

# Choices / Consequences 1 — Gates & Paths

Jesus now begins the final section that ties directly into His conclusion for the entire sermon. He warned that there would be a series of choices each disciple would be forced to make that would lead to the success or failure of each of His disciples. He described distinctly different gates and paths, teachers, disciples, and foundations. There is no way to avoid these choices. At pivotal moments in life, often without warning, we will be confronted with circumstances that will force a decision that reveals our spiritual priorities. The consequences of these choices will not only affect the rest of our lives as a disciple here on earth, but also continue into eternity. Since we will have no option when these circumstances arise but to make these **either/or** decisions, Jesus used this portion of the sermon to guide and counsel His disciples to help them make the right choice. We have been forewarned, and need to arm ourselves with wisdom in order to make the right choice.

First, there are **two gates** (:13-14). One gate leads to destruction and the other to eternal life. There are also **two paths** (:13-14) we will walk upon after entering one of those gates. Even after entering the right gate we are not fully safe since the path leading back to destruction is always a single choice away. If we stray from the strait and narrow way leading to life then we will still end in destruction even if we entered the right gate.

To help with the gates/paths Jesus warns that we will always have to be aware of two types of teachers. We must choose among these **two teachers** (:15) which ones we will allow to train and guide us. Some teachers are the Lord's sheep/shepherds teaching the truth and guiding us to heaven. Others are ravenous wolves in sheep's clothing. They teach error to draw away disciples after them. These teachers are illustrated by **two trees** (:16-20). There are good trees bearing good fruit and evil trees bearing evil fruit. If we follow the latter we will be thrown into the fire.

There are also **two disciples** (:21-23). Although all disciples call Jesus Lord, some actually do what the Father says while others do not. Jesus warned powerfully that "*many*" will seek to convince Him they were faithful by the works they did, but on the last day, Jesus will be forced to reject them all because "*I never knew you.*"

Finally, there are **two foundations** (:24-27) upon which we will build our lives. Disciples who hear the words of our Lord in this sermon will be confronted with these **two choices** for their entire lives. Some will hear these words and do them and others will hear these words and either ignore or choose not to do them. Those who build their lives upon the foundation of this sermon are building on rock and those who ignore these words are building their spiritual lives upon a foundation of sand.

<b>Gates</b>	— Enter the Narrow Gate leading to life; Avoid the Wide Gate leading to destruction.
<b>Paths</b>	— A difficult way leading to life; A broad way leading to destruction.
<b>Teachers</b>	— Avoid the false prophets who wear sheep's clothing but are ravenous wolves.
<b>Trees</b>	— A good tree bears good fruit; A bad tree - bad fruit. By their fruits you know.
<b>Disciples</b>	— Call Jesus Lord and do Father's will; Call Jesus Lord but don't do Father's will.
<b>Foundation</b>	— Hear and do - Rock Foundation; Hear and do not; Sand Foundation.

These are very serious matters! There are many grave dangers lurking against those Jesus wants to save and forgive. We must be aware of them and take the necessary steps to avoid their risks. These are absolutes that are fixed and will not be covered by the grace, mercy and compassion of God. They are choices where we make our faith and humility known or they are choices that reveal unbelief and arrogance.

## Two Gates

*"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. 14 Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it. Mt 7:13-14*

This is such a startling prophecy! Who would have imagined that the access and entrance Jesus opened for all when He died upon the cross would be narrow? We know that God "*desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.*" (1Tim. 2:4) and is "*not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.*" (2Pet. 3:9) How then is it possible that the preaching of the true gospel would have so few entering the gate that it would be difficult to find it?

Was it God's intention this gate be narrow? The simple answer is that the gate is always wide enough to accommodate everyone who is asking, seeking and knocking. But the gate is only as wide as the number of people seeking to enter it. The reason the gate is narrow is described by

Paul in his letter to the church in Corinth.

*For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. 19 For it is written: "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, And bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent." 20 Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? ... 26 For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. 27 But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; 28 and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, 29 that no flesh should glory in His presence. 30 But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God — and righteousness and sanctification and redemption — 31 that, as it is written, "He who glories, let him glory in the Lord." 1Cor. 1:17-20; 26-29*

God crafted the gospel in such a way to draw the humble and submissive and to repel the proud and rebellious. In this way the church was protected from the ungodly who would seek to use it for their own purposes. Hence one of the reason the gate is narrow is found in the choices God made when He created the gospel. The "message of the cross" is far too foolish for the vast majority of people. All we have to do is consider the world before the flood and the history of Israel to understand God's concern. All who are unwilling to "trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not upon your own understanding" will never find the narrow gate that leads to life.

Yet there is more to this warning. It is not simply because "not many wise after the flesh, not many mighty," and "not many noble are called." Nor is it only because God wanted to "put to shame" "them that are wise;" "the things that are strong;" "and the things that are despised," "that no flesh should glory before God."

Although the atheists, agnostics, and idolaters make up a large segment of those who refuse to enter the gate that leads to life, the true reasons for the narrow gate are much more complicated. The real problem are those who modify the doctrines or righteous conduct demanded by Scripture to make it more palatable.

As we consider the reality today we are confronted with the terrible truth of Jesus warning. Multitudes who call Jesus Lord are not doing the will of the Father in heaven (Mt 7:21-23). These multitudes create that wide gate and dwarf the gate leading to life! The majority living in error create the illusion that the gate leading to life is narrow. Paul and Peter spoke of a great falling away that would confront those seeking the true gate making it very small indeed!

*But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. 2 And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. 2 Peter 2:1-3*

*Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, 2 speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, 1 Tim. 4:1-3*

*The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, 10 and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. 11 And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, 12 that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness. 2 Thess. 2:9-12*

With the way of truth being blasphemed, some giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, and strong delusions condemning those who did not believe the truth, it is obvious the gate will be narrowed.

Think about it! If multitudes loved the truth and sought to follow God exactly as demanded, the gate to life would be wide and the way into error would be narrow. But from the very beginning, the human race has been reluctant to follow God. In the generation of Noah multitudes lived, but "when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water." (1Pet. 3:20).

Of the multitudes still living after the tower of Babel, God chose only Abraham. Out of Sodom, God "delivered righteous Lot, who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked 8 (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds) — 9 then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment" (2Pet. 2:7-8)

When Israel came out of Egyptian bondage, they were all "baptized into Moses" "But with most of them God was not well pleased."

*Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all*

*passed through the sea, 2 all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, 3 all ate the same spiritual food, 4 and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ. 5 But with most of them God was not well pleased, for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness. 1Cor. 10:1-5*

We know from the record in Numbers that only Joshua and Caleb of those above the age of 20 were allowed to enter the promised land.

*Say to them, 'As I live,' says the Lord, 'just as you have spoken in My hearing, so I will do to you: 29 The carcasses of you who have complained against Me shall fall in this wilderness, all of you who were numbered, according to your entire number, from twenty years old and above. 30 Except for Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun, you shall by no means enter the land which I swore I would make you dwell in. Num. 14:28-30*

Throughout the Judges, Kings and after the exile, this never changed. Paul spoke of the futility of the Jewish system to save multitudes: "*Isaiah also cries out concerning Israel: 'Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, The remnant will be saved.'*" (Rom. 9:27).

This is why the gate will always be narrow. Though God has made the gate clear and plain throughout the Scriptures, so few people enter it in each generation that it always appears to be narrow. The multitudes teaching error and claiming to please God will always so outnumber those who hold to the truth that the gate leading to destruction will be wide and broad. So it was in the days of Noah. The only gate was the ark and only eight souls entered. In the days of Lot the way to life was narrow for it required love for God's moral standards and in Sodom, he was the only one practicing it. It was Lot who seemed odd and his lifestyle narrow. Even in the days of Moses the gate was narrow. So many were living in sin and rebellion that the way leading to life was almost impossible to find among them even though God had told them on Mt Sinai and in the Law exactly what they gate was: "*For forty years I was grieved with that generation, And said, 'It is a people who go astray in their hearts, And they do not know My ways.'*" 11 So I swore in My wrath, '*They shall not enter My rest.*"' (Ps 95:10-11).

## **What is the Narrow Gate Leading to Life?**

What is the gate today? As we look out among the multitudes of disciples who claim to follow Jesus what is the gate that their refusal to enter has made narrow? What is the narrow gate each of us must enter? We know the simple steps of salvation that lead to entrance into the eternal kingdom. Which of these has been marginalized and minimized to the point where "*few are they that find it?*" A careful look will quickly reveal it today.

Faith comes by hearing the word of God(Rom. 10:17),  
Without faith it is impossible to please Him(Heb. 11:6)  
Unless you believe I am He you will die in your sins(Jn. 8:24),  
God has demanded all men everywhere to repent(Acts 17:30-31),  
With the heart man believes and with the mouth confession is made to salvation(Rom. 10:9-10)  
He who believes and is baptized; repent and be baptized(Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:38).

Which of these is so obscure today and so little thought given that the entrance into the kingdom is now narrow? The ordinance of baptism has made the gate narrow indeed! Like Noah's ark, people today refuse to enter the kingdom through baptism. "*while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water. 21 There is also an antitype which now saves us — baptism*" (1Pet. 3:20-21). Baptism is the true Noah's ark today. It was this baptism that Paul said is also a likeness to Israel's passage out of Egypt and toward the promised land. They "*were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea;*" (1Cor. 10:2). When multitudes reject baptism, change the ordinance to sprinkling or pouring, change the participant from a repentant adult into an infant, or change its purpose from salvation to a meaningless ritual, they narrow the gate leading to life.

Think of it! Of those who call themselves disciples, who are those on the last day whom Jesus will proclaim: "*I never knew you.*" Not *I do not know you now, or I knew you for a little while but now I don't know you.* It is clear from their attitude they believed, had repented and openly confessed him as Lord. But since we are "*baptized into Christ*" (Gal 3:27) and join Jesus in his death, burial and resurrection(Rom 6:1-6; Col 2:11-13), Jesus could easily say "*I never knew you*" to those who were never properly baptized.

*1 Most assuredly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. ... 9 I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. John 10:1, 9*

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. John 14:6

Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." 4 Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" 5 Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. John 3:3-5

just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, 26 that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, 27 that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. Eph. 5:25-27

He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, 6 whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, Titus 3:5-7

Jesus created the door for the sheep, and no one comes to the Father except through that door. Unless one is born again of water(baptism) and the Spirit(hearing the inspired word of God) he will never enter the kingdom of God. Jesus cleansed the church by the washing of water(baptism) along with the preaching of the word. In God's mercy, he saved us through the washing of regeneration (baptism) and renewing of the Holy Spirit(trust and obedience to His revealed words). If we reject baptism, there is no door, no way, no entrance, no new birth, no washing and no regeneration. He will say to those who reject baptism and thus enter through the wrong gate, "I never knew you."

## Two Paths

Even after entering the right gate, safe passage is still not guaranteed! The path beyond the narrow gate is also is straitened, narrow, and contracted.

*"thlibo... to press (as grapes), press hard upon... a compressed way, i.e. narrow, straitened, contracted,... metaph. to trouble, afflict, distress..."* (Thayer, p. 291; 2346)

Far from a four lane freeway clearly marked and with grooves in the pavement to quickly reveal we have strayed from the path! It is more like a small trail crossing through the mountains. It climbs the pass over bare rock(hard to see) with many obstacles to go around and through. It passes through the thick forest where we must squeeze through the trees. It must be walked with great care, with one eye always searching for where it leads next and the other watching every step lest we trip or fall from the heights.

In using this figure, Jesus also warned it would take the very best we have to remain on this path our entire life. Not only is the path difficult, but it is lonely! A path with only a few fellow travelers upon it. A true walk with God is much more difficult than most people imagine. Yet Jesus was very clear it is so.

What is this path? I believe Jesus described it perfectly in this sermon(7:21-23). Not those who call Jesus Lord, but those who do the will of the Father. A few Scriptures will suffice.

*But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. 9 As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed. Gal. 1:8-9*

*Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son.2 John 9-10*

*I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: 2 Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. 3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; 4 and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. 2 Tim. 4:1-5*

*But though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach unto you any gospel other than that which we preached unto you, let him be anathema. 9 As we have said before, so say I now again, if any man preacheth unto you any gospel other than that which ye received, let him be anathema. Gal. 1:8-9*

Remember, the true disciple must "Test all things; hold fast what is good. 22 Abstain from every form of evil." (1Th 5:21-22) He must "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." (2 Tim. 2:15). There are so many things that require such careful thought. Things we must sift and cautiously consider many Scriptures. But this is all necessary to remain on the path that leads to life.