

A HARMONY OF THE GOSPELS

XLV. The Sermon On The Mount: False And True Righteousness

K. Christ's Instruction To Those Who Enter His Kingdom

3. Christ's True Versus The False Way Of Salvation

(Matthew 7:13-14)

I. Introduction

- A. After critiquing the Pharisees' false righteousness, Christ addressed those who desired to enter His Kingdom in Matthew 7:7-29 (J. Dwight Pentecost, The Words and Works of Jesus Christ, 1991, p. 186).
- B. Matthew 7:13-14 is part of that address, and it contrasts Christ's true versus the false way of salvation. We view this passage for our insight, application and edification (as follows):

II. Christ's True Versus The False Way Of Salvation, Matthew 7:13-14.

- A. Earlier in His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus had clarified in Matthew 5:20 that unless His hearers' righteousness exceeded the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, they would not enter God's kingdom.
- B. Thus, the wide gate and the broad road He mentioned in Matthew 7:13 referred to the false teaching of the scribes and the Pharisees on how to enter God's kingdom where the small gate and narrow road in Matthew 7:14 was Jesus' true teaching on how to enter God's kingdom (Ibid., p. 187; Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 34).
- C. "Even the Lord Jesus acknowledged that few would find the true way, the way that leads to life (i. e., to heaven, in contrast with ruin in hell)." (Ibid.) "Christ's requirements were very rigid but were of God. Only the ones who came through Him could be accepted into the kingdom . . ." (Ibid., Pentecost) Salvation was impossible for man to reach by his meritorious good works as the Pharisees taught, for the very best of sinful man's works greatly fall short of the absolute righteousness of a holy God. One actually needs to be given God's righteousness as a gift through faith in Christ to have eternal life, cf. Romans 3:20-28.
- D. Such teaching may seem very basic to us in a church where we are often exposed to the true Gospel of Christ, but a number of professing evangelicals no longer hold to the small gate and narrow way that Jesus taught:
 1. R. Albert Mohler, Jr., President of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in his article, "'Evangelical': What's in a Name?" (in John H. Armstrong, gen. ed., The Coming Evangelical Crisis, 1996, p. 34), noted that an article appeared in a 1990 edition of Christianity Today magazine that called for "a total transformation of evangelical faith . . . complete with a wrathless deity and an unnecessary cross." In another words, evangelicalism's flagship magazine had run an article that called for a view of a God Who had no wrath against sin and against sinners, and that salvation by Christ's cross was unnecessary!
 2. This led to the claim that "God's wrath, newly defined, 'never means sending people to an eternal hell.' The Church is not the assembly of the redeemed but a fellowship poised to declare all sins forgiven," Ibid.
 3. Dr. Mohler continued, reporting that some have come to agree "that the non-Christian religions of the world can be revelatory and even redemptive (though most would insist that Christ remains Savior of all) . . . Some now argue against hell as eternal torment in favor of annihilationism. Some also argue for a postmortem opportunity to confess Christ." (Ibid., p. 35)
- E. Accordingly, we answer these **alleged** transformed evangelical claims from Scripture, showing that Jesus' claim of the small gate and narrow way of salvation is as applicable today as it was in His earthly ministry:
 - a. God has set forth the redemptive work of His Son Jesus Christ on the cross as a "propitiation" (Romans 3:25), that "propitiation" being a satiating of God's wrath against the sinner and his sin. (Leon Morris, The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross, 1972, p. 180-185)
 - b. The cross of Christ is thus necessary for God to justify and to forgive sinners, Rom. 3:26; Col. 1:13-14.
 - c. Acts 4:10-12 adds that salvation exists in no other name than in the name of Jesus Christ.
 - d. Hebrews 9:27 teaches that after death (postmortem), men face judgment, not a second chance to be saved.
 - e. If people do not believe in Christ and His death for their sin in this earthly life, they will face eternal torment in the lake of fire, 1 Corinthians 11:1-11; 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9; Revelation 20:15, 10.

Lesson: Christ's claim that wide was the gate and broad was the way of the Pharisees that led to eternal damnation while small was the gate and narrow was the way of faith in Himself that led to salvation is as applicable today in even evangelical circles as it was in His earthly life. Man's efforts to gain salvation by human merit is a false way that many people tragically try, and it contrasts sharply with the true way by faith in Christ that relatively few use.

Application: May we uphold the small gate and narrow way of salvation by faith in Christ before a needy world.