

# The Hard Road to Jerusalem

Thomas Robinson, *Seeing Life Through Jesus' Eyes 11*, April 1, 2012

## Matthew 7:13-20

<sup>13</sup> **“Enter by the narrow gate.**

For the **gate is wide** and the **way is easy** that leads to **destruction**,  
and those who enter by it are **many**.

<sup>14</sup> For the **gate is narrow** and the **way is hard** that leads to **life**,  
and those who **find** it are **few**.

<sup>15</sup> **“Beware of false prophets,**  
who come to you in **sheep’s** clothing but inwardly are ravenous **wolves**.

<sup>16</sup> You will **recognize** them by **their fruits**.  
Are **grapes** gathered from thornbushes, or **figs** from thistles?

<sup>17</sup> So, every **healthy tree bears good fruit**, but the **diseased tree bears bad fruit**.

<sup>18</sup> A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit.

<sup>19</sup> Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

<sup>20</sup> Thus you will **recognize** them by **their fruits**.

## Matthew 21:1-16

<sup>1</sup> Now when they **drew near to Jerusalem** and came to Bethphage, to the Mount of Olives,  
then Jesus sent two disciples, <sup>2</sup> saying to them,

“Go into the village in front of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her.  
Untie them and bring them to me. <sup>3</sup> If anyone says anything to you, you shall say,  
‘The Lord needs them,’ and he will send them at once.”

<sup>4</sup> This took place to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet, saying,

<sup>5</sup> **“Say to the daughter of Zion, ‘Behold, your king is coming to you,  
humble, and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.’”** [Zech 9:9]

<sup>6</sup> The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them. <sup>7</sup> They brought the donkey and the colt and put  
on them their cloaks, and he sat on them.

<sup>8</sup> Most of the crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread  
them on the road. <sup>9</sup> And the crowds that went before him and that followed him were shouting,

**“Hosanna to the Son of David!**

**Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!** [Ps 118:25-26]

**Hosanna in the highest!”**

<sup>10</sup> And when **he entered Jerusalem**, the whole city was stirred up, saying, **“Who is this?”** <sup>11</sup> And the  
crowds said, “This is **the prophet Jesus**, from Nazareth of Galilee.”

<sup>12</sup> And **Jesus entered the temple** and drove out all who sold and bought in the temple, and he overturned  
the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons. <sup>13</sup> He said to them, “It is  
written, **‘My house shall be called a house of prayer,’ but you make it a den of robbers.**” [Isa 56:7; Jer 7:11]

<sup>14</sup> And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple, and he healed them.

<sup>15</sup> But when the chief priests and the scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the **children** crying  
out in the temple, **“Hosanna to the Son of David!”** they were indignant, <sup>16</sup> and they said to him, “Do you  
hear what these are saying?”

And Jesus said to them, “Yes; have you never read, **‘Out of the mouth of infants and nursing babies you  
have prepared praise’?**” [Ps 8:2]

## Luke 19:41-44 Jesus Approaches Jerusalem

<sup>41</sup> And when he drew near and **saw the city, he wept over it,** <sup>42</sup> saying, “Would that you, even you, had known on this day the **things that make for peace!** But now they are hidden from your eyes. <sup>43</sup> For the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up a barricade around you and surround you and hem you in on every side <sup>44</sup> and tear you down to the ground, you and your children within you. And they will not leave one stone upon another in you, because you did not know the **time of your visitation.**”

## 1 Corinthians 1:21-25

<sup>21</sup> For since, in **the wisdom of God,** the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through **the foolishness of what we preach to save those who believe.** <sup>22</sup> For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, <sup>23</sup> but **we preach Christ crucified,** a stumbling block to Jews and **foolishness to Gentiles,** <sup>24</sup> but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. <sup>25</sup> For **the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.**

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## Entering A Narrow Gate, A Constricted Road

Jesus’ words have often been wielded in later history as a command to strict doctrine, a puritanical life-style, making discipleship like boot camp. In every element of Jesus’ sermon he helps us break through to see a life that is more wonderful, more authentic, and more challenging than puritanical piety – beyond the righteousness of the Pharisees.

Jesus calls us to seek/enter the Kingdom of God. We watch him/follow him as he comes to the gate of Jerusalem to begin the final confrontation that will ultimately inaugurate that kingdom through his own crucifixion and resurrection. What gate does he enter? How?

## What Happened on Palm Sunday?

Jesus approaches Jerusalem at Passover, with a crowd ready to celebrate deliverance. Tension and expectations high. James & John asked for right and left hand in Kingdom (Mt 20).

Before him Jesus has a wide gate of everyone’s desires for a mighty deliverer military style.

The narrow gate is so constricted and hard that no one can even imagine it as a gate. It is a path that takes betrayal without anger, turns his cheek to blows from soldiers, that loves both friends and enemies to the utmost, that leads to cross and crucifixion. It leads to life.

Jesus enacts the prophecy of Zechariah 9:9, the victorious, humble king who commands peace to the nations and frees the prisoners of hope. Son of David, God’s visitation to his temple. He’s a triumphant king, but victory redefined in terms of God’s wisdom and strength.

To the Priestly rulers and Romans, he looks a dangerous fool, to be scoffed at, but killed.

## Narrow Gate to Wide Life

As he looks back, Matthew helps us realize that only Jesus saw the gate/road to life, our life, God’s life, eternal life. It involved taking God wholeheartedly more than we are used to, seeing life through Jesus’ lens of the Sermon on the Mt. Narrow, Yes! It’s the narrowness of rejecting anger, speaking truth, loving and praying for enemies, serving without display, doing the beautiful deeds that embody God’s own glory. Jesus as Son of David/Son of God walks this path to the utmost so that we can follow him into life. We may well face trouble on the way, but Jesus has already been victorious and leads us to wide vistas of God’s life.

The false prophet still sounds good: This time our self-centered violent revolution will bring true peace. We follow him without fail. But he’s the real fool. The destruction is all around. Jesus says narrow your focus; seek God’s kingdom, and all else will be yours as well.