



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

Matthew 7:13-14 Two Ways

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THERE ARE ONLY TWO WAYS THAT MATTER MOST IN LIFE, AND NO THEY ARE NOT POLITICAL PARTIES. WHICH WAY ARE YOU ON?

I find it interesting that many people who do not seem particularly interested in Jesus or the Bible say they like the Sermon on the Mount. They often specify that they value "The Beatitudes" (Matthew 5:3-12) or the "Golden Rule" (Matthew 7:12). I have never once, however, heard such a person say they prefer the *conclusion* of the Sermon. This may be because these words are extremely direct about matters of eternity, and therefore more difficult for some to digest. As one commentator explains, "Jesus began his sermon with unqualified tenderness, embracing in the Blessings those who felt least embraceable. He concludes with unqualified toughness, warning us that his sermon is not an intellectual option, a set of suggestions we may take or leave, one philosophy among several others, but that it is the exclusive way to life."¹

In Matthew 7:13-29, Jesus gives four short lessons that show that everyone is making a choice between two ways of living and responding to God, each with very different outcomes: 7:13-14 Two ways (narrow, wide), 7:15-20 Two trees (good, bad), 7:21-23 Two claims (deeds, words), 7:24-27 Two builders (wise, foolish). Let's look at the first lesson today.

TWO WAYS

Matthew 7:13-14 "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. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it."

Notice that there are two *gates* (wide, small), two *ways* (broad, narrow), and two destinations (*destruction, life*). Jesus does not explain here precisely what these gates

and ways represent. However, he is clearly speaking of judgment (*destruction*) and eternal life (*life*), as the context makes even more obvious (see 7:19, 21-23).

In order to come closer to understanding His meaning, we can refer to two parallel passages.

John 10:7-9 "So Jesus said to them again, "Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly."

Here again, as in Matthew 7:13-14, Jesus speaks of a *door* that we are to *enter through*. Those who enter will have *life*, but those who do not enter are at the mercy of the one who intends to *destroy* them. This time though, Jesus explains that he himself is that door.

In another passage, Jesus amplifies this even more:

John 14:6 "Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.'"

Again, Jesus used similar language as Matthew 7:13-14, declaring himself the *way* and the *life* and explaining that we must go *through* him to be with God the Father.

As Peter, who was one of Christ's closest disciples, explained just a few years later,

"And there is salvation in no one else [other than Jesus Christ]; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

CAPITOL BIBLE STUDIES

LEGISLATORS: WEDNESDAYS @ 7:45 A.M., ASSEMBLY RULES CONFERENCE ROOM (3171)

STAFF/LOBBYISTS: WEDNESDAYS @ 12:00 NOON, ROOM 125

Two Ways

So, in considering Matthew 7:13-14, we see that the narrow gate and way refer to a life of faith in Christ and obedience to God's will (see 7:21), while the wide gate and way represent any other way one might attempt to approach God.

THE ROAD LESS TRAVELED

***Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.***²

Unfortunately, Jesus said that most people are on the wide road but few are on the narrow. This should not surprise us, for Jesus often emphasized the difficulty of following Him (Matthew 10:38, 16:24-25; John 15:18-19, 16:1-3; Acts 14:22).

*“The fact that ‘everybody does it’ is no proof that what they are doing is right. Quite the contrary is true: God’s people have always been a remnant, a small minority in this world. The reason is not difficult to discover: The way of life is narrow, lonely, and costly. We can walk on the broad way and keep our ‘baggage’ of sin and worldliness. But if we enter the narrow way, we must give up those things.”*³

TWO DESTINATIONS

The good news is that all who enter through faith in Jesus and follow his narrow path, demonstrated through obedience (7:21), will enjoy an *abundant* (literally “overflowing”) life with God now and forever (John 10:10). Those who do so are privileged and blessed.

However, all who follow another way of their own choosing are on the wide path and are headed for *destruction*. This word *destruction* (Greek = *apoleia*) “does not refer to extinction or annihilation, but to total ruin or loss.” “It is not the complete loss of being, but the complete loss of well-being.”⁴

WHY ONLY ONE WAY?

Many people protest when they hear that there is only one way that leads to the abundant life God promises. It seems so, well, narrow. Yet, we should actually be incredibly thankful that there is *any* way to be saved. If we understand that there is just one true God who is perfectly holy, and that our sin is so offensive to him that it demands judgment, but that he launched the greatest rescue mission of all time by being born as a lowly human being and submitting himself to a brutal substitutionary execution – all in order to save and bless those who are willing, how can we complain? To do so would be like a person drowning in the ocean complaining because only one ship came to rescue him. Instead, we will marvel in amazement and gratitude as we devote our lives to knowing and following Him.

PICK A PATH

So, we must choose. We can be like the man who wrote to a newspaper following a local Billy Graham broadcast that presented the truth of Christ, “If in order to save my soul I must accept such a philosophy as I have recently heard preached, I prefer to remain forever damned.”⁵ Or, we can thank God for making a way for sinners like us, and step forward to enter. He is not forcing anyone, and we should never try to push his message on anyone either. Rather, he invites us to enter into life with Him. Will you do so?

Contact me if you would like to talk about this more.

¹ F.D. Bruner 282, quoted in Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew* (Eerdmans, 1992), 173.

² Robert Frost, “The Road Not Taken.”

³ Warren Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary, Volume 1* (Victor, 1994), 30-31.

⁴ John F. MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary, Matthew 1-7* (Moody, 1985), 457.

⁵ MacArthur, 458.