

Entering God's Kingdom

Key Verse: *“Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.”*
—**Luke 13:24**

Selected Scripture:
Luke 13:22-30

IN THE KEY VERSE OF OUR

lesson, the word “strive” means to endeavor or struggle with great effort. A path of life based on morality, temperance and responsibility is quite commendable. However, the way in which a Christian is invited to walk during the present Gospel Age entails much greater striving and diligence. This invitation is

to follow in the footsteps of our Lord, to seek for “glory and honour and immortality.”—Rom. 2:7

The entrance into this special relationship with God is described as a “strait,” or narrow, gate. The pathway which follows is similarly called a “narrow” way. (Matt. 7:14) It is a way of complete consecration to God, of self-denial, and of sacrifice on behalf of others. (Matt. 16:24; Rom. 12:1) Those who walk in this narrow way do so in response to the calling, or invitation, of God to be joint-heirs with Christ as his bride. (Eph. 1:18; Rom. 8:16,17; II Cor. 11:2) Paul, in speaking of his own life of consecration, said, “I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”—Phil. 3:14

How different is the strait gate and narrow way compared to the path of many who claim the name of Christ, and whose conduct often seems little removed from the

spirit of the world. Indeed, most view the zeal which strives, fights, runs and watches as extreme and foolish. The rich, the popular, and those absorbed in the ambitions of this world, are content with the material rewards of this life, and are not likely to leave them for things which do not satisfy these earthly desires. Jesus said, "I thank thee, O Father; ... because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes."—Matt. 11:25

God is in the process of completing a "marvelous work" with regard to the calling and selection of a bride for his Son. This work is not according to the spirit of the world, "the wisdom of their wise men," nor "the understanding of their prudent men." (Isa. 29:14) The Apostle James speaks of God's purpose to take out from among the world "a people for his name." (Acts 15:14) These seek to "enter in" to the heavenly kingdom. Their way, however, is made narrow by the circumstances of the present time and by the opposition of the worldly spirit to truth and righteousness. Thus, the exhortation to these is to "give diligence to make your calling and election sure."—II Pet. 1:10

As disciples striving to walk in the narrow way, through God's Holy Spirit we are privileged to know the "mystery of his will." (Eph. 1:9) The Heavenly Father's plans and purposes are opened up to our minds, and we thus are able to have joy in laying down our lives in sacrifice and in service to the Lord and his cause.—John 15:12,13; I John 3:16; 4:7-11

The strait gate and narrow way of the present time are only for those whom God has called. However, when this "little flock" is complete, and made "joint-heirs" with Christ in the millennial kingdom, another way will be opened for all mankind. It will not be a narrow way, that few can find, but a "way of holiness," with the stumbling stones of sin and temptation removed. All people, "the ransomed of the LORD," will be invited to walk therein, and "obtain joy and gladness."—Isa. 35:8-10 ■