

THE MANY AND THE FEW

Matthew 7:13-27

THE MANY AND THE FEW

Near the end of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7), He introduces the concept of "**the many** and **the few**," in reference to our chosen path of life.

*"Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are **many** who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are **few** who find it."* (Matthew 7:13-14)

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Christ commands us to enter through the narrow gate, then contrasts the ways of life, noting that **many** will choose the wide gate, the broad way that leads to destruction, and will "enter through it," then noting that **few** will choose the small gate and the narrow way that leads to life. But instead of saying they will "enter through it," Jesus says, "there are few who find it."

The main difference between the path of **the many** and the path of **the few** is that hardly any are actually searching for the right path. Those who are not searching will not find it. Nobody accidentally gets to Heaven.

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In this chapter, Jesus had just finished saying,

"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened." (Matthew 7:7-8)

This was not a new principle. Jeremiah had told the exiles in Babylon to seek God.

"Then you will call upon Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart." (Jeremiah 29:12-13)

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David told his son Solomon to seek God:

"As for you, my son Solomon, know the God of your father, and serve Him with a whole heart and a willing mind; for the Lord searches all hearts, and understands every intent of the thoughts. If you seek Him, He will let you find Him; but if you forsake Him, He will reject you forever." (1 Chronicles 28:9)

King Asa was told by Azariah to seek God:

"Now the Spirit of God came on Azariah the son of Oded, and he went out to meet Asa and said to him, 'Listen to me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin: the Lord is with you when you are with Him. And if you seek Him, He will let you find Him; but if you forsake Him, He will forsake you.'" (2 Chronicles 15:1-2)

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The theme of "**the many** and **the few**" continues through the rest of the sermon.

Jesus warns people about false prophets:

"Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves." (Matthew 7:15)

And how to recognize them:

"You will know them by their fruits." (Matthew 7:16, 20; cf. Galatians 5:22-24)

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Jesus warned again about the rise of false prophets:

"Many false prophets will arise and will mislead many." (Matthew 24:11)

We learn here that **"the many"** are represented not only by the false prophets, but also by those who are deceived into believing and following them.

Peter also warns about false prophets and teachers:

"But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you ..." (2 Peter 2:1)

It is apparent that **"the few"** are those who will recognize false prophets and teachers **"by their fruits,"** and will not be deceived by them.

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Jesus continues by taking us to the great scene of final judgment:

"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.'" (Matthew 7:21-23)

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It is clear from Matthew 7:21-23 that it is not what we say or what we claim that assures our entrance into the kingdom of Heaven, but rather what we do, and by whose authority.

Jesus states in this passage that only the obedient will be saved, **"he who does the will of My Father."**

After hearing this testimony of Jesus, the conclusion is inescapable that on Judgment Day, there will be **many** who stand before the judgment seat of Christ, who believed beyond doubt that they were saved, yet sadly, they were lost.

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Jesus tells us that on Judgment Day, there will be **many** who call Him "Lord" who will be lost. People who call Jesus "Lord" generally consider themselves to be "Christians."

This means there will be **many** who call themselves "Christians" who will be lost. Why?

Jesus explains that **many** will make the claim that they performed the very same works that Jesus did on earth, prophesying, casting out demons, and performing many miracles, and that they did so "in His name," and yet Jesus will declare to them, **"I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS."** (Matthew 7:23)

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These whom Jesus will cast out are the **many** who acted without law, without divine authority, but rather on their OWN authority, or by the authority of a false teacher or false prophet.

Note what Jesus said to the Pharisees and scribes who did the same:

"You hypocrites, rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you: 'THIS PEOPLE HONORS ME WITH THEIR LIPS, BUT THEIR HEART IS FAR AWAY FROM ME. BUT IN VAIN DO THEY WORSHIP ME, TEACHING AS DOCTRINES THE PRECEPTS OF MEN.'" (Matthew 15:7-9)

(cf. James 2:14-16)

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We can therefore include within **"the many,"** all those who forsake the pure doctrine of Christ for any of the many doctrines of men.

"Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son." (2 John 9)

The many are not satisfied with the divinely inspired word of God, the Bible, but add to it the uninspired words of men.

What separates a Christian from a Baptist but "The Baptist Manual"? What separates a Christian from a Methodist, but "The Methodist Handbook"?

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What separates a Christian from members of all the so-called "Christian denominations," Roman Catholic, Orthodox, or Protestant, or any of the variations within those groups?

What separates a Christian from those who follow entirely different "gospels" such as the "Book of Mormon," or the Jehovah's Witnesses' so-called "New World Translation"?

What separates a Christian from followers of the Koran, or of the holy books of the Buddhists, Hindus, or any of the world's 4,000+ recognized religions?

The answer is always: **The words of men.**

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A Christian is a disciple of Jesus Christ (Acts 11:26), believing the Holy Spirit-inspired words of the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16-17, Romans 1:16-17) ... and only the Bible.

Many claim to teach and practice "in His name," or by the authority of God, yet cannot provide a "Thus says the Lord" or quote "book, chapter, and verse" as their authority within divinely-inspired Scripture.

Paul warned the churches of Galatia:

"But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed! As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed!" (Galatians 1:8-9)

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Note the four words uttered by Jesus to the **many** before casting them out. He said, *"I never knew you."*

"And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.'" (Matthew 7:23)

His phrase "I never knew you" speaks volumes, in that those who are lost (**the many**) are those who don't know Him. Conversely, those who are saved (**the few**) are those who do know Him.

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John tells us how we know **if** we know Him:

"By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. The one who says, 'I have come to know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him: the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked." (1 John 2:3-6)

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The knowledge of God and of his beloved Son, are conditioned upon whether or not we keep His commandments. We must know what they are!

Notice the contrast with those who say "I have come to know Him," yet do not keep His commandments. These are "**the many**" Jesus referenced in this sermon. These are hypocrites. Liars.

"**The few**" then, are represented here by those who do keep His word, and perfect the love of God in Christ by abiding in Him and walking "*in the same manner as He walked.*"

Jesus' "*manner*" was self-denial and obedience to God.

"... Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Yours be done."
(Luke 22:42)

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Jesus concludes his Sermon on the Mount with these words:

"Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock. Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell and great was its fall." (Matthew 7:24-27)

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In conclusion, Jesus contrasts the results of Gospel preaching on "**the many** and **the few**."

The **few** are represented by those who hear the words of Christ and are persuaded to act, comparing those to a wise man who built his house on the rock, which stood firm through the rain, floods, and slamming winds.

The **many** are represented by those who hear the words of Christ and choose NOT to act. Jesus compares those to the foolish man who built his house on the sand, which upon the coming of rain, floods, and slamming winds, "*it fell, and great was its fall.*" (Matthew 7:27; cf. Hebrews 10:23-27)

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On Judgment Day, EACH one of us will be among either "the **many** or the **few**."

However, we will not be judged collectively, but individually.

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad." (2 Corinthians 5:10)

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ON JUDGMENT DAY ...

Will you be among the **many**, who claim to be Christians, calling Jesus "Lord," as you begin to enumerate the things you've done in His name, only to be "*cast into outer darkness, in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth?*" (Matthew 8:12)

(See also Matthew 13:42, 50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30, 41; Luke 13:28; Revelation 21:8)

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Or will you be among **the few**, who sought after truth and found it in the words of Jesus, persuading you to act, like the wise man, in humble obedience to the will of God, and hear Jesus speak these words?:

"... Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." (Matthew 25:34)

(See also Matthew 25:21, John 3:36; 6:68-69; 11:25-26; Romans 8:18; Galatians 6:7-8; 1 John 5:11; Revelation 21:1-7)

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On Judgment Day, whether you are among **the many** or among **the few** is up to you!

Paul told Titus that God's grace instructs us how and why to make the right choices and decisions.

"For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds." (Titus 2:11-14)

HOW TO BE AMONG THE FEW

OBEY THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST

"For after all it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed – for our testimony to you was believed." (2 Thessalonians 1:6-10)

HOW TO BE AMONG THE FEW

OBEY THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST

"Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures ..." (1 Corinthians 15:1-4)

HOW TO BE SAVED

Hear the word (2 Thessalonians 2:14-15; James 1:21)

Believe the gospel (Hebrews 11:6; John 8:24)

Repent of sins (Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30-31)

Confess Jesus Christ (Romans 10:10; Matthew 10:32-33)

Be Baptized (Galatians 3:26-27; Romans 6:3-4; Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38)

Remain Obedient (Matthew 7:21; Revelation 2:10; Hebrews 3:12)