

• THE Gospel Part 09 – What Is Striving To Enter Through The Narrow Door? Part Two – Study Guide

This study guide provides an academic and scriptural analysis of the Sermon on the Mount, focusing on the rigorous ethical and spiritual standards required to "strive" through the narrow gate. It clarifies that the Gospel of the Kingdom demands a fundamental transformation of life and service to others as the criteria for inheritance.

Definitions of Key Words

- **Poor in Spirit:** A state of humbleness and meekness of heart; individuals who are not focused on self-promotion or exalting themselves.
- **Meek:** Those who are gentle and humble; scripturally, they are the ones designated to inherit the earth.
- **Righteousness:** Conduct that aligns with God's standards; in this context, it must exceed the outward legalism of the religious leaders.
- **Strive (*Agonizomai*):** To labour fervently or "agonize"; it describes the difficult effort required to enter the narrow gate.
- **Narrow Gate:** The restrictive and hard entrance to life and the Kingdom, found by only a few.
- **Perfect:** Maturity in character and love, specifically reflecting the Father's impartial love for both the good and the evil.

Expansion of Key Points

1. The Context of the Narrow Gate

The command to enter by the narrow gate in **Matthew 7:13** is not an isolated verse but the conclusion of a long buildup starting in **Matthew 5**. The Sermon on the Mount serves as Jesus's definition of what it takes to "strive" or "agonize" through that gate. It is a message delivered specifically to the redeemed—the "disciples"—concerning the "Gospel of the Kingdom," which is the good news of His coming earthly reign.

2. The Absolute Necessity of Change

Jesus establishes a non-negotiable requirement for entering the Kingdom: radical change. Drawing from **Matthew 18:3**, the sources emphasize that unless a person "changes and becomes like a little child," they will "never enter the kingdom of heaven". This change is not a one-time mental assent or raising a hand in a meeting, but a continuous process of humbling oneself and breaking out of personal comfort zones to serve others.

3. The "Pecking Order" of the Kingdom

The sources highlight that there is a "pecking order" or hierarchy in the coming Kingdom based on present obedience. According to **Matthew 5:19**, those who relax the commandments and teach others to do the same will be called "least," while those who "do them and teach them" will be called "great". Greatness is specifically linked to being "meek" and "humble" like a child (**Matthew 18:4**).

4. Exceeding the Righteousness of the Pharisees

A critical criterion for entry is that a believer's righteousness must "exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees" (**Matthew 5:20**). The Pharisees were focused on outward legalism and self-glory; however, Jesus demands an internal righteousness that addresses the heart. For example, while the law forbade murder, Jesus warns that being "angry with his brother" makes one subject to judgment (**Matthew 5:21–22**).

5. The Hard Path: Loving Enemies

The "hard" way mentioned in **Matthew 7:14** is exemplified by the command to "love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (**Matthew 5:44**). This is described as "agony" because it is naturally difficult to rejoice and be glad when reviled or persecuted (**Matthew 5:11–12**). Striving through the gate involves doing more than what is "easy," such as loving only those who love you back (**Matthew 5:46–47**).

6. The Earthly Nature of the Inheritance

The sources clarify that the "Kingdom of Heaven" is not about "going to heaven" when you die. Instead, it is a Kingdom *from* heaven that turns up on earth. This is confirmed by **Matthew 5:5**, which states the meek will "inherit the earth," and the fact that Jesus was teaching the "Gospel of the Kingdom" to the redeemed of Israel regarding their earthly inheritance.

Biblical References

- **Matthew 4:23**: Jesus teaching the Gospel of the Kingdom in

synagogues.

- **Matthew 5:1–12:** The Beatitudes; character of the Kingdom heirs.
- **Matthew 5:13–16:** Salt and light; the necessity of good deeds.
- **Matthew 5:17–20:** Fulfilling the law; exceeding the righteousness of Pharisees.
- **Matthew 5:21–26:** Internalizing the law; anger and reconciliation.
- **Matthew 5:27–30:** Adultery of the heart; radical change to avoid hell.
- **Matthew 5:31–32:** Marriage and divorce.
- **Matthew 5:33–37:** Oaths and integrity.
- **Matthew 5:38–42:** Non-resistance and going the extra mile.
- **Matthew 5:43–48:** Loving enemies; being perfect like the Father.
- **Matthew 7:13–14:** The narrow gate vs. the wide gate; few vs. many.
- **Matthew 11:27:** Revelation of the Father through the Son.
- **Matthew 18:1–4:** Changing to become like children; the greatest in the Kingdom.
- **Luke 13:24:** Striving to enter the narrow door.
- **Ezekiel 36–37:** Context for being born from above/resurrection.
- **1 Corinthians 15:** Resurrection of the dead.

Study Questions

- **Audience and Subject:** According to the sources, to whom is the Sermon on the Mount addressed, and what is the primary subject matter?
- **The "Striving" Definition:** How does Jesus define "striving" or "agonizing" in the context of our service to others?
- **Entrance Criteria:** What is the specific warning given in **Matthew 18:3** regarding entrance into the Kingdom?
- **Least vs. Great:** How does a redeemed person determine whether they will be "least" or "great" in the Kingdom?
- **The "Hard" Way:** Why is the path to life described as "hard" and "narrow"? Provide examples of the "hard" requirements mentioned in **Matthew 5**.
- **The Wide Gate:** Why are there "many" on the wide path, and what is the ultimate destination of that gate?

Answer Key

- It is addressed only to **God's redeemed** (His disciples), and the subject is the **Gospel of the Kingdom**—His coming earthly reign and their inheritance in it.
- Striving involves **breaking out of predefined comfort zones** to serve others; serving only to the point of comfort is not enough to walk through the narrow gate.
- Unless a person **changes and becomes like a little child**, they will **never enter** the Kingdom.
- It is based on whether they **practice and teach** the commandments. Relaxing them leads to being "least"; doing and teaching them leads to being "great".
- It is "hard" because it demands difficult changes, such as **loving enemies, praying for persecutors, and turning the other cheek** instead of seeking "eye for an eye" justice.
- "Many" are on it because it is **"easy"** and requires no change or agony; however, it leads to **destruction and loss**.

Exhortations

- **Break Your Comfort Zone:** Recognize that serving only when it is convenient or comfortable is not "striving." You must be willing to **agonize in service and love** to others if you intend to make it through the narrow gate.
- **Embrace the Change:** Do not rely on past experiences or a one-time "decision." The Kingdom demands a **changed life today**. Approach God with the humility of a child, ready to be transformed by His commands.
- **Love the Unlovable:** The benchmark of the "hard way" is how you treat those who revile you. Instead of retreating, **rejoice and pray for your enemies**, knowing your reward is being stored in heaven for the coming Kingdom.
- **Be a Doer and a Teacher:** Your rank in the Kingdom is being determined right now. Do not just listen to these words; **do them and teach others** to do the same so that you may be called "great".
- **Watch Your GPS:** If your spiritual walk is easy and you are following the majority, you are likely on the wrong course. Turn back to the **hard, narrow path** defined by Jesus Christ.