

Sunday, May 22, 2022
"Meet Your King"
Summary of The Choice of Entrances
Matthew 7:13-14
Wayne Shelton

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Jesus began his sermon with unqualified tenderness, embracing in his blessings those who felt least embraceable. He now concludes his sermon with unqualified toughness, warning that his sermon is not an intellectual option, a set of suggestions we may take or leave, one philosophy of life among others. No, the warnings make explicit that Jesus believes his person and teaching are the exclusive way to life. The hard way of Matthew makes the same claim ethically that John's one way makes theologically in its equally 'narrow' assertion: *"I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father except through me"* (John 14:6). With this language, Jesus enters a deep stream of biblical thought. Early in this history of Israel, the Lord began to tell his people that there were two ways of life. One could live in covenant with him and be blessed, or one could follow the world and be cursed. Moses presented the choice to Israel this way: "See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse... life and prosperity, [or] death and destruction" (Deut. 11:26; 30:15). At the end of a long and faithful life serving God, Joshua challenged Israel: "Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve." Some Israelites were interested in the pagan gods of Canaan. "But," he concluded, "as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord" (Josh. 24:15; 23:7, 16). Jesus says his road leads to life, but before it ends, it is narrow and hard. To this day, many who are lightly committed to Christ need to hear the same word. On the broad, easy road, people do as they please. The way of Christian discipleship is hard. The gate is also narrow, restricting us in certain ways.