

"ENTER THROUGH THE STRAIT GATE..."

Intro: Several years ago George Gallup, the famous political pollster, embarked upon a study of the thinking of Americans about life after death. The results were most interesting: He found first that only 2 out of 3 Americans believe in life after death in any sense. From there opinions about the afterlife became far most divergent. 2/3's of those surveyed thought the afterlife would be peaceful. A little over half (54%) thought they would be in the presence of God. Only 42% looked forward reunions with friends, relatives. Strangely 12% thought they would be able to have contact with the living. 20-25% of those believing in an afterlife thought they would return as another life form in reincarnation! 5% said they thought the afterlife would be boring! From a Bible perspective only about 47% of all Americans believe there is a heaven. A little over a third believe in hell!

Equally interesting are the attitudes of those believing in heaven and hell. Only 2-7% of those believing in heaven thought their chances of going there were poor. Perhaps in our own generation this explains the general indifference to the gospel. One third of our people don't believe at all and of the other two-thirds who do, there is no real concern of being lost! So why bother.

Jesus certainly had a different view. Perhaps it has never been more important to persuade people to take a closer look at where we stand with God. That is the challenge of Jesus in Mt. 7:13ff.

TWO GATES, TWO WAYS, TWO DESTINATIONS!

Two gates--one strait, one wide

Strait is not "straight" but "strait".

Narrow or compressed

Two ways--narrow & wide

Two groups--few and many

Two destinations (ultimate destinations)

Life--Union with God, heaven!

Destruction--Separation from God, hell

FOUR IMPORTANT DEDUCTIONS!

God's way is not spacious but confining!

Throughout this sermon the Lord has spoken of the strict demands of God for righteousness. When we come to God we must leave behind our own opinions, our own self-will, and our own self-righteousness. We must narrow our opinions to God's opinions, our will to God's will, our righteousness to God's righteousness!

It is in confinement that we find our greatest freedom. The sooner we learn to narrow our view to God the greater will our freedom be! We will bask in the freedom of His forgiveness, and His love.

He will produce in us the fruits of the Spirit, concerning which he says, "Against such there is no law!"

From the vantage point of those disobedient to truth, the gospel way will always seem narrow! It will seem narrow because it is narrow!

God's way cannot be discovered by an appeal to majority opinion!

One of the most troubling aspects of Jesus' appeal is his disturbing insistence that most people will not go to heaven! It is sad to think of the vast throngs of people who deny that there is a heaven at all!

And then, we recognize that among those who believe in an afterlife virtually all of them consider it a "peaceful" experience! where is the "few" of Mt. 7?

Jesus' omniscient assessment of the judgment suggests that majority opinion will not suffice to determine what is right!

Young people who come home saying to Mom and Dad, "But everybody's doing it" might remember that. And those that struggle with simple commands of the Bible because they realize that most people don't obey them might remember that also!

But, remember also that Jesus never intended for us to be as concerned about how many were going as about whether we are among them!! Lk. 13:22-28.

The narrow way cannot be pursued as long as we are motivated by a desire to please men rather than God!

If it is true that most are on the road to hell, then it follows that those who intend upon fitting in with the world and pleasing the world will inevitably be on the road that leads to destruction!

Among the barriers to entering the way of Christ are thoughts of how others will react to our decision. What will our friends say?

What will our parents say? Etc.

The path we walk is not defined by our own thinking but by the word of God.

I think that often people of the world do not plan to go to hell.

They do not consciously set out to do wrong. They don't evaluate their actions in light of the word of God but things around them.

And, they just don't look at where their conduct leads. They are so busily engaged in the road itself that they never think about where the road is heading!

Do you ever really think about where you stand with God? And by what do you determine that you are on the right road?

Friends, preachers, church membership? The one thing that stands out so clearly at the end of this sermon is that only God's way will lead us to heaven! And only submitting to God's will can put us in God's way! Mt. 7:21

There are only two destinations!

Some day we will give account to God for the lives that we have lived. We will be judged by the law of God we have lived under!

Rom. 2:16

Trying to be better is not enough! Carson: "Nothing could be more calamitous than to meditate long and hard on Mt. 5-7 and then to resolve to improve a little".

What Jesus does in this Sermon is set forth the righteous requirements of God.

First we are made to see that none of us can hope to go to heaven on our own merits. If we seek salvation by law, we are doomed to destruction.

This sermon was designed to bring us to the dust in humility before God. Through an awareness of our own sin, we cast our souls by faith upon the merits of His Son who died for us. To come to Christ we must leave behind naive notions of merit and the inevitability of human progress. We must come instead aware of sin and reliant upon God not only for forgiveness but for power to be what He would have us be!

This is what makes the gate "strait" or narrow. And this is what it takes to get into the narrow way.

Only those who bring themselves under the authority of the word of God can go to heaven!

Conclusion: All of us must see ourselves from Christ's perspective. We are saved or lost! We are sinners or we are forgiven. We are on the road to heaven or on the road to hell. Where are you? "Enter in now while you can".