

Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., Fausset, A. R., Brown, D., & Brown, D. (1997). *A Commentary, Critical and Explanatory, on the Old and New Testament*.

Matthew 7:21-23

21. Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord—the reduplication of the title “Lord” denoting zeal in according it to Christ (see [Mk 14:45](#)). Yet our Lord claims and expects this of all His disciples, as when He washed their feet: “Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am” ([Jn 13:13](#)).

shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven—that will which it had been the great object of this discourse to set forth. Yet our Lord says warily, not “the will of *your* Father,” but “of *My* Father”; thus claiming a relationship to His Father with which His disciples might not intermeddle, and which He never lets down. And He so speaks here to give authority to His asseverations. But now He rises higher still—not formally *announcing* Himself as the Judge, but intimating what men will say to Him, and He to them, *when* He sits as their final judge.

22. Many will say to me in that day—What day? It is emphatically unnamed. But it is the day to which He had just referred, when men shall “enter” or not enter “into the kingdom of heaven.” (See a similar way of speaking of “that day” in [2Ti 1:12](#); [4:8](#)).

Lord, Lord—The reiteration denotes surprise. “What, Lord? How is this? Are we to be disowned?”

have we not prophesied—or, “publicly taught.” As one of the special gifts of the Spirit in the early Church, it has the sense of “inspired and authoritative teaching,” and is ranked next to the apostleship. (See [1Co 12:28](#); [Eph 4:11](#)). In this sense it is used here, as appears from what follows.

in thy name—or, “to thy name,” and so in the two following clauses—“having reference to Thy name as the sole power in which we did it.”

and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works—or, miracles. These are selected as three examples of the highest services rendered to the Christian cause, and through the power of Christ’s own name, invoked for that purpose; He Himself, too, responding to the call. And the threefold repetition of the question, each time in the same form, expresses in the liveliest manner the astonishment of the speakers at the view now taken of them.

23. And then will I profess unto them—or, openly proclaim—tearing off the mask.

I never knew you—What they claimed intimacy with Christ, is just what He repudiates, and with a certain scornful dignity. “Our acquaintance was not broken off—there never was any.”

depart from me—(Compare [Mt 25:41](#)). The connection here gives these words an awful significance. They claimed intimacy with Christ, and in the corresponding passage, [Lu 13:26](#), are represented as having gone out and in with Him on familiar terms. “So much the worse for you,” He replies: “I bore with that long enough; but now—begone!”

ye that work iniquity—not “that *wrought* iniquity”; for they are represented as fresh from the scenes and acts of it as they stand before the Judge. (See on the almost identical, but even more vivid and awful, description of the scene in [Lu 13:24–27](#)). That the apostle alludes to these very words in [2Ti 2:19](#) there can hardly be any doubt—“Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord *knoweth* them that are His. And, Let every one that nameth the *name* of Christ depart from iniquity.”

Matthew 20:16

16. So the last shall be first, and the first last—that is, “Take heed lest by indulging the spirit of these murmurers at the penny given to the last hired, ye miss your own penny, though first in the vineyard; while the consciousness of having come in so late may inspire these last with such a humble frame, and such admiration of the grace that has hired and rewarded them at all, as will put them into the foremost place in the end.”

for many be called, but few chosen—This is another of our Lord’s terse and pregnant sayings, more than once uttered in different connections. (See [Mt 19:30](#); [22:14](#)). The “calling” of which the New Testament almost invariably speaks is what divines call *effectual* calling, carrying with it a supernatural operation on the will to secure its consent. But that cannot be the meaning of it here; the “called” being emphatically distinguished from the “chosen.” It can only mean here the “invited.” And so the sense is, Many receive the invitations of the Gospel whom God has never “chosen to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth” ([2Th 2:13](#)). But what, it may be asked, has this to do with the subject of our parable? Probably this—to teach us that men who have wrought in Christ’s service all their days may, by the spirit which they manifest at the last, make it too evident that, as between God and their own souls, they never were chosen workmen at all.

Henry, M. (1996, c1991). *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*.

Matthew 7:13-14

II. We must make religion our business, and be intent upon it; we must be strict and circumspect in our conversation, which is here represented to us as entering in at a *strait gate*, and walking on in a *narrow way*, v. 13, 14. Observe here,

1. The account that is given of the bad way of sin, and the good way of holiness. There are but two ways, right and wrong, good and evil; the way to heaven, and the way to hell; in the one of which we are all of us walking: no middle place hereafter, no middle way now: the distinction of the children of men into saints and sinners, godly and ungodly, will swallow up all to eternity.

Here is, (1.) An account given us of the way of sin and sinners; both what is the best, and what is the worst of it.

[1.] That which allures multitudes into it, and keeps them in it; *the gate is wide, and the way broad*, and there are many travellers in that way. *First*, "You will have abundance of liberty in that way; *the gate is wide*, and stands wide open to tempt those that go right on their way. You may go in at this gate with all your lusts about you; it gives no check to your appetites, to your passions: you may *walk in the way of your heart, and in the sight of your eyes*; that gives room enough." It is a *broad way*, for there is nothing to hedge in those that walk in it, but they wander endlessly; a *broad way*, for there are many paths in it; there is choice of sinful ways, contrary to each other, but all paths in this *broad way*. *Secondly*, "You will have abundance of company in that way: *many there be that go in* at this gate, and walk in this way." If we *follow the multitude*, it will be *to do evil*: if we go with the crowd, it will be the wrong way. It is natural for us to incline to go down the stream, and do as the most do; but it is too great a compliment, to be willing to be damned for company, and to go to hell with them, because they will not go to heaven with us: if many perish, we should be the more cautious.

[2.] That which should affright us all from it is, that it *leads to destruction*. Death, eternal death, is at the end of it (and the way of sin tends to it),—everlasting *destruction from the presence of the Lord*. Whether it be the high way of open profaneness, or the back way of close hypocrisy, if it be a way of sin, it will be our ruin, if we repent not.

(2.) Here is an account given us of the way of holiness.

[1.] What there is in it that frightens many from it; let us know the worst of it, that we may sit down and count the cost. Christ deals faithfully with us, and tells us,

First, That *the gate is strait*. Conversion and regeneration are *the gate*, by which we enter into this way, in which we begin a life of faith and serious godliness; out of a state of sin into a state of grace we must pass, by the new birth, *Jn. 3:3, 5*. This is a *strait gate*, hard to find, and hard to get through; like a passage between two rocks, *1 Sa. 14:4*. There must be *a new heart, and a new spirit, and old things must pass away*. The bent of the soul must be changed, corrupt habits and customs broken off; what we have been doing all our days must be undone again. We must swim against the stream; much opposition must be struggled with, and broken through, from without, and from within. It is easier to set a man against all the world than against himself, and yet this must be in conversion. It is a *strait gate*, for we must stoop, or we cannot go in at it; we must become as little children; high thoughts must be brought down; nay, we must strip, must deny ourselves, put off the world, *put off the old man*; we must be willing to forsake all for our interest in Christ. *The gate is strait* to all, but to some straiter than others; as to the rich, to some that have been long prejudiced against religion. *The gate is strait*; blessed be God, it is not shut up, nor locked against us, nor kept with a flaming sword, as it will be shortly, *ch. 25:10*.

Secondly, That *the way is narrow*. We are not in heaven as soon as we have got through the *strait gate*, nor in Canaan as soon as we have got through the Red Sea; no, we must go through a

wilderness, must travel a *narrow way*, hedged in by the divine law, which *is exceedingly broad*, and that makes *the way narrow*; self must be denied, the body kept under, corruptions mortified, that are as a *right eye* and a *right hand*; daily temptations must be resisted; duties must be done that are against our inclination. We must endure hardness, must wrestle and be in an agony, must watch in all things, and walk with care and circumspection. We must go *through much tribulation*. It is *hodos tethlimmeneu*—*an afflicted way*, a way hedged about with thorns; blessed be God, it is not hedged up. The bodies we carry about with us, and the corruptions remaining in us, make the way of our duty difficult; but, as the understanding and will grow more and more sound, it will open and enlarge, and grow more and more pleasant.

Thirdly, The gate being so strait and the way so narrow, it is not strange that there are but *few that find it*, and choose it. Many pass it by, through carelessness; they will not be at the pains to find it; they are well as they are, and see no need to change their way. Others look upon it, but shun it; they like not to be so limited and restrained. Those that are going to heaven are but few, compared to those that are going to hell; a remnant, a little flock, like the grape-gleanings of the vintage; as the eight that were saved in the ark, 1 Pt. 3:20. *In vitia alter alterum trudimus; Quomodo ad salutem revocari potest, quum nullus retrahit, et populus impellit*—*In the ways of vice men urge each other onward: how shall any one be restored to the path of safety, when impelled forwards by the multitude, without any counteracting influence?* Seneca, *Epist.* 29. This discourages many: they are loth to be singular, to be solitary; but instead of stumbling at this, say rather, If so few are going to heaven, there shall be one the more for me.

[2.] Let us see what there is in this way, which, notwithstanding this, should invite us all to it; it *leads to life*, to present comfort in the favour of God, which is the life of the soul; to eternal bliss, the hope of which, at the end of our way, should reconcile us to all the difficulties and inconveniences of the road. Life and godliness are put together (2 Pt. 1:3); *The gate is strait and the way narrow* and up-hill, but one hour in heaven will make amends for it.

2. The great concern and duty of every one of us, in consideration of all this; *Enter ye in at the strait gate*. The matter is fairly stated; life and death, good and evil, are set before us; both the ways, and both the ends: now let the matter be taken entire, and considered impartially, and then choose you this day which you will walk in; nay, the matter determines itself, and will not admit of a debate. No man, in his wits, would choose to go to the gallows, because it is a smooth, pleasant way to it, nor refuse the offer of a palace and a throne, because it is a rough, dirty way to it; yet such absurdities as these are men guilty of, in the concerns of their souls. Delay not, therefore; deliberate not any longer, but *enter ye in at the strait gate; knock* at it by sincere and constant prayers and endeavors, *and it shall be opened*; nay, a wide door shall be opened, and an effectual one. It is true, we can neither go in, nor go on, without the assistance of divine grace; but it is as true, that grace is freely offered, and shall not be wanting to those that seek it, and submit to it. Conversion is hard work, but it is needful, and, blessed be God, it is not impossible if we strive, [Lu. 13:24](#).

Matthew 20:16

Lastly, Here is the application of the parable ([v. 16](#)), in that observation which occasioned it ([ch. 19:30](#)); *So the first shall be last, and the last first*. There were many that followed Christ now in the regeneration, when the gospel kingdom was first set up, and these Jewish converts seemed to have got the start of others; but Christ, to obviate and silence their boasting, here tells them,

1. That they might possibly be outstripped by their successors in profession, and, though they were before others in profession, might be found inferior to them in knowledge, grace, and holiness. The Gentile church, which was as yet unborn, the Gentile world, which as yet stood *idle in the*

market-place, would produce greater numbers of eminent, useful Christians, than were found among the Jews. More and more excellent shall be *the children of the desolate than those of the married wife*, Isa. 54:1. Who knows but that the church, in its old age, may be more fat and flourishing than ever, to show that the Lord is upright? Though primitive Christianity had more of the purity and power of that holy religion than is to be found in the degenerate age wherein we live, yet what *labourers* may be *sent into the vineyard in the eleventh hour of the church's day*, in the Philadelphian period, and what plentiful effusions of the Spirit may then be, above what has been yet, who can tell?

2. That they had reason to fear, lest they themselves should be found hypocrites at last; for *many are called but few chosen*. This is applied to the Jews (ch. 22:14); it was so then, it is too true still; many are called with a common call, that are not chosen with a saving choice. All that are chosen from eternity, are effectually called, *in the fulness of time* (Rom. 8:30), so that in making our effectual calling sure we *make sure our election* (2 Pt. 1:10); but it is not so as to the outward call; *many are called*, and yet refuse (Prov. 1:24), nay, as they are called *to God*, so they go *from him* (Hos. 11:2, 7), by which it appears that they were not chosen, for *the election will obtain*, Rom. 11:7. Note, There are but few *chosen* Christians, in comparison with the many that are only *called* Christians; it therefore highly concerns us to build our hope for heaven upon the rock of an eternal choice, and not upon the sand of an external call; and we should fear lest we be found but seeming Christians, and so should really come short; nay, lest we be found blemished Christians, and so should *seem to come short*, Heb. 4:1.

1 Peter 4:18

He intimates the irremediable doom of the wicked: *If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and sinner appear*, v. 18. This whole verse is taken from Prov. 11:31, *Behold the righteous shall be recompensed in the earth; how much more the wicked and the sinner?* This the Septuagint translates exactly as the apostle here quotes it. Hence we may learn, [1.] The grievous sufferings of good people in this world are sad presages of much heavier judgments coming upon impenitent sinners. But, if we take the salvation here in the highest sense, then we may learn, [2.] It is as much as the best can do to secure the salvation of their souls; there are so many sufferings, temptations, and difficulties to be overcome, so many sins to be mortified, the gate is so strait and the way so narrow, that it is as much as the righteous can do to be saved. Let the absolute necessity of salvation balance the difficulty of it. Consider, Your difficulties are greatest at first; God offers his grace and help; the contest will not last long; be but faithful to the death, *and God will give you the crown of life*, Rev. 2:10. [3.] The ungodly and the sinner are unquestionably in a state of damnation. *Where shall they appear?* How will they stand before their Judge? Where can they show their heads? *If the righteous scarcely be saved*, the wicked must certainly perish.