate; for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut the door, and ye begin to stand outside, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and He shall answer and say unto you, I know you not from where ye are; then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and have drunk in Thy presence, and Thou hast taught in our streets. But He shall say, I tell you, I know you not from where ye are; depart from Me, all ye workers of iniquity. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God And, behold, there are last who shall be first, and there are first who shall be last" (vv. 2438, 30). Jesus was not talking about irreligious people; He referred to religious people who thought they were on the right road. I can't think of a more horrible scene than that of people who think they are saved being locked out of heaven.

Jesus said many will go on the broad road (Mt. 7:13). Do you want to find out more about that group? In verses 2223, Jesus said, "Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name? And in Thy name have cast out demons? And in Thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from Me, ye that work iniquity." What a shock! The many people on the broad road are going to find out that they were not on the road to heaven. The door will be shut in their faces forever.

The way to heaven is narrow, but I'm happy to say that it's wide enough to take in the chief of sinners (1 Tim. 1:13, 15). You've got to enter the narrow gate alone. You can't escape the choice; you will have to make it inevitably. To make no choice means that you've made a choice and you will face that decision.

Focusing on the Facts

1. What significance does Matthew 7:13-14 have in the Sermon on the Mount? What do the verses following Matthew 7:13-14 do?
2. What does the Lord focus on in Matthew 7:13-14?
3. Cite some examples from Scripture of God offering men an ultimate choice. Ultimately, what two alternatives does every man have?
4. The contrast in Matthew 7:13-14 is not between religion and paganism. What is being contrasted?
5. What did man do when he saw that he was sinful according to the law?
6. What point does Jesus want to bring man to?
7. What is similar about the narrow and wide roads? What is different about them?
8. What is interesting about the way Jesus said, "Enter in at the narrow gate ..."?
9. Using Scripture, support the fact that there is only one way to become saved. Who determined the basis of salvation?
10. What device best illustrates the fact that a person must enter the narrow gate alone?
11. Explain why it is difficult to become saved. Support your answer with Scripture.
12. What is one of Satan's pervasive lies today?
13. To become saved, a person must go through the narrow gate without any baggage. What must a person strip himself of?
14. You can't go through the narrow gate unless your heart is _____ over sin.
15. Salvation is not an _____ to your life; it is a _____ of your life.
16. What does a truly redeemed life manifest?

17. Describe the "requirements" of going through the wide gate.
18. Describe the narrow way. What is it hemmed in by? What does God do if you fail the requirements of the narrow way?
19. What is the wonderful thing about walking the narrow way?
20. Is there a cost to walking the narrow way? Explain.
21. What do you declare war on when you go through the narrow gate? How must you live your life?
22. What does the narrow way open up into? What does the broad way narrow down into?
23. What will the response to Christ be like during the Tribulation (Rev. 7:49)? Why do only a few people choose to respond to Christ during this age?
24. What will happen to people who add Jesus to their lives without denying themselves? (Lk. 13:24-28, 30; Mt. 7:22-23)

Pondering the Principles

1. Have you ever examined yourself to make sure that you are coming to heaven on God's terms? In Matthew 5, at the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus specified those terms: you must be poor in spirit (admit that you are spiritually bankrupt and helpless to enter heaven on your own; v. 3), sad over your sin (v. 4), meek (patient and submissive; v. 5), and hungering and thirsting for righteousness (v. 6). Are all four of those things characteristic of your life? Can you honestly say that your life changed at the time you acknowledged Christ as your Savior? If not, then you have not come through the narrow gate that leads to heaven. Confess your sinfulness to God now, and ask for the righteousness that Christ's blood has made available for you. Give God control of your life, and be obedient to Him. If you did come through the narrow gate, thank God for making available to you a way to receive eternal life.
2. Read Psalm 1:16. According to verse 1, what kind of man is blessed by God? What characterizes a godly person (v. 2)? What is the result if a person walks righteously (v. 3)? According to verse 4, the ungodly "are like the chaff which the wind driveth away." What does Matthew 3:12 say that Jesus will do with the chaff? What does Psalm 1:56 say about the ungodly? When you share the gospel message with someone, let him know the consequences of the choice that he makes about his eternal destiny.

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