

Two gates - Two ways - Two destinations

By Leon King

The Scriptures tell us that Jesus went up into a mountain; and when he was set, his disciples came to him, and he taught them. His statement to them, recorded in the seventh chapter of Matthew, is important for all. In it are set forth two gates, two ways, and two destinations. Every individual now living or who has ever lived has entered through one of these gates, traveled on one of the ways, and arrived at the destiny at the end of his way.

"Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." -- Matthew 7:13-14.

All people can properly be divided into two categories - the saved and the damned. Dear reader, you are one or the other for there is no middle ground. There are those who are not condemned and those who are condemned already - those who are alive in Christ and those who are spiritually dead - those who have entered in at the strait gate and those who have entered the wide gate - those who walk the narrow way and those who tread the broad way - those who find life and those who find destruction. Every person is in one category or the other.

We are told that the narrow way to life is entered in through the strait gate. That is, the gate through which one enters into eternal life is a restricted gate for the word strait means "restricted." Jesus explains it this way in another passage, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."* -- John 14:6. Though some may say

that there are many ways to the Father, it simply is not true. There is only one way. If a person doesn't come by Jesus Christ, he doesn't come to the Father, no matter what he may think. *"There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death."* -- Proverbs 14:12 and 16:25. The strait gate is the way to life. The wide gate is the way to destruction, and all who have not entered in through the strait gate are already on the way of destruction.

I. Cain and Abel. The two ways may be illustrated from the first two children born into the world - Cain and Abel. God commanded that both Cain and Abel bring an offering. Cain was a tiller of the ground and a wicked person. Cain thought that he could bring any thing he chose as an offering to God, so he brought the fruit of the ground. God rejected his offering. Abel - acting in faith, believing and trusting God - obeyed and brought an offering of the firstlings of his flock. Abel brought a blood sacrifice, which God had commanded.

"By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh." -- Hebrews 11:4.

We see that Abel's offering was an offering made by faith. This means that God had commanded and that Abel responded in belief and trust. Abel's offering was accepted, but Cain's rejected. Cain was angry with Abel then rose up and murdered his brother. Why was he angry, and why did he kill Abel?

"Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous." -- 1 John 3:12.

Cain murdered Abel because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous. That same attitude is now in the children of the devil toward the children of God. The reason is the same - because the works of the children of the devil are evil, and those of God's children are righteous. Cain's way was the broad way to destruction. Abel's way was the narrow way to life.

II. The Pharisee and the Publican. The two gates and two ways are also illustrated in the story of the Pharisee and the Publican from Luke 18.

"And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." -- Luke 18:9-14.

One does not need super intellect to understand that the Pharisee was stuck on himself. He thought that his deeds of religion would be acceptable to God so that he would be justified. Not so! On the other hand, the publican saw himself as a condemned sinner in the sight of God, smote on his breast, and asked for mercy. God's way is the way of mercy. Here is the strait gate. The Pharisee could not enter in through the strait gate because he thought that his own way was acceptable. Many people in our day feel that their outward acts of religion will bring them to God. It simply is not true. The only way is through the Lord Jesus Christ and his completed sacrifice for sins on the cross. The Pharisee walked the broad way to

destruction; but the publican entered through the gate of mercy and was justified.

III. The Rich Man and Lazarus. The rich man fared sumptuously every day. He was clothed with the finest clothing available. He died and went to hell. In hell, he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and saw the beggar, Lazarus, resting in a place called Abraham's bosom. The rich man was an unrepentant sinner. His lack of repentance is the reason why he went to hell. He did not go to hell because he was a rich man. He went because he was an unrepentant sinner. How do we know? We know because he pleaded with Abraham to send Lazarus back to testify to his five brothers who were still living. He thought they would repent and not come to that awful place of torment if Abraham would send Lazarus back from the dead. Modern men think that repentance is no longer required, but the Scripture says, "*Repent, and believe the gospel.*" We are told that "*repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his (Jesus) name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.*" -- Luke 24:47. When one repents, he has a change of mind about himself, about God, and about all others. We come to look at things as the Bible describes them and not as the world describes them.

"...but now (God) commandeth all men every where to repent: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead." -- Acts 17:30b-31.

The beggar, Lazarus, was laid at the gate of the rich man begging for the crumbs which fell from his table. Lazarus' body was filled with sores; so the dogs came and licked the sores. He died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. Abraham's bosom is a term, which describes a place of rest for repentant sinners in the heart of the earth. This place of rest was in

full view to the unrepentant, who died and went into the place of torment. The beggar did not go to the place of rest because he was a beggar filled with sores. Lazarus, obviously, had repented, or he would not have been taken to the place of rest. He walked the narrow way which led to life; whereas, the rich man walked the broad way which led to destruction. Notice the account in Scripture:

"There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that, they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence. Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house: For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead." -- Luke 16:19-31

IV. The Two Thieves at Jesus' Crucifixion. The thieves who were crucified on the left and right hand of our Lord Jesus Christ illustrate the two gates and the two ways. One thief was incorrigible and remained condemned; but the other experienced a change of heart, which made him understand that he was dying for his misdeeds while Jesus had done nothing wrong.

"And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us. But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise." -- Luke 23:39-43.

The thief who railed on Jesus was neither willing to see himself as he really was, nor was he willing to believe that Jesus was whom He had declared himself to be - the very Son of God. The repentant thief, who said *"Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom,"* went with Jesus to paradise that very day. Where did the other go? He went to the end of his wide gate and broad way - the way traveled by the vast majority of people in the world - the way to perdition - to utter destruction. He went to hell.

V. Those whose names are in the Lamb's book of Life and those whose names are not. Here is yet another way to discern between the strait gate and the wide gate - between the narrow way and the broad way. The names of some are written in the Lamb's book of life, but others are not. Those whose names are there will enter into heaven and the presence of God.

"And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life." -- Revelation 21:27.

Can a person know whether or not his name is written in the Lamb's book of life? Obviously, they can for the Lord instructed his disciples to rejoice because their names were written in heaven.

"Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven." -- Luke 10:20

The Apostle Paul also spoke of women and "fellowlabourers, whose names are in the book of life. How is it that he could make such a bold statement? Was it not that he knew that they had repented, believed the gospel, and were doing works suitable for saints? Repentance, belief, and good works are concrete indicators that a person is walking on the narrow way which leads unto life.

The other side of the book of life is seen at the great white throne judgment where the unsaved dead appear for judgment. We are told that the books are opened at that judgment. The books that will be opened in the day of judgment will undoubtedly include the Bible, for Jesus said, *"my word shall judge you in the last day."* Then, another book is opened, which is the book of life.

Let us take a Bible view at the scene of the great white throne judgment.

"And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of

life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire." -- Revelation 20:11-15.

Is your name written in the book of life? It is indicative of the strait gate and narrow way, which leads unto life. Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, is that gate. He is the way - He is the truth - He is the life, and no man comes to the Father but by Him.

***"Repent ye, and believe the Gospel."* -- Mark 1:15.**