

Matthew 19-09-29b

Let's resume our study now in Matthew chapter 7 and I'll go ahead and answer the burning question of the hour. What is this gate? Are we, when it's the gate to life, does that mean, you know, that we're talking about the great white throne judgment of Revelation chapter 20 in the lake of fire? Is this what the destruction is that is spoken of for the broad way? Wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction. Well, we begin by looking at context.

Who is being spoken to here? Who is the audience? We're still in the teaching on the hill, the sermon on the mount, so to speak. So, who's being spoken to? These are, first of all, Jewish people, Israelite people, people from Judea and Galilee. More specifically, they are faithful ones.

And we are well into a teaching section here. This isn't Jesus going to a new town, standing on a street corner and saying, there's two gates. Be sure you pick the narrow one.

Otherwise, you're like Merle Haggard. I tell you, I don't think I have a more favorite song of Merle Haggard. I like a lot of his songs, but none better than I Wish a Buck Was Still Silver.

If you haven't heard that song, go to YouTube. Don't get a live version. Get the recorded version and listen to that song.

Because the chorus is, are we rolling downhill like a snowball headed for hell? No. But Jesus did not go to a town and say, you're a snowball headed for the hot place unless you pick the narrow gate. Who is he talking to here? How long has he been talking? And what is he talking about? What has he already said? Ask, seek, knock.

When you pray, pray this way. This is how you should treat your brother. These are lifestyle commands, are they not? This is how to lead the life of faith, patience, obedience, love, self-sacrifice, self-denial.

This is not an evangelistic service. This is not a salvation appeal, is it? So if you're talking to people who are already saved, not only are these people already believers in God, they are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, and they followed him up the hill to hear this distilled, somewhat advanced for the day teaching, right? This is the condensation and the essence and the explanation of Old Testament scripture. This is its implementation and its application in the current day for people who are believers.

So I ask you again, when Jesus talks about there is a narrow gate and there's few that find it, and he tells these people, enter by that gate. He says, you enter. He doesn't say you have entered, does he? That's not a perfect tense.

What do we know about tenses in Greek when it comes to commands? If it's an heiress, you need to start doing something that you're not currently doing. If it's a present, it's something you need to keep on doing, right? Keep on entering. If it's a present, this is an heiress.

So Jesus says, you know, when you've got a group of troops that are either at ease or maybe they're at parade rest or whatever, and you say, attention, you've taken that one word and broken it into a command preparation and a command of execution. Guys are either sitting there at parade, standing there at parade rest, or they're keeping one foot in place so they don't mess up the formation. They've probably already dressed right and gotten their dress and cover, but they're, you know, you're having to wait.

It's 45 minutes before the parade starts. Typically in the Marines, they get you there nearly an hour early and you stand around for 45 minutes so that you're not late. And so then he says, attention, and your thumbs are down the seams of your trousers, your heels are together, feet are 45, and you should be dressed and covered already.

Attend, command of preparation, shun, execution. So you weren't doing a thing like standing at attention, but when the command is executed, now you are. That's what an heiress imperative is.

It is do this. You're not currently doing it. If you were already doing it, I would give you a present imperative.

If everybody was standing at attention and I said, I couldn't really say attention when they're already at attention. I'd be a bad officer or bad senior enlisted. I could say, I could talk to people who are standing at attention.

I could say, I'm going to keep you at attention. You were lazy and looked like a ragbag bunch of army soldiers marching over here. So we're going to stand at attention for all 45 minutes until the parade starts.

You're not going to get parade rest. You're not going to get at ease. You're going to continue to stand at attention.

I've already got you at attention and you're going to stay there. Keep on standing at attention. That's your present imperative.

Give them some slack. Time to stand heiress. This is an heiress imperative.

Second person, plural. You all, I'm talking to you, the group that has followed the Lord Jesus up the hill. And he says, you all enter.

What does that tell you about the gate? They haven't gone through it yet. You don't tell somebody to, there's people here in the church right now. I'm not going to say, well,

come in.

Come on in. You're already in. Right? So if Jesus says, enter the narrow gate, what can you say about these people? They have not yet gone through the gate.

And yet they've been sitting up here probably for quite a while, listening to Jesus teach about the life of a healthy, spiritual, growing, God loving believer. So this A is not salvation and B, they are not yet doing this thing. And he says, you need to enter.

Now, what is the parallel passage? Keep your finger here and turn back over like we did last week to Luke chapter 13. Luke chapter 13, look at verse 22. Jesus is going through the cities and villages, teaching and journeying toward Jerusalem, traveling around, but he's working his way in somewhat of a casual fashion.

It's not a forced march. It's not a quick, direct journey. He's working his way toward Jerusalem.

One of them says, Lord, are there few who are saved? Now we have been conditioned from time immemorial. Our grandparents were conditioned and it somehow entered our genes. And we believe when somebody says saved, you're talking about heaven or hell, golden streets or lake of fire.

You're either saved or you're not. As we have discussed in the past, I will reiterate, we must disabuse ourselves from this binary way of thinking. We look at people, and when I say we, I'm talking about those of us who sort of emerged from kind of the fundamentalist Baptist persuasion, if you will.

Well, is he saved or is he lost? Saved or lost? One or zero? On or off? It's one or the other. Saved? Ah, no worries. Lost? Oh, Lord, save this poor sinner.

Oh, Uncle Bob, Lord, bring him to his knees. Get him saved. Once he's saved, Bob could be the worst reprobate, wife-beating, alcoholic, cheating, stealing, tax-evading guy on the planet.

We don't pray for him one hundredth, one percent as hard as if somebody said, well, you know, Bob's lost. Lost? Well, it's eternity on the line. And, you know, as long as he's saved, he could be the worst rascal that ever lived, but at least he's saved.

And, you know, life is short, eternity is long. So, yes, I sure wish he wasn't a rascal and he's a misery and a curse and a pain to everybody around him, but he's saved. We have this view.

I defy you to find that view in the Bible. It's not there. Paul doesn't reflect it.

Peter doesn't reflect it. John doesn't reflect it. The Lord Jesus Christ does not reflect it.

What do they emphasize? The issue is not, are you saved? The issue is, are you headed for life? And there's a difference. You can be saved and not enter into life. The New Testament, especially, is replete, replete with illustrations, with exhortations, with warnings, with demonstrations of the difference for believers of entering into life or not.

Your salvation is taken for granted. Does Jesus ever make an appeal that says, you've got to believe on me or you're going to the lake of fire? We think, well, Bob, you know, in the classical view, is going to be, you know, swimming in a sea of flames, screaming and excruciating pain forever. I love Uncle Bob.

We've got to get this fixed. I'll give him a tract. I'll pray for him.

I'll talk to him. I'll get somebody else to talk to him. I'll drag him to a film that'll scare him into the kingdom or something.

It's all about eternal conscious torment or not. And we're not too worried about the not. We just don't want the eternal conscious torment.

If you dropped your Bible and the book of Revelation fell off and you only had the other 26 books of the New Testament to go by, where would that come from? Well, let's see, Lazarus and the rich man, I'm tormented in a flame, but, you know, we've just got such a whopper jawed view that Jesus never talks about, Paul never talks about, Peter never talks about, and John never talks about. What do they talk about? Keep your finger here in Luke 13, and you've got another finger in Matthew maybe, but you don't really need those fingers. Turn over to Jude.

You need the fingers. You don't need the places. Let me be clear.

The epistle of Jude, right strawy epistle. Let's begin after the greeting. Jude, bondservant of Jesus Christ, brother of James.

It's very interesting because we believe that Jude is one of the brothers of the Lord Jesus, but he doesn't say, I'm a brother of the Lord. He says, I'm a brother of James. Everybody knows James.

James is the half-brother of the Lord. He's not a brother of James and John, the sons of Zebedee. This is the well-known James of Jerusalem.

But interesting, he says, I am a servant of Jesus Christ, not a half-brother of the Lord Jesus Christ. Brother of James, but brother of James means he is another of the half-brothers, if we've got our Jameses straight. Notice, who is the letter to? To those who are called, sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ.

Could be beloved by the Lord. But in any case, we would say these are believers, right? Mercy, peace, and love be multiplied to you. Beloved, verse three, while I was very

diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.

Evidently, Jude had a previous letter that didn't become a part of the inspired canon. Doesn't mean it wasn't inspired or that it wasn't helpful. We just don't have it.

God didn't choose to include it in what we've got. But he says, I was diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation. Now I'm writing because I find it necessary to talk about contending earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.

Why? Because in the community of believers who have already accepted the Lord Jesus as their savior are already guaranteed to not be going to the lake of fire. Of course, they never talked in those terms. This is how we would view it.

Certain men have crept in unnoticed who long ago were marked out for this condemnation. Ungodly men who turn the grace of our Lord into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ. But I want to remind you, though you once knew this, but you've been drawn away.

Now what does it mean to turn it into lewdness and denial? They have turned it into this. It wasn't this. It's been turned into this.

These men have crept in unnoticed. They weren't identified as preachers of falsehood and heresy and doctrinal twisting. They came in and then through discussion, through talking, through teaching, they have perverted the grace of God.

They have turned it into something it was not. Are these guys evangelists preaching a different way of salvation? No. The way of faith, the life of faith that was once for all delivered to the saints has to be contended for, has to be fought for.

They're not preaching another way of what we would call salvation. They're teaching and preaching another way of life for believers. This is spirituality.

This is what pleases God. And they have turned it into lewdness. Now, what is the two-word mantra for all advertising? If you want to sell something, if you want it to be popular, sex sells.

Put a pretty girl standing next to the car. You want to sell Coppertone? You don't have some overly hairy guy standing there, you know, 15 pounds overweight. You want to sell suntan lotion? You got some shapely young thing with a bottle of it in her hand or somebody else.

You want to sell anything? You know, that's one sure way to do it is you'll get at least half the population if you put a sweet young thing there pitching it. So they are turning

the grace of God into lewdness, into something that is personally appealing that catches some part of our nature that is corrupt. That's what lewdness is.

It hooks into the corrupt nature. Now, how can you take godly living and hook it into the sinful nature? That's what these men have done. They have crept in unnoticed and they have turned grace, the grace of God, into lewdness.

How do you do that? Well, look around at vast swaths of modern Christianity. Prosperity gospel has done it. Name it and claim it has done it.

Hail fellow well met. Our church, yeah, you know, we talk about Jesus and sing some hymns, but we've got wonderful people. Your kids will have lots of squeaky clean other kids to play with.

By the way, that's a falsehood. I've been a kid in a church that made all of those claims and let me tell you, you haven't been dissed and you haven't been made to feel poor and you haven't been made ashamed of yourself until it's happened in a church of squeaky clean people because you're that much more likely to believe it. There must be something wrong with me that they're polite and yet cold and they're clicking together with themselves and not with me.

Not talking about every church, I'm just saying there can be a big swath of self-indulgence, self-promotion, of mutual admiration society within churches and it is lewdness. It's not grace. Grace is sacrificial to self, beneficial to others.

And many, many wonderful churches, many, many great groups, a lot of really wholesome, good, spirit-filled fellowship to be had. But these men are not promoting that. These have crept in and the reason Jude is writing is this group, this situation has been infiltrated by people who have made it prurient, have made it self-indulgence, self-gratifying, the kind of people that Paul wrote to in Corinth who elbowed their way into the feast of food after the morning teaching and were insensible or even rude to the poor and greeted each other and ate up all the good food.

And here's people that really don't have any food at home and they're going away hungry, insensitive, inconsiderate, self-indulgent, self-centered. Wow, there's this lady who makes this wonderful dish and I love that every Sunday. I'm going to get me a half a plate full of that.

And here's somebody standing over here that's got nothing. So they have turned the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord or Lord God, that God part is questionable, and our Lord Jesus Christ. So I want to remind you, though you once knew this, that the Lord, having saved the people, they are delivered.

How? Blood of the Passover lamb. They have been redeemed. They have been spared from death by the blood of a sacrifice and they have come out from Egypt.

The people having been saved out of the land of Egypt afterward destroyed those who did not believe. They were saved, but they were destroyed because they did not believe. Well, wait a minute, you're saying you can lose your salvation? No, they didn't return to Egypt as slaves, did they? They were delivered, but having gone through a gate, they did not walk the way in that sense.

These people believed in the God of their fathers from childhood, but there was an opportunity to be delivered in time, be delivered in life from the power of sin represented by Egypt and the slavery to sin represented by it. And they were willing to walk out, but they weren't willing to travel the narrow road, so to speak. So having saved the people, they are destroyed.

So here's my contention. Here is my thought to offer you. You can be saved and be lost.

You can have life and perish. You can be a believer and be destroyed. Do these people not believe there is a God in heaven? I don't even think there is a God.

I think Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were delusional. I think Moses is having fits. I don't know what's the matter with all the rest of these people.

I just don't even think there is a God. All they've got to do is look over their shoulder. Here's a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night.

Are these people not believers in the salvation sense? Of course they are. They have been saved even in the symbolic sense. They are saved.

They are blood-bought. They are baptized. They've crossed the Red Sea.

Author of Hebrews says they were baptized with Moses. Saved and baptized. You don't get any more saved than that.

Baptism was a picture and a representation of leaving old life and entering into new life. And now they are destroyed because they do not believe. They didn't lose their belief for salvation.

They are not trusting in the ongoing sense. You can enter a gate or not. You can travel a road or not.

These people, and you have the angels that left off their own abode. I don't want to get into that, but look at verse 7. As Sodom and Gomorrah, pay and the cities around them in a similar manner, having given themselves over to sexual immorality and gone after strange flesh. Do you know what going after strange flesh is? Homosexuality.

That's what that is. It's not normal flesh, not normal relations. It is strange.

It is wrong. And they gave themselves over to it. They are set forth as an example,

suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.

Now we have a few verses when we say, I don't believe in eternal conscious torment. And yet I can go over to Revelation and there are passages like those who take the mark of the beast that appear to suffer this eternal fate. So you take Revelation chapter 14 verses 9 through 11.

We'll just use one real quickly here. Turn over to Revelation. We just keep moving toward the back of the Bible because that's what the view is.

We're looking ahead. Revelation chapter 14. We'll start at verse 9. You know what's going on.

You've already seen the 144,000 and you've got these angels that appear. I saw another angel in verse 6, flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth, to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people saying with a loud voice, fear God and give glory to Him. There's your evangelistic appeal.

You've got an angel preaching the eternal gospel, the eternal good news to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people, fear God and give glory to Him for the hour of His judgment has come and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water. Do you notice that this is in the last seven years of the age of Israel and the basis for salvation is not personal faith in Jesus Christ. Even though Jesus Christ has come and has died because God so loved the world, what does the angel preach for salvation? Fear God and give glory to Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water.

This is God the Father. The basis for salvation in the age of Israel was Hebrews 11.6. He that comes to God must believe that He is and that He rewards those who diligently seek Him. He will be found by those who seek Him.

Seek Him early while He may yet be found. Call upon Him while He is near, God the Father. That was the basis of salvation in the Old Testament age.

And this is the Old Testament age, the last seven years, the last three and a half years as a matter of fact. That is the eternal gospel. That is the basis even for belief in the Lord Jesus Christ.

In order to believe in Jesus Christ, you have to believe in the Father and that He is God's Son and that His sacrifice satisfied the righteous requirement of God's righteousness and justice. So believing in the Son is believing in the Father by proxy. It's just more specific.

Another angel followed saying Babylon has fallen, the great city, drinking the wine of her fornication, etc. Verse 9, this is our verse, then a third angel followed them saying with a loud voice, if anyone worships the beast and his image and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand, he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God,

which is poured out full strength into the cup of his indignation. Anyone who takes the mark is going to drink the wine of the wrath of God.

Now, this is a specific volitional test. This is a specific wide gate, not the one that Jesus is talking about. Most everybody on the planet is going to take the mark.

Why is that? Because you already had the rapture and everybody that was inclined to believe in God and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as a way to God has left. The number of converts in any generation is a minority. And you've got the 144,000 servants of God that were mentioned earlier in the chapter.

Well, who's left? Unbelievers. And they are going to drink the wine of the wrath of God poured out full strength into the cup of his indignation. Now, what's being talked about there? What is the wine being poured into the cup and its full strength wrath and indignation of God? Is it the great white throne judgment of Revelation 20? No, it is not.

We're not talking about the lake of fire here. We're not talking about the great white throne judgment here. And this is not a prediction of it.

When is the wine of the wrath of God being poured out full strength? Last half of the tribulation. It is an earthly temporal judgment on flesh, right? Keep your context straight. Just because we're talking about the wrath of God doesn't mean every wrath of God.

There are specific instances of the wrath of God. The flood was an instance of the wrath of God. The judgment on Israel in the wilderness was the wrath of God.

The Assyrian captivity was the wrath of God. The Babylonian captivity was the wrath of God. There are many instances of the wrath of God.

This is the one poured out full strength. Remember, you've got the seals, the trumpets, and the bowls, the vials. Well, these people who have taken the mark are going to experience the cups, the bowls, the vials, the wrath of God poured out full strength.

That's what they're talking about, right? Fix that idea firmly in your mind. Don't be removed from it because as we keep reading, you're going to wonder if you got that right. It makes perfect sense so far, right? It is the tribulational judgments, third of the earth burnt, the seas dried up, all kinds of holocaust, sky is dark, the sun is dark, and the moon has turned to blood, all of that, right? That's what we're talking about.

Don't lose that thought. Keep going. Poured out full strength into the cup of his indignation, he, the person who has taken the mark of the beast, shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the lamb.

Tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the angels, in the presence of the lambs, of the lamb rather. Verse 11, and the smoke of their torment ascends forever and

ever. And they have no rest day or night, those who worship the beast and his image and whoever receives the mark of his name.

No rest day or night. Primary passage for those who want to believe in eternal conscious torment. They say, this is not the cup of God's wrath poured out in the tribulation.

This is more than a thousand years in the future after the great white throne. This is the destination for those who take the mark of the beast. A, how big is this group compared to all the unbelievers of human history? If I was going to talk about the smoke of torment ascending and I was going to talk about eternal conscious torment, would I restrict it to this specific group and let everybody else say, well, I've never seen the beast.

I've never taken a mark. Why should I suffer this particular judgment? This is a very specific group. And compared to the population of humanity, past, present, and future, a microscopic group, well, they're representative.

Anybody that would take the mark of the beast, they're just like every other. Where are you getting that? Nobody even had the book of Revelation for the first umpteen thousand years of human history. So how would they know this? How would they know what's on the line? Well, if I'd only known that the smoke of my torment was going to go forever, I'd have made a different decision about salvation.

I'd have gone seeking God. Why didn't the Old Testament people go out and warn the Hittites and the Hivites and the Archites and the Jebusites and the Philistines and all of the Moabites and the Ammonites and all the other Hites and the Egyptians? Now, I know you've got me as a slave, but let me tell you, there's something bigger going on here. You're about to bob around in eternal conscious torment for eternity if you don't believe in the God of my fathers here and start worshiping Yahweh.

You know, you're having a good time here in Egypt, but eternity stretches before you with this livid, skin-peeling, flaming, horrific future never-ending. The smoke is going to ascend forever and ever. You've got to do something about it.

Everybody would be a screaming evangelist trying to stop this from happening, and we're often encouraged to think this way today. Well, it's not in the Bible, and the reason it's not in the Bible is that it only comes from a few passages like this that are misunderstood. What is going on here? This is the cup of God's wrath poured out full strength in the tribulation.

This has been described as the tribulation, the great, the thlipsis, the great. Jesus called it that, Matthew 24. It's called the time of Jacob's trouble over in Zechariah, I think.

It is a time unlike any that has ever been. It's the worst, and these people opt for the mark of the beast, and they gain this special judgment. Now, is this group and this group alone going to suffer eternal conscious torment? Because it sure looks like it to me.

Tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and the presence of the Lamb. That sounds like heaven, right? And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever. Well, if I don't perish but have everlasting life, then this torment must last forever and ever.

If you don't think about it too long, that kind of makes sense. And he iterates it once again, who worship the beast and his image and receive the mark of his name. Worship the beast, worship the image, receive the mark.

This is your judgment, right? Torment ascends forever and ever. You can almost easily say, I understand that this is the tribulation, except for the forever and ever. The torment and the smoke thereof just seem to be endless.

Now go back to Jude. What did we just read? Verse 7, Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them in a similar manner to these, having given themselves over to sexual immorality and gone after strange flesh, they've made a decision like unto, comparable to the people worshipping the beast and his image and taking the mark, right? Are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire. What? Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them.

How many cities? You go back, Adonai, Zebulunim, you've got five cities there, right? All five of them were judged. Sodom and Gomorrah were the biggest and the most prominent. Lot lived in Sodom, so we hear a lot about that.

People who follow this path of sexual immorality and strange flesh are called Sodomites. Used to be, can't call them that anymore in political correct world. Set forth as an example, suffering what? Vengeance of eternal fire.

Well, if it's eternal fire, then they're still flaming, right? The smoke of their judgment should still be ascending. Is there a fire in Sodom, Gomorrah, Adonai, Zebulunim, or I can't remember the name of the fifth city. Zohar.

Any of those? Yeah, any of those cities? That's right, because Lot went there, so the littlest one got a pass. Any of them still on fire? Any of them still flaming? Is scripture wrong when it says the judgment of eternal fire? What is eternal fire is our new question. What is eternal smoke? It is the finality and irreversibility of the judgment that is being symbolized, is being communicated in metaphor.

Anybody ever rebuilt Sodom? Can you go to the Middle East today and visit? Oh, we rebuilt it. They rebuilt Jericho. You can go to Jericho.

They've rebuilt a lot of the cities that got destroyed. Can you visit Sodom? Can you visit Gomorrah? Can you visit Adonai? Can you visit Zebulunim? You cannot, because the fire that destroyed them, it's not that the fire burns eternally, it is that the effect of the fire is permanent and irreversible. It is eternal fire in the sense that when it burns a thing, the

thing stays burnt and is destroyed and gone.

Hear me closely. The destruction that is a consequence of God's judgment is irreversible. Irreversible, not necessarily continuous punishment or continuous judgment.

It is final and irreversible, irrevocable. There is no appeal. There is no higher court.

There is no parole. There's no time off for good behavior. When God destroyed Sodom, when God destroys a thing, it stays destroyed.

Permanent, irrevocable loss. That's the eternity of it. That's the quality.

That's what the eternal aspect is, is the irreversibility, the finality, and the gone-ness of whatever it was that was judged. All you got to do is remember Jude 7. Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them, given themselves over, suffered the vengeance of eternal fire. That's what an eternal fire does.

It doesn't necessarily keep burning, but you certainly remember they are still a symbol of utter destruction to this day. Well, back to Luke chapter 13. We're going to work our way back to Matthew here in about the next four minutes.

So go back to Luke chapter 13, and Jesus says, somebody asks Him, are there few who are saved? Now what's He talking about? Everybody's in Israel. Everybody's the people of God. They've got synagogues all over the place.

They've got scribes, Pharisees. They are the people of God, conduct themselves as such. They've got all these tight restrictions on Sabbath.

Everybody is keeping these Sabbath restrictions and these laws, and they've got tassels, and they've got sacrifices, and they've got practices, and nobody works on the Sabbath. They consider themselves the people of God who deserve the blessing of God, and they're kind of confused by why they're currently under Roman domination, because they think they're pretty good. All these things I've kept for my youth, and so on.

So this is kind of a surprise, because Jesus is talking about to repent or perish. Go back to the beginning of chapter 13 in Luke. Pilate had taken some Galileans, people from the region where Jesus is from, and where Peter and James and John and Andrew are from, and had mingled their blood with their sacrifices.

They had said something they weren't supposed to say, and Pilate is known in history to have been an extremely violent and bloody man. People have tried to question the gospel account where he spares Jesus and said, well, that's just a fiction because he's known to be a bloody man. Well, the gospels also record what a bloody man he was, and it's right here.

There were present at that season some who told him about the Galileans whose blood

Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. You want to sacrifice to your God? Well, sacrifice yourself. And he killed them and poured their blood out on their offerings.

Jesus answered and said, do you suppose that these Galileans were worse sinners than all other Galileans because they suffered these things? I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. Unless you repent, unless you change your mind, you will likewise perish. Is this a salvation question, lake of fire or heaven? Or is this a loss of the benefits of life? Those 18 on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, do you think they were worse sinners than all of the men who dwelt in Jerusalem? And a lot of the prominent sort of moral majority people that were talking about typhoon struck and they were saying, well, you know, it's the wrath of God and a bunch of pagans and Puerto Rico got slammed.

And they were saying, well, you know, they're a bunch of pagan, spooky thinking people down there who practice voodoo. And that's why God let him be hit by hurricane. They haven't read their own scriptures.

Jesus said, these people aren't any worse sinners than anybody else. God doesn't use typhoons and hurricanes to punish people that are exceptionally wicked. He said, never again, is he going to use a flood to destroy anybody? Right? It's a promise of God.

These dingbats, and they're rightly condemned by the rest of the world who say these flakes that are, you know, fighting fundies are just despicable for acting like somebody deserved a natural disaster. Nobody deserves a natural disaster. And Jesus says it right here.

Do you think the 18, the tower fell on were worse centers than all others who built in Jerusalem? I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. You're going to find yourself without lacking. And he says, you all, he's talking in Israel to people present, listening to him teach.

And he says, you'll perish like they perished. There's going to come a time when you're going to lose it all. Certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, came seeking fruit on it and found none.

This is 13, six of Luke. He said to the keeper of the vineyard, look three years, I've come seeking fruit on this fig tree and find none. What does the fig tree universally represent in the Bible? It's Israel, right? The fig tree.

How many years has he come looking? Three. How long did Jesus have his, his ministry in and around Israel before they turned him over to the Romans to be executed? Little over three years, three years, I've come seeking fruit on this fig tree and find none. Cut it down.

Why does it use up the ground? But he answered and said to him, sir, let it alone this

year also until I dig around it and fertilize it. This is the Lord Jesus teaching into the teeth of apathy and indifference and religious misdirection. This is Jesus calling people to the narrow gate, to walk the narrow way, because there are so many on the wide road, having gone through the wide gate.

Let me dig around it and fertilize it. If it bears fruit and he doesn't even finish, if it bears fruit, that'd be a different thing. But if not after that, you can cut it down.

Guess what? After that, because it didn't bear fruit, the movement of, of believing what happens post-Pentecost leaves Israel and goes out to the nations, doesn't it? It spreads through the Roman empire. This is why the seven churches, did you ever think about this in Revelation? I don't think I even thought of it or mentioned it when we were talking about Revelation chapter two and three, the letters to the seven churches, where are those churches? To the churches in Jerusalem and Nazareth and, you know, any of the cities of Galilee or Judea, Beth Peor, Beth Avon, Gibeah, any of those, they're all cities out in the Roman empire, aren't they? They're, they're outside of Israel. Faith has left the area the way God's glory left the area.

If it bears fruit, if not cut it down. And because of that, as soon as the, the center of gravity of believers has left Jerusalem and left Judea and left Israel, Israel is destroyed. 70 AD within that generation of the Lord Jesus Christ, 40 years from his crucifixion, there is no Israel and there is no Jerusalem to speak of.

It's been knocked down and destroyed. You have the woman with the spirit of infirmity. I just mentioned this woman being bent over and could in no way raise herself up.

She's loosed from her infirmity. You have hypocrite there in verse 15, should not this woman be loosed from the bond on the Sabbath? Then he talks about the parable of the mustard seed and the parable of the leaven. And then in verse 22, going through the villages, cities, journeying toward Jerusalem.

Are there few who are saved? Talking to people who ought to know better. There is no question of the existence of God. There is a question of strive to enter.

Agonize, oh my, agonize, push yourself to the point of pain to enter through the narrow gate. For many, I say to you will seek to enter and will not be able. Interesting difference.

This is a different gate. Jesus said in Matthew, there's few that find the Here, there's people trying to enter the gate. Reminds you what he said about from Old Testament days all the way up until John.

The kingdom has been preached and men have been pressing to enter into it. But you get the idea that they're not entering. They're pressing and they're not able to.

He says the same thing here. Many will seek to enter and will not be able. When once

the master of the house has risen up and shut the door.

This is the gate to a house. This is the gate of a small courtyard leading to a house where there is a feast that has been laid. There's a meal that's been laid.

This is not a gate leading to a road. It's a different gate. Strive to enter through the narrow gate.

Not a narrow gate, the narrow gate. There's only one. Many will seek to enter and will not be able.

Why? Because at the point that they're seeking and trying, that gate is shut. The master has risen up and shut the door and you begin to stand outside and knock at the door saying, Lord, Lord, open for us. Knock and it shall be opened.

This is a matter of timing. Not everyone who knocks is going to have it opened. He will answer and say, I do not know you.

I don't know where you're from. They will begin to say, we ate and drank in your presence. What would Christians in the modern church say? Lord, we celebrated communion once a month, every Sunday, once a quarter.

We ate and drank in your presence. Never a more fulsome belief that that's happening than with the crackers and the Kool-Aid, right? We ate and drank in your presence. We celebrated your death.

And you taught in our streets. Notice, you taught in our streets, we ate and drank in your presence. Well, the people in Corinth were eating and drinking, right? To their own destruction.

We can sickly in many sleep who were eating and drinking in his presence, so to speak. You taught in our streets. They don't say like Psalm 119, I sought your commandments.

I cried out for your words and I received them to myself and I meditate them. I sing them. I reflect them.

I communicate them to the next generation, Psalm 145. He said, you were in the streets teaching. You sanctified our streets with your teaching.

We live there. We should be in by proxy. You taught in our streets.

Don't say anything about we learned from you. We followed you. We left our streets in our village and abandoned all to follow you.

We took up our cross and followed you. We denied ourselves and followed you. It's a hollow superficial connection, isn't it? We ate and drank in your presence.

Jesus might be clear at the other end of the room, clear at the other end of the village, but hey, we, you know, we were kind of there and you were kind of there. We didn't reject you. We didn't disbelieve you.

We were in the vicinity. He will say, I tell you, I do not know you, where you are from. Now, not only does he not know them, he doesn't know where they're from.

What does that mean? Think about that. That's grist for the mill. Depart from me, you workers of iniquity.

There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God and yourselves thrust out. You will see it. He doesn't say there's going to be weeping and gnashing of teeth as you stand in line to be the next one pushed into the lake of fire.

In order to see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, you have to be raised when they are raised. You have to be present when they are present. They're going to be in the kingdom.

You will see it. Jesus says, you will see the patriarchs. You will see the prophets.

In the kingdom of God and yourselves thrust out, not just denied entrance, shooed from the gate. We don't want to be within the sound of your voice at the gate. They will come from the east and the west, from the north and the south and sit down in the kingdom of God.

And indeed, there are last who will be first and there are first who will be last. Those who are in the kingdom, meaning inside that gate, in that feasting area, in that place of fellowship, in that place of reunion and joy, and others will be present and thrust out. Interestingly, there were some sympathetic Pharisees who warned him in the next verse that Herod is trying to kill him.

And he again mentions the three days in verse 32. I cast out demons, perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I will be perfected. I must journey today, tomorrow, and the day following.

It cannot be that a prophet should perish outside of Jerusalem. And it's a real condemnation of Jerusalem that as the capital city of the people of God, that's where Jesus is going to be executed. And then he goes on to say, Jerusalem, your house has left you desolate.

You shall not see me until the time comes when you say, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. So we have a little bit more to cover here on this gate, this way, and the people who travel it. They have unique characteristics.

It is not salvation. It is what you do as a believer. You can be destroyed.

You can be on the broad way, having passed through the wide gate to destruction and you're saved. But your future and your inheritance and your opportunities and rewards in the kingdom will be just as gone as the people that Jesus spoke to in Luke 13. Thrust out, weeping and gnashing teeth, not because of personal torment, not because of rejecting the son.

What is the basis for it? We heard you and we ate and drank in your presence. He says, I don't know you and I don't know where you're from. So many of the warning passages of scripture are addressed to us as believers and we've sloughed them off to unbelievers and they lose their teeth.

They lose their bite. They lose their repentance power because we say, that's not me. That's exactly what the Pharisees did.

Are we blind also? That's not us. I'm tithing the cinnamon in my spice cabinet. Can't miss that destruction is possible, likely and prevalent for believers.

Broad is the gate, wide is the way that leads to destruction. And there's many on it. It was true of the Israelites, the Jews in Jesus day, those to whom he was speaking.

And he says, you have got to get off of there and find the narrow gate and walk the narrow way. Arist, you have got to start doing this. People who have climbed the mountain and are patiently sitting, listening to me teach.

You have to strive to enter, strive, work. It's not a matter of faith. Faith is not works.

Ephesians 2, 8 and 9. Initial salvation, eternal life is on a different basis. This is life to have it and have it abundantly. This is a future in the kingdom.

This is a future of service and function and fulfillment and joy and reunion and opportunity, as opposed to sitting on the outside, looking in, wanting to go through a gate and being denied because everything on the other side of it is desirable, but you didn't care about it when it counted. Well, more about this next time, but we'll close for this morning with that warning thought in our minds and a word of prayer. Father, thank you for your watch care for us.

As our father, you love us and therefore you chasten us and you scourge every son whom you receive. And we want to take to heart the warnings of scripture. May God, the Holy spirit to take these and help us to see their individual and particular pertinence and application in our own hearts and our own souls and our own lives, our priorities, our goals, our values, the investment of our time and our energy.

And having been chastened, having looked into the perfect law of liberty, may we remember what we see and change our minds and become those who have entered the pressingly narrow gate and are walking the narrow way that leads to life. We know that

this is often an individual pursuit and it is a single file road, but we pray both individually and as a group that we can be led in that way. We can find that path and in doing so fulfill your purpose for us, both in this life and in the ages to come.

We pray these things in Jesus name. Amen.