

## TWO ROADS, TWO GATES

### Matthew 7:13-14

## I. INTRODUCTION

## II. THE TEXT

**KJV—13** *Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: 14* *Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.*

**NASB—13** *Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. 14* *For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.*

**NIV—13** *Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. 14* *But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.*

**ESV—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. 14* *For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.*

**The Message—***Don't look for shortcuts to God. The market is flooded with surefire, easygoing formulas for a successful life that can be practiced in your spare time. Don't fall for that stuff, even though crowds of people do. The way to life—to God!—is vigorous and requires total attention.*

## III. BACKGROUND

### A. GENERAL TERMINOLOGY

#### 1. **GATES**—PURPOSES IN BIBLICAL TIMES

- a. Entry—Access to city
- b. Protection
  1. Because they were in breach of wall—fortified—with guard towers
  2. Closed at night—to protect against enemy attack
  3. Everyone 'within the walls' was under protection of city
- c. Demarcation—ostracism
  1. To be thrown outside the gate was to be outcast
  2. Punishment/execution administered outside the gate
- d. Assembly

1. Elders gathered at gate
2. Place of public pronouncement
3. Place of judgment and legal decisions
4. Commerce

## 2. WAY/ROAD

### a. Literal/obvious usage

#### 1. Roadway between destinations

- a. Intricate network of small roads in Palestine—245 OT era roads have been identified
- b. Two major North-South roads
  1. Coastal highway—from Egypt to Syria and Mesopotamia
  2. Ridge road along Israelite highlands
    - Beersheba in south—to Jerusalem—to Jezreel in north
    - ‘Highway of Patriarchs’—traveled by Abraham, Isaac, Jacob

#### c. Four major East-West roads

#### 2. Roman Roads

- o 2-5 lanes wide—6-15 feet wide
- o Passed straight through barriers
- o Paved—with one or more layers of cement or stone
- o Designed to last for centuries

### b. Metaphorical usage = way of life—behavior—style of life

### c. Descriptor of early Christians = ‘The Way’

- Acts 9:2
- Acts 19:9, 23
- Acts 22:4
- Acts 24:14, 22

## B. TERMS DESCRIBING JESUS

### 1. THE GATE—πύλη

- a. Close parallel is the ‘door’—θύρα

- b. **Jn 10:9**—*I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.*

## 2. THE WAY

**Jn 14:6**—*I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.*

## IV. CONTEXT

### A. PARALLEL PASSAGE

**Lk 13:24**—*Strive to enter through the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able to.*

1. As Jesus was headed through Galilee toward Jerusalem
2. After these events:
  - a. Healing on the Sabbath of a woman bent double for 18 years—officials rebuked Him
  - b. Two parables—the Kingdom of God is like:
    - o Mustard seed
    - o Leaven in flour for bread
3. This verse introduces Jesus' telling about difficulty to enter 'the house'—**Lk 13:24-30**
  - a. The parable
    - Many will try to enter—but the Lord of the house will shut the door
    - They implore Him—saying they know Him—He taught in their streets
    - He will say, "I do not know where you are from—depart from Me you evil-doers"
    - In that place—there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth
    - But others will come from all directions—and recline at His table in Kingdom of God
    - Some are last—who will be first—and first who will be last
  - b. Context
    1. Parable parallels two passages in Matthew
      - o **Mt 7:21-23**
      - o **Mt 8:11-12**
    2. **Mt 7:21-23**—Sermon on the Mount
      - o Parallels idea that not all who claim to be disciples will enter the Kingdom
      - o *Not everyone who says to me Lord, Lord will enter the Kingdom of Heaven*

3. **Mt 8:11-12**—after Jesus commended the faith of the Centurion in Capernaum
  - o Many will come from all directions and recline in the Kingdom
  - o But sons of the kingdom will be cast out—weeping and gnashing of teeth

## **B. SERMON ON MOUNT**

1. Change in direction of Sermon
  - a. After pivotal **verse 12**—summarizing the Kingdom Ethic—The Golden Rule
  - b. Jesus closes the sermon by:
    1. Highlighting the importance of following the Kingdom Ethic
    2. Revealing eternal consequences of obedience or disobedience
    3. Contrasting true and false discipleship
  - c. He does this by presenting four challenges:
    1. Choosing the right way—Narrow not Broad
    2. Produce the right fruit—Good not Bad (false prophets)
    3. Not just saying—but doing what God says—[false disciples not admitted to Kingdom]
    4. Wise obedience—not foolish disobedience
2. The Two Ways—Narrow and Broad—A Choice
  - a. This choice—**follows** ‘either-or’ behavioral choices—Jesus already presented
    - o Store treasure either on earth—or—in heaven—**6:19-21**
    - o Eye full of light—or—darkness—**6:22-23**
    - o Serve either God—or—mammon/worldly wealth—**6:24**
  - b. This choice—**anticipates** ‘either-or’ character/nature—Jesus is about to mention
    - o Trees bearing bad fruit (false prophets)—or—good fruit—**7:15-21**
    - o Wise person (house on the rock)—or—foolish person (house on sand)—**7:24-27**

## **C. OLD TESTAMENT—TWO WAYS**

- **Dt 30:19-20**—*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 . . .*
- **Ps 1:6**—*For the Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.*
- **Jer 21:8**—*You shall also say to this people, “Thus says the Lord, ‘Behold, I set before you the way of life and the way of death.’”*

## V. EXPLANATION OF TEXT

### A. THE TEXT/TRANSLATION

**13** Εἰσέλθετε διὰ τῆς στενῆς πύλης ὅτι πλατεῖα ἡ πύλη καὶ εὐρύχωρος ἡ ὁδὸς ἡ ἀπάγουσα εἰς τὴν ἀπώλειαν καὶ πολλοὶ εἰσιν οἱ εἰσερχόμενοι δι’ αὐτῆς

**14** ὅτι στενὴ ἡ πύλη καὶ τεθλιμμένη ἡ ὁδὸς ἡ ἀπάγουσα εἰς τὴν ζωὴν, καὶ ὀλίγοι εἰσὶν οἱ εὐρίσκοντες αὐτήν

### B. OVERALL STRUCTURE

1. **Exhortation:** Enter the narrow gate!
2. **Warning:**
  - Condition—wide gate and broad road
  - Consequence—lead to destruction
  - Situation—many enter it
3. **Challenge:**
  - Condition—small gate and narrow way
  - Consequence—lead to life
  - Situation—few enter it

### C. EXAMINATION OF TEXT

#### 1. Verse 13

- a. **Enter through the narrow/straight gate** = Εἰσέλθετε στενῆς πύλης

1. Possible meanings—of ‘narrow/strait’
  - a. Built on root word meaning ‘to stand’—that which is ‘set’ or ‘firm’
  - b. Strict moral requirements
    1. Not Pharisaic legalism
    2. But following the Kingdom Ethic in His sermon

- c. Disciplined life
  - 1. A narrower choice than the common one
  - 2. Selective way of life—not the obvious one everyone else chooses
- 2. Where does this gate lead?
  - a. Not *explicitly* stated here—but stated elsewhere in Sermon—**Kingdom of Heaven**
  - b. Jesus had already mentioned the destination
 

**5:20**—*For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.*
  - c. Jesus soon returns this idea
 

**7:21**—*Not everyone who says to Me, “Lord, Lord,” will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter.*
- 3. Imperative verb—**enter!**
  - A command for all disciples—not optional
  - Which implies—everything else in the sermon is also commanded
  - If you follow Me—you must enter this way—and follow this Kingdom Ethic
- b. **For wide is the gate and broad is the road** = **ὅτι πλατεῖα ἡ πύλη καὶ εὐρύχωρος ἡ ὁδός**
  - 1. Now we see there are two gates
  - 2. This means two things
    - a. Implied
      - 1. There is a terminal destination beyond for everyone
      - 2. We do not stay put—but we all move on to eternal destinations
    - b. Everyone must make an ‘either-or’ choice
  - 3. Wide gate
    - a. Is big and obvious
    - b. *Seems* to point to something better and more important beyond
  - 4. Broad road

- a. Basic idea = big and spacious—accommodating huge crowds
  - 1. The **obvious** way
  - 2. The most **popular** way—accommodating huge crowds
  - 3. *Seems* to point toward some splendid and important destination
- b. Also suggests **quick**—most expeditious route—like the Interstate
- c. Built on root word suggesting ‘prosperity’
  - 1. Contrasted with ‘narrow’ way that is ‘rigid’ or ‘set’—maybe even ‘difficult’
  - 2. So some translations say—the **easy way**
- d. By contrast—the narrow way is:
  - 1. Less obvious
  - 2. Less pretentious
  - 3. More difficult to find
- c. **That leads to destruction** = **ἡ ἀπάγουσα εἰς τὴν ἀπώλειαν**
  - 1. Present participle— **ἡ ἀπάγουσα**
    - ‘that which is leading’—it **is constantly moving** toward destruction!
  - 2. **Note:** the only other place ‘gate’ is used in the NT—refers to hell!
 

**Mt 16:18**—*I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon his rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hell will not prevail against it.*
- d. **And many enter through it** = **καὶ πολλοὶ εἰσιν οἱ εἰσερχόμενοι δι’ αὐτῆς**
  - 1. Warning—do not follow the crowd!
  - 2. There is *not* safety in numbers!

## 2. Verse 14

- a. **For small/strait is the gate and narrow the road** = **ὅτι στενὴ ἡ πύλη καὶ τεθλιμμένη ἡ ὁδός**
  - 1. Some translations make this emphatic say—“**How** small . . .”
  - 2. Small/strait gate
    - a. By comparison with the wide gate—capable of carrying heavy traffic

- b. Maybe a small pedestrian passageway—too small for vehicles
- 3. Narrow road
  - a. Narrow—built on root word meaning ‘difficult’ or ‘causing trouble’
  - b. By contrast with the ‘easy’ way—the disciples way is not smooth and untroubled
  - c. Following Jesus the Way on the Way is not the easy way!
- b. **That leads to life** = ἡ ἀπάγουσα εἰς τὴν ζωὴν
  - 1. Contrast with ‘destruction’ of the broad way
  - 2. Present participle—‘that which is constantly leading to’—ever moving toward life
  - 3. Jesus’ promise ties this all together
  - **Jn 14:6**—*I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life*
  - 4. And He connects it with the destination
  - **Jn 146b**—*no one comes to the Father but through me.*
- c. **And only a few find it** = καὶ ὀλίγοι εἰσὶν οἱ εὐρίσκοντες αὐτήν m
  - 1. This does not exactly parallel the ‘wide gate, broad road’ passage
    - a. Emphasis there was on ‘entering’ the gate/road
    - b. Here the emphasis is on ‘finding’ the narrow gate
  - 2. This is linked to two previous passages
    - o **7:7-8**—*... seek, and you will find ... he who seeks finds ...*
    - o **6:33**—*But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness ...*
  - 3. What this means
    - a. We must **seek** the Kingdom—the small gate and narrow way
    - b. Compared with the wide gate—it is not obvious and easy to see
    - c. It is not found accidentally—but intentionally
  - 4. Only a few find it—so—this is **“the road less traveled”**

#### D. CLOSING OBSERVATION

1. Which comes first—the ‘gate’ or the ‘road’?

2. Some say the following

- a. Gate is first (conversion/evangelism)—then comes the way (obedience/ethics)
  - o Seems artificially to divide justification from sanctification
- b. Way is first (following Christ)—the gate is second (entry into eschatological glory)
  - o Seems to de-emphasize ‘decision’ point and emphasize ethical obedience

3. Preference—personifying the Gate and the Way

- Gate comes first in text—so it should be the beginning point
- But the gate is not just a ‘decision’—it is walking to/through Christ Himself
- When doing so—we make a commitment to follow the ‘way’
- But the ‘way’ is not just an ethical code—or way of life
- It is following Jesus Christ the Way along the Way
- So both the Gate and the Way *are* Christ
- Entering Christ (the Gate) means to walk with Him (the Way) all the way

## **V. SUMMARY OBSERVATIONS**