

Bible Readings

Joshua 24:14-28

¹⁴ "Now fear the LORD and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your ancestors worshiped beyond the Euphrates River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. ¹⁵ But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD."

¹⁶ Then the people answered, "Far be it from us to forsake the LORD to serve other gods! ¹⁷ It was the LORD our God himself who brought us and our parents up out of Egypt, from that land of slavery, and performed those great signs before our eyes. He protected us on our entire journey and among all the nations through which we travelled. ¹⁸ And the LORD drove out before us all the nations, including the Amorites, who lived in the land. We too will serve the LORD, because he is our God."

¹⁹ Joshua said to the people, "You are not able to serve the LORD. He is a holy God; he is a jealous God. He will not forgive your rebellion and your sins. ²⁰ If you forsake the LORD and serve foreign gods, he will turn and bring disaster on you and make an end of you, after he has been good to you."

²¹ But the people said to Joshua, "No! We will serve the LORD."

²² Then Joshua said, "You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen to serve the LORD."

"Yes, we are witnesses," they replied.

²³ "Now then," said Joshua, "throw away the foreign gods that are among you and yield your hearts to the LORD, the God of Israel."

²⁴ And the people said to Joshua, "We will serve the LORD our God and obey him."

²⁵ On that day Joshua made a covenant for the people, and there at Shechem he reaffirmed for them decrees and laws. ²⁶ And Joshua recorded these things in the Book of the Law of God. Then he took a large stone and set it up there under the oak near the holy place of the LORD.

²⁷ "See!" he said to all the people. "This stone will be a witness against us. It has heard all the words the LORD has said to us. It will be a witness against you if you are untrue to your God."

²⁸ Then Joshua dismissed the people, each to their own inheritance.

Matthew 7:13-14

The Narrow and Wide Gates

¹³ "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. ¹⁴ But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.

Intro/Common Misconceptions & Wrong Attitudes

[PowerPoint 1-Heading Problems]

- In the world we live in today - we have a number of **common misconceptions and wrong attitudes**

[PowerPoint 1a]

- **Misconception #1 is Universalism** - that is - everyone gets saved and goes to Heaven - except for the really really bad people - like Hitler and the Nazis and mass-murderers

[PowerPoint 1b]

- **Misconception #2 is religious pluralism** -which basically says there are multiple paths to God or gods - and they all lead to Paradise

[PowerPoint 1c]

- **Misconception #3 is Syncretism** - where religious beliefs from different religions are **merged together** [for example people in Sri-Lanka and India who convert from Hinduism or Buddhism to Roman Catholicism - are encouraged to pray and worship statues of saints instead of praying and worshipping to the various Hindu gods or Buddha]

[PowerPoint 1c]

- **Misconception #4** is the notion that **Hell does not exist**. Or the notion that **God wouldn't send anyone to Hell**
Or there's the **wrong idea of Hell** (that it's not that bad - you'll be able to play golf and have a beer with your mates)

[PowerPoint 1d]

- On top of that we live in a world with **wrong attitudes...**

[PowerPoint 1e]

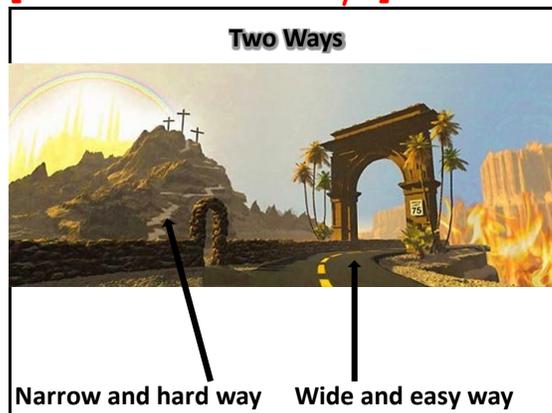
- Some people **don't want to be held accountable** for their behaviour and they **don't want to follow rules; especially God's rules;** and they certainly **don't want to be told what to do - they simply want to do what they please - whenever they want**

[PowerPoint 1f]

- And there's the attitude that some people **think they know better than God**
- And some people have the attitude "*everybody does it - therefore it must be okay*"
- In our NT passage from **Matthew 7:13-14** - **Jesus dismisses these common misconceptions and attitudes**
- In these verses - Jesus presents a **clear choice** - and He **doesn't give** the option of **sitting on the fence**

The Choice Jesus Presents (vv13-14)

[PowerPoint 2-2 ways]



Two Ways/Roads

- First - there are **two ways** or **roads** - Jesus says.
- The OT already mentions this idea of **2 ways** in **Psalm 1** [*One of our hymns this morning - Blessed is the man*]
- Psalm 1 contrasts **two ways**
 - 1st - The way of the **righteous** person - who **delights in God's law** - **mediates on God's law daily** - **bears fruit for God** - the person going this way - lives God's way
 - 2nd - The other way of Psalm 1 is - the way of the **wicked** - basically **someone who doesn't delight in God** - and the Psalm describes the **wicked as chaff** [part of wheat that is cast away as worthless] -such a

person is **without any substance** - and such as person the psalm says will perish

- Here in Matthew 7 - Jesus elaborates on these 2 ways
 - **Jesus says - one way is easy - the word means **broad, spacious or roomy** - some translations call this way - the **wide and easy way****
 - There is **plenty of room** on this wide and easy way - for **diversity of opinions** and the **relaxing of moral standards** - **anything goes** on this wide and easy way.
 - People on the wide and easy way **have no boundaries or limitations** - **whatever feels good to them is allowed** - **God's rules and God's ways don't matter to them**
 - Examples of living this way - are the **worship of money and material things as their gods; self-indulging drinking and drug taking; no commitment to faithful loving loyal relationships** - making the **pursuit of riches and success a priority in their lives** - and so on...
 - People on this wide and easy way - are their **own boss** - they are **king of their own lives** - and there's **no room** for **God or Jesus in their lives**
- The other way Jesus describes - as the **hard way** - it's the **narrow way**
- This way has its **boundaries are clearly marked**
- The reason this way is narrow is because people on this way are **bound by the restrictions** from divine revelation from God's Word
- At first it seems this way is not so attractive - because there are **limits on our behaviour** due to God's rules - but God's rules have been put in place - to **keep us safe** - and to help us to **live a life** that brings glory to God

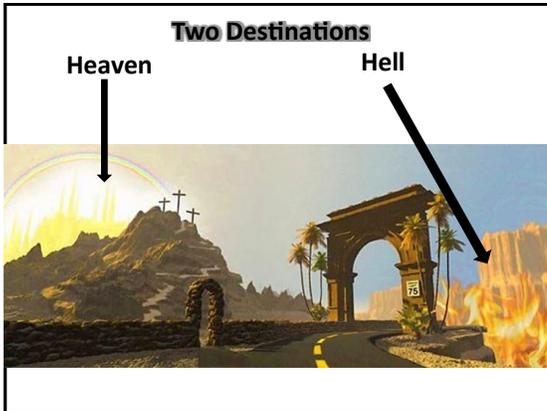
[PowerPoint 3-2 gates]



Two Gates

- Second - Jesus says - there are **two gates** - a **wide gate** and a **narrow gate**
- The **wide gate** leads to the wide and easy way
- There is no limit to what a person can take through this wide gate - nothing has to be left behind - a person can bring all their sinful behaviour with them through this gate - they don't even need to leave behind their self-righteousness or pride
- Whereas the **narrow gate** leading to the narrow way - is hard to find - it's easy to miss
- To enter through the narrow gate - means **leaving** our sinful behaviour and self-indulgent behaviour behind - **leaving** covetousness and thirst for wealth behind - perhaps even leaving family and friends behind - who don't like the fact we believe in Jesus
- There is a **cost for people** to enter through the narrow gate
- It means living our old life behind - and embracing a new life in Jesus
- To find this gate - a person must come to Jesus
- Jesus Himself says in John 10:9 - **I [Jesus] am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved.**

[PowerPoint 4-2 destinations]



Two Destinations

- There are **two destinations** - Jesus says
 - The **wide gate** to the **wide and easy way** - that leads to **destruction**. Jesus is talking about Hell here. He doesn't really define what destruction means here or the precise nature of Hell. But elsewhere in the Bible - Hell is described - as an **eternal fire** (Matt 25:42) - a **kingdom of darkness** where there will be **weeping and gnashing of teeth** (Matt 8:12) - a **place of everlasting destruction** where people are **shut out from the presence of God and from His glory forever** (2 Thes 1:6-9).

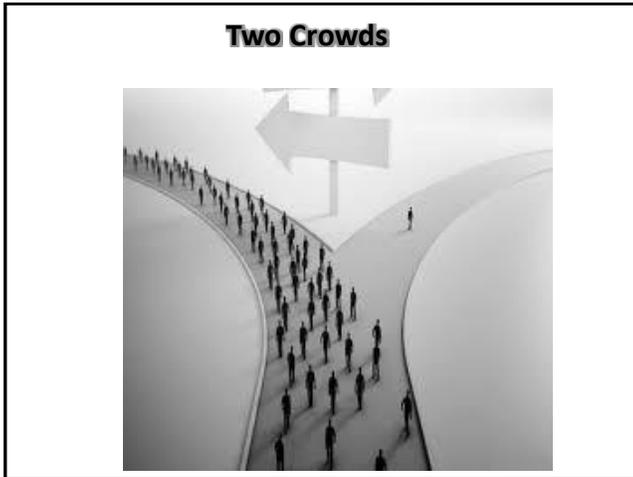
From this it's fair to say that in Hell - everything good will be destroyed - no love, no loveliness, no beauty, no truth, no joy, no peace and no hope - **all gone forever!** Worse still - the **complete absence of God!** It is a **prospect too awful to contemplate** without tears - for the **wide and easy way** is the **way of disaster**.

Some may complain that God is not loving by allowing people to go to Hell - but we **need to understand that God's holy standards** are perfect - His **pass mark** for living a perfect life is **100%** - which is why we need Jesus - the **only truly perfect one** - to take away our sins - and **make us right with God**

And besides God doesn't force us to love Him - He wants us to love Him out of honour and respect as King of our lives

- By contrast - Jesus says - the narrow gate that leads to the narrow hard way - leads to a life that pleases God - and leads to eternal life in Heaven - where we live with God forever!

[PowerPoint 5-2 Crowds]



Two Crowds

- **Fourthly** - there are **two crowds** - Jesus says
- The **crowd on the wide and easy way** - Jesus says is **many**
- Whereas the crowd on the narrow and hard way - Jesus says is **only a few**
- From this we can deduce that those following the narrow and hard way - are in the **minority**
- As we look at our country today - a country founded on Christian values - it's sad to say - that **Christians are in the minority and many have chosen the wrong way!**

The Choice

- To sum it up then

[PowerPoint 6-The choice]

- Jesus only offers two ways - hard or easy - there is **no middle way**
- And He offers two gates - wide or narrow (there is no other gate - no other religion - no other religious leader)
- And there are two crowds - large or small (there is **no neutral group**)

- Ending in two destinations - destruction or life - Hell or Heaven (there is no third alternative - no purgatory)
- Obviously having such clearly opposed options is **not very fashionable today**
- Many people today - like to be uncommitted
- **Every opinion poll allows not only for "yes" or "no" - but the convenient "don't know" option**
- Every invite on Facebook allows for "going" and "not going" - and of course the option "maybe" - just in case a better offer comes up
- **People don't want to be tied down to 2 choices**
- **But Jesus won't allow us to **escape the choice!****

Response

- How should we respond this morning?
- **We cannot sit on the fence - Jesus only presents two choices - and only one of those choices is the right one**
- In fact - the **exclusive outrageous claim of Christianity** - which causes offense to some people - is that the only right choice is through the gate of Jesus - as He Himself says in John 14:6: **I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.** [our children's song this morning]
- **We cannot walk on 2 roads in two different directions - it's impossible!**
- **The right option - is to take the narrow gate to the narrow and hard road - that leads to life - but it's a costly option - it means letting go of our "baggage" of sin and worldliness - it means letting go of our old life - (In our OT passage from Joshua 24 - Joshua told the Israelites - to throw away the false gods their ancestors served (v14). In the same way - **we must throw away the things we worship and value as more important than God. Joshua demanded a whole-hearted commitment to the Lord! Jesus demands the same.****

- **Joshua gave an amazing testimony - v15 - He said - [But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD](#) - [can we join Joshua](#) - and say the same this morning - with a heartfelt conviction?**
- **If we are whole heartedly committed to God - we will let the Bible be our moral compass in life - and not say "if everyone else is doing it - it must be right"**
- **This right choice also requires perseverance - as Jesus says - His way is hard - but remember we have Jesus yoked to us - and *his yoke is easy and His burden light* (Matt 11:30) - as we persevere, we encourage others to come through the narrow gate to join us - on the narrow way to Heaven**

[PowerPoint 7-2 Ways to Live]

- **Finally - it would be very wrong of us - to know we have found and entered the narrow gate on the narrow road - that leads to Heaven - and to not share the amazing choice Jesus presents, with others we know - who don't know Jesus**
- **So, my challenge is for us to tell at least one person - this week - about the 2 ways to live [[I have leaflets for you to use](#) - to help you share [your faith](#)]**

Let's pray...