

THE NATURE OF THE GOSPEL

Matt.7:13-14

INTRODUCTION:

Stress the NARROW way. The biggest complaint against the Lord's teachings is the NARROWNESS it continually claims! But remember, only EIGHT souls were saved by the flood! And of the 100's of thousands who left Egypt, ONLY TWO entered into Canaan. In the text, FEW means "NOT MANY"! But even those who admit to this truth usually like to INCLUDE and EXCLUDE according to their OWN standards! Even of those gathered here today, **WHO AMONG US** doesn't consider himself as *right on the borderline???*

I. YET IN ALL ITS NARROWNESS, WE MUST BE IMPRESSED WITH THE BROADNESS OF THE GOSPEL!

A. The BROADNESS of the Gospel is impressive as it deals with the subject of GOD!

1. Every nation, even among pagan people, recognizes that there's at least ONE god.
 - a) But most pagans had a restricted, smaller concept of God, because their gods were more on a NATIONAL scope than UNIVERSAL!
 - b) In fact, as they were in captivity, Cyrus said that every nation had a God, and this was one of the main reasons he let Israel go back to Canaan.
2. The gospel of the Lord teaches the BROADNESS of the God of Heaven!
 - a) He's Omni-present [Psa 139:7-11- *"Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? 8 If I ascend into heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there. 9 If I take the wings of the morning, And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, 10 Even there Your hand shall lead me, And Your right hand shall hold me. 11 If I say, "Surely the darkness shall fall on me," Even the night shall be light about me;"*]; Omnipotent [Gen.1:1]; and Omniscient [Prov.15:3- *"The eyes of the LORD are in every place, Keeping watch on the evil and the good."*].
 - b) Where is God worshipped? **HE'S EVERYWHERE AT ONCE!** [Jno.4:19-21- *"The woman said to Him, "Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet. 20 "Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship." 21 Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father."*
 - c) Paul told of the broadness of the subject of God on Mars Hill in [Acts 17:26-30- *"And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, 27 "so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; 28 "for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, 'For we are also His offspring.'" 29 "Therefore, since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man's devising. 30 "Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent,"*
3. **The Bible**, when contrasted with the beliefs of other religions, **presents quite the broadest perception of God!**

B. The BROADNESS of the Gospel is also seen in the subject of **HUMANITY!**

1. [Psa.8:4- *"What is man that You are mindful of him, And the son of man that You visit him?"*
 - a) The Ancients looked upon most strangers who came among them as barbarians.
 - b) For the most part, they didn't recognize any international god, so there was no higher link tying them together.
2. But the Psalmist delves deeper into the question as he continues in [Psa.8:5-9- *"For You have made him a little lower than the angels, And You have crowned him with glory and honor. 6 You have made him to have dominion over the works of Your hands; You have put all things under his feet, 7 All sheep and oxen; Even the beasts of the field, 8 The birds of the air, And the fish of the sea That pass through the paths of the seas. 9 O LORD, our Lord, How excellent is Your name in all the earth!"*

3. Again call attention to Paul's statement to those Athens: **Acts 17:26**- " ..He made of one blood all nations of men ..." .
 - a) Paul is stressing the brotherhood of all believers on the earth!
 - b) Later, he writes in **Ephesians 4:6** that there is only ONE God for ALL HUMANITY!
- C. Thirdly, the subject of HUMAN DESTINY also shows the BROADNESS of the Gospel!
 1. The question of the ages is raised in **Job 14:14**- " *If a man die, shall he live again?*"
 - a) Some present the claim that death brings ANNIHILATION!
 - b) Other ideas: The Indian's "happy hunting ground", so they bury implements with him.
 - c) Even some modern religionists have some "far out" ideas:
 - 1) Jehovah Witnesses/ Mormons/ Hindus (& Shirley McLaine).
 - 2) "Father Riker" of Holy City, down between Los Gatos & Santa Cruz: *Give him all your earthly goods & he'll take care of you and get you into "heaven".*
 2. But there's no idea of human destiny so BROAD as that revealed in the gospel.
 - a) The universal invitation of the Lord INCLUDES ALL! **Isa.1:18; Matt.11:28.**
 - b) There is the EXPECTATION of ETERNAL LIFE! **Matt.25:34, 46**- "*Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world 46 "And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."*"
 3. Do we really believe that a loving God would make a hell for MAN ... whom He created in His own likeness?
 - a) **CERTAINLY NOT!** Hell was prepared for the devil and his angels! **Mt.25:41.**
 - b) God made HEAVEN for His people. cf. **Jno.14:2.**
 - c) It's certainly not GOD'S desire that ANYONE be cast into hell. **2 Pet.3:9.**

II. WHERE THE GOSPEL IS FAITHFULLY PREACHED, WHY IS IT ACCUSED OF BEING NARROW?

- A. A few "preachers" soon learn to "tickle the ears" of some of the more demanding members!
 1. **It would be like** a history teacher who asks a school board for a job: "Do you teach the world is round or flat?" "**HOW DO YOU WANT IT TAUGHT?**"
 2. Or like the little fat B.S. leader who was about two miles behind his troop when he asked a hiker: "Have you seen a group of boy scouts go by here? I'm their leader!"
 3. It certainly isn't a "man of God" today who seeks to find out where the congregation is and then strikes out after it! The really SAD PART is that many religious groups EXPECT a preacher to do that!
- B. Under many conditions, **THE GOSPEL IS NARROW!**
 1. But even so, some are still trying to make it TOO NARROW!
 - a) cf. The Canaanitish woman in **Matt.15:22-28**- "*And behold, a woman of Canaan came from that region and cried out to Him, saying, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David! My daughter is severely demon-possessed."* 23 *But He answered her not a word. And His disciples came and urged Him, saying, "Send her away, for she cries out after us."* 24 *But He answered and said, "I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."* 25 *Then she came and worshiped Him, saying, "Lord, help me!"* 26 *But He answered and said, "It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs."* 27 *And she said, "Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters' table."* 28 *Then Jesus answered and said to her, "O woman, great is your faith! Let it be to you as you desire."* And her daughter was healed from that very hour."
 - b) cf. The little children in **Matt.19:13-14**- "*Then little children were brought to Him that He might put His hands on them and pray, **but the disciples rebuked them.** 14 *But Jesus said, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven."**
 2. ANY DEVIATION from the gospel brings the condemnation of the Lord, whether we're falling short or going beyond His revealed will! **Gal.1:8-9; 1 Cor.4:6**- "*Now these things I have transferred to myself & Apollos in a figure, brethren, **THAN YOU MIGHT LEARN NOT TO GO BEYOND THAT WHICH IS WRITTEN!"***
 - a) What's this do to doctrines of brethren who demand that we use only one container on the Lord's table, or not have separate classes, or not serve the communion in the PM?

- b) Also, how are those affected who use instrumental music, or count beads, or burn candles as religious acts?
- 3. We must be JUST AS NARROW and ONLY SO BROAD as the Gospel of CHRIST!

III. THE NATURE OF THE GOSPEL ITSELF IS WHAT DICTATES AND STRESSES ITS NARROWNESS TO US! [THERE ARE FOUR REASONS WHY GOSPEL IS NARROW]:

- A. It is THE WAY OF TRUTH! Jno. 14:6.
 - 1. Not "A" way, but an exclusive way! ["A" way not bother people!]
 - a) Acts 4:12- Not "A" name, but THE name!
 - b) 2 Jno.9- Not "A" doctrine, but THE doctrine of Christ!
 - 2. TRUTH IS NARROW!
 - a) The apostle Paul Preached there's ONLY ONE WAY! Acts 17:23.
 - b) TRUTH is NARROW in every field of endeavor, else everyone could be a musician/ or a pharmacist/ or a mathematician!
 - 3. WHY IS IT THAT people expect a TOLERANCE OF TRUTH in the religious field?
 - a) They tolerated the diverse teachings of priests/ opinionists in the first century.
 - b) But when the apostles taught the exclusiveness of Christ's way, they became very intolerant!
 - c) Cornelius had the kind of attitude that God would choose for us today! Acts 10:33.
- B. It is THE WAY OF HOLINESS! 1 Thes.3:13- *"so that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints."*
 - 1. The Lord & His disciples were accused of many things: disciples ate with unwashed hands; Jesus associated and ate with sinners; and He violated traditions concerning the Sabbath.
 - 2. NOW, after 19 centuries, what can you see that you'd **ADD or LEAVE OUT** of the life of Christ that would make Him more PURE or HOLY? 1 Pet.2:21; Phil.2:5-8.
- C. The Gospel is NARROW because it is THE WAY OF HUMILITY
 - 1. One of the last things Christ tried to impress on the Apostles before His death was the need for humility: Jno.13:16- *"Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him."* **AND THEN HE WASHED THEIR FEET!**
 - 2. AGAIN, the gospel is too NARROW for some here!
 - a) As with the woman with the antique in the attic of the burning house -- you have to turn loose of pride in order to be saved!
 - b) Ezek.16:49-PRIDE was the sin of Sodom! Prov.16:18-*"Pride goeth before destruction"* .
 - 3. Some even try to tamper with the gospel by appealing to "pride" when trying to convert: "Oh, it would be so good for this church if you were just a member of it!" Remember Rom.1:16!
- D. The Gospel is THE WAY OF LOVE!
 - 1. Love is NARROW!
 - a) We demand strict faithfulness in the mate we love, don't we?
 - b) CHRIST also demands faithfulness of His Bride, the Church! [WE are the church!]
 - 2. Love is RESTRICTIVE! Matt.6:33.
 - a) We are to DO HIS WILL! Jno.14:15, 23; Jas.4:17.
 - b) We must NOT add to it nor take from it! Dt.4:2; Rev.22:18-19.

CONCLUSION:

The gospel is NARROW because it's the nature of God's message to so be! It is PRECISE, as in the plan of salvation: B+R+C+B++RF. Its narrowness is even here stressed: