

Matthew 7:14

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

Analysis

Jesus describes the alternative: 'Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it' (Greek: τί στενὴ ἡ πύλη καὶ τεθλιμμένη ἡ ὁδὸς ἡ ἀπάγουσα εἰς τὴν ζωήν, 'how narrow the gate and constricted the way leading to life'). 'Strait' (στενή) means narrow, confined. The narrow path requires self-denial, sacrifice, and countercultural choices. It 'leads to life' (ζωήν) - eternal life, relationship with God. 'Few find it' - not because it's hidden but because it's hard. People choose comfort over cost. This isn't elitism but realism about human nature's preference for ease.

Historical Context

The narrow way evokes Proverbs 4:11-18's path of the righteous versus way of the wicked. Jesus' teaching comes at the Sermon's conclusion after describing costly discipleship - enemy-love, persecution, radical trust. The narrow way is discipleship to Jesus, not generic moral living. Early Christianity's narrow path included martyrdom, social ostracism, and economic sacrifice. 'Few find it' proved true - Christians remained small minority in Roman Empire for centuries despite evangelistic growth.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. What specific demands of discipleship make the narrow way difficult?
2. How does the promise of eternal life motivate perseverance on the difficult path?
3. What cultural pressures tempt you to abandon the narrow way for the broad path?

Interlinear Text

ὅτι	στενὴ	οἱ	πύλη	καὶ	τεθλιμμένη	οἱ	όδὸς	
Because	strait	which	is the gate	and	narrow	which	is the way	
G3754	G4728	G3588	G4439	G2532	G2346	G3588	G3598	
οἱ	ἀπάγουσα	εἰς	οἱ	ζωήν,	καὶ	όλιγοι	εἰσὶν	οἱ
which	leadeth	unto	which	life	and	few	there be	which
G3588	G520	G1519	G3588	G2222	G2532	G3641	G1526	G3588
εὑρίσκοντες	αὐτήν							
that find	it							
G2147	G846							

Additional Cross-References

Matthew 22:14 (Parallel theme): For many are called, but few are chosen.

Romans 12:2 (Parallel theme): And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

Isaiah 35:8 (Parallel theme): And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein.

Mark 8:34 (Parallel theme): And when he had called the people unto him with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

Acts 14:22 (Parallel theme): Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.

Proverbs 8:20 (Parallel theme): I lead in the way of righteousness, in the midst of the paths of judgment:

Isaiah 30:21 (Parallel theme): And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left.

John 16:33 (Parallel theme): These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.

Matthew 20:16 (Parallel theme): So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen.

Jeremiah 6:16 (Parallel theme): Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein.