

Enter through the narrow gate

“Enter ye in by the narrow gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many are they that enter in thereby. For narrow is the gate, and straitened the way, that leadeth unto life, and few are they that find it.” (Mt 7:13-14)

The narrow gate is discipleship to Jesus Christ. There are many things I do not understand, but I will not dishonor my Lord Jesus Christ but even implying that there is some other way to God than through Him. He Himself said, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” (John 14:6)

It is true that the gate is narrow. Jesus is the gate. Many assume that “surely” there must be some other way than just Jesus. Yet many of these same people, trusting that false assumption, don’t even try to find those other ways! Try them. Seek out Islam, or Buddhism, or Hinduism, or even Judaism. See if they bring you into a present reality of God ruling in His kingdom. See if those other ways produce a clean conscience once again. See if they give you a power beyond yourself to do good. See if they comfort your heart in grief, give you confidence in peril, and change you on the inside to live in divine love.

It is true that the way is hard. It is like a hiker faced with two paths. One leads up a steep, rocky mountain. The other is a more gentle, sloping trail. But that easy trail ends only in a bog of quicksand. The hard, difficult trail, once ascended, leads to open, thrilling vistas of beauty and strength. The way is hard in the sense that it permits no other lifestyle. One cannot both pursue materialism and follow Jesus. One cannot pursue sexual immorality and follow Jesus. One cannot pursue ambition and follow Jesus. Yet, once having embarked on that narrow way, the road actually becomes easy. Life becomes simple. Close surrender to our very kind Lord permits freedom of choice, ease of conscience, and peace and joy in the emotions.

What if it turns out that you will never cease to exist? Even if you wanted to? Dr. Dallas Willard, philosophy professor at the University of Southern California, and one



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of our best Christian thinkers today, often poses that question in his seminars. We are unceasing spiritual beings with an eternal destiny in God’s great universe. That is the Biblical picture of reality for the human being. The question is not whether we will live past the death of our bodies. No, the question is “Where and under what conditions will you live past death?”

Would you enjoy living in heaven? “Well of course,” most people would say. But they say that because they don’t understand what heaven is like. Christians understand what heaven is like because our Lord Jesus came from there. Through His parables and teachings, and in His works of power and sacrificial life, Jesus showed us what heaven is like.

Heaven is a place of holy love. It is a place where the inhabitants are caught up in the blazing reality of God, living intensely in His love, constantly abiding in His presence, fully yielded to His will of their own accord, wanting nothing more than to please, love, and serve Him. Heaven is a joyful communion of human beings and angels, reigning with and worshipping their supreme Lord, Jesus Christ. Those in heaven find their greatest delight in preferring one another above themselves and singing the praises of one another and God.

Does this describe you? Do you enjoy being with holy people now? Is the thought of laying down your life for others one that appeals to you? Does self-control, simplicity of lifestyle, standing for justice and righteousness, and abiding in the Word of God strike a happy chord in your heart? Do you love God now?

To yield your life to Jesus Christ is the first step. But it is only the first step. The call from our Lord is “Follow me.” Our job is to keep following. He leads us into green pastures and quiet waters and, praise God, restores our soul. He also leads us through the valleys of shadow, training us to fear no evil for Jesus is with us. We become transformed as we continue to follow Jesus. The “hardness” of the way at first, due to our divided self, mixed motives, and habits formed in sin, becomes the “easy yoke and light burden” of surrendered will. We become the kind of people who will enjoy being in heaven.

No one will enjoy being in hell. But if their tastes haven’t changed in this life, they will prefer hell to living in the presence of a holy God.

Jesus knew that after He visibly departed His followers would be prey to those who would try to lead them astray after “other Christs.” Initially, it would be the threat of Judaizers (those claiming Christ but really depending upon Law-keeping) then later the Gnostics (a hyper-spirituality in which sin with the body didn’t matter) and always, in the words of the Apostle Paul, those “holding to a form of religion, but denying its power.” (2 Tim 3:5) This is why Jesus firmly said to His disciples to enter and remain on the “narrow way.”

Who are those who would lead us astray today? Certainly theological liberalism when it promotes “different paths to God” and deviant lifestyles such as living together before marriage and homosexual relations. But also evangelical voices that persuade us to accept Christ and pursue the American dream of wealth and ease. Anything that calls us away from a strict obedience to Jesus Christ must be run from. As the Apostle John said, “Anyone who claims to abide in Him must walk as Jesus walked.” (1 John 2:6)

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