

THE FULL ARC

1. Gihon — *Awakening*

- God initiated salvation; His life begins to flow through the man of God, and the heart of man is opened.

2. Hermon — *Confrontation*

- The enemy resists, identity is contested, and through this process, conviction is forged.

3. Kidron — *Decision*

- Daily choices shape destiny, and salvation becomes, not just a moment, but a path both lived and walked upon.



Good morning TAC! Today, we will be continuing our Israel geography series. Last week, we had you in the northernmost extreme of Israel, and this week we will be

returning to the city of Jerusalem. Today's sermon is titled "Kidron: Small Decisions, Radical Outcomes."

In times past, we have read passages like Ezekiel 5:5 that present Israel as the very center of the world. Taking this a step further, Jerusalem is the center of Israel and the very place where God's name dwells. As we get started, let's read a commentary written by the sons of Korah about Jerusalem:

Psalm 48:1–3 (ESV)

1 Great is the LORD and greatly to be praised
in the city of our God!
His holy mountain, 2 beautiful in elevation,
is the joy of all the earth,
Mount Zion, in the far north,
the city of the great King.
3 Within her citadels God
has made himself known as a fortress.

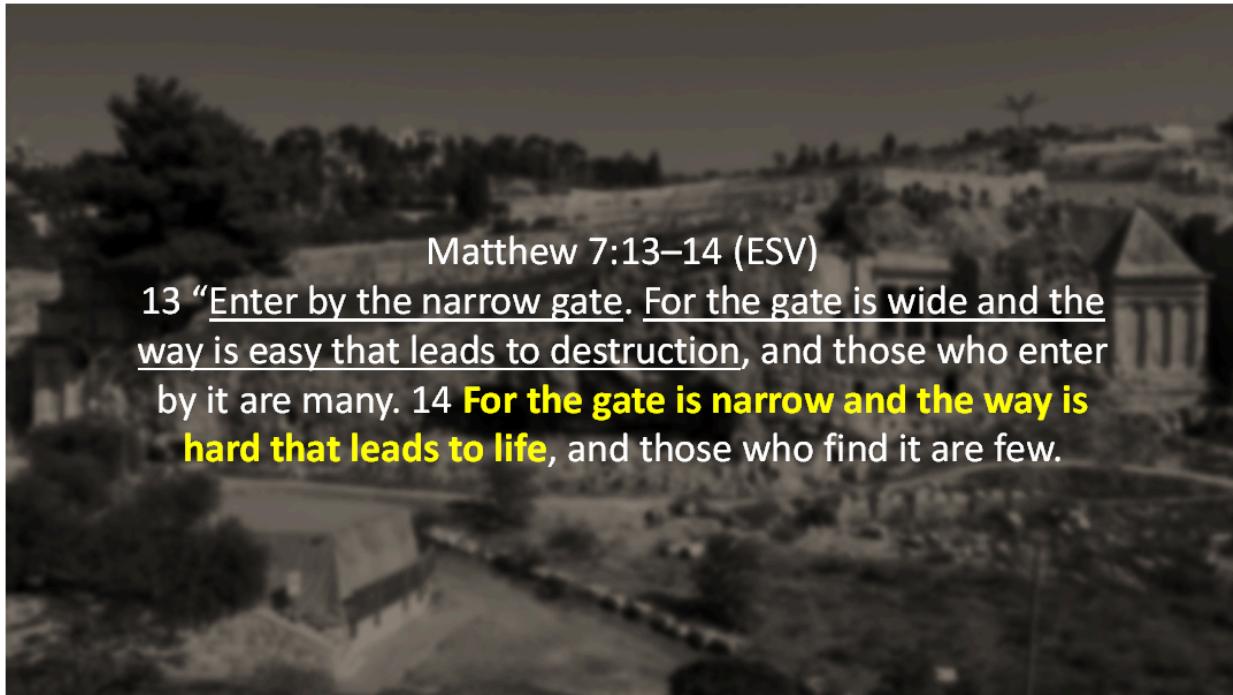
While the whole earth belongs to the God of Israel, there is only one city that He specifically calls **His city**. He expressly says that He is within the citadels of Jerusalem and has made himself known. Jerusalem is the city of the great King. Let's pick back up in verse 12 as the sons of Korah begin to give instructions to us regarding the city:

Psalm 48:12–14 (ESV)

12 Walk about Zion, **go around her,**
number her towers,
13 **consider** well her ramparts,
go through her citadels,
that you may tell the next generation
14 that this is God,
our God forever and ever.
He will guide us forever.

There is no other city that is written about in this way. The Psalm literally gives commands like walk around, number, and consider the way Jerusalem is built **so that you may tell the next generation.**

While we are on the subject of considering the city of Jerusalem, we want to examine a few of Jesus statements that will serve to illustrate a point. Next slide:



Matthew 7:13–14 (ESV)

13 “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. 14 **For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life**, and those who find it are few.

We have all encountered this passage numerous times and have drawn various lessons from it. However, it's worth considering what Jesus' audience envisioned when He spoke these words. What lesson were they meant to take away? As suggested by our introduction, the architecture of Jerusalem can provide insights into these questions. Before getting into that, let's examine a similar statement in the book of Luke.

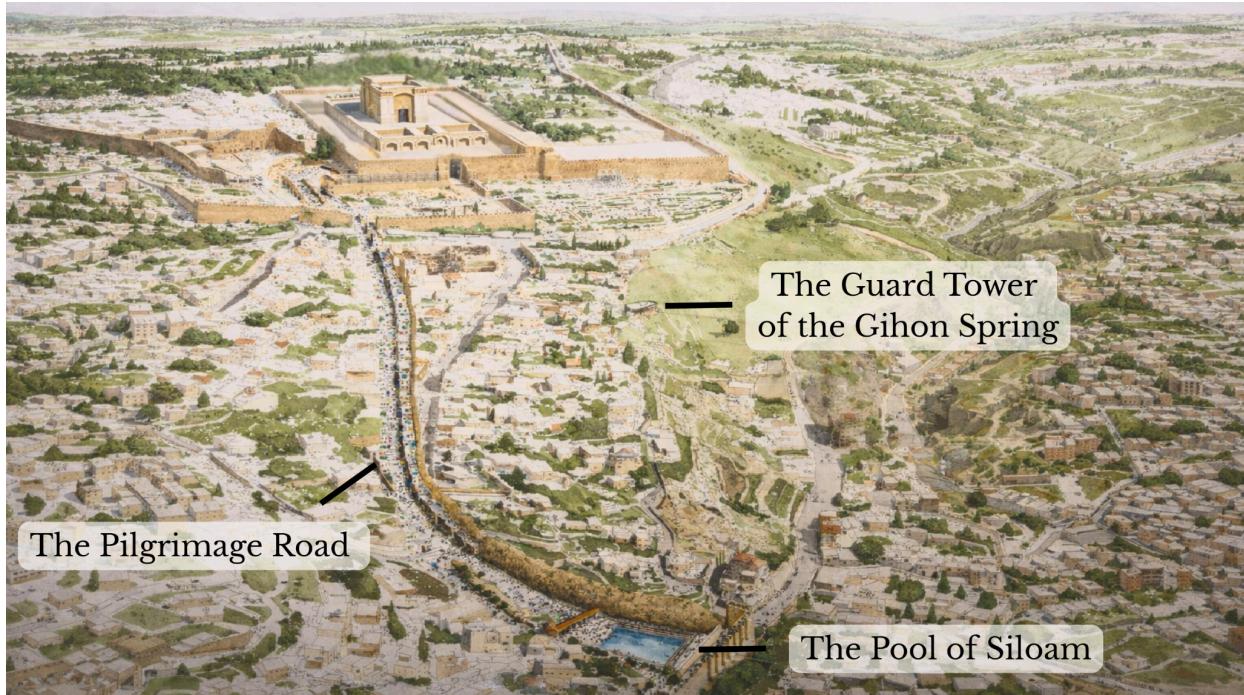
Luke 13:23–27 (ESV)

23 And someone said to him, “Lord, will those who are saved be few?”
And he said to them, 24 “**Strive to enter through the narrow door**. For many, I tell you, will seek to enter and **will not be able**. 25 When once the

master of the house has risen and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and to knock at the door, saying, 'Lord, open to us,' then he will answer you, 'I do not know where you come from.' 26 Then you will begin to say, 'We ate and drank in your presence, and you taught in our streets.' 27 But he will say, 'I tell you, I do not know where you come from. Depart from me, all you workers of evil!'

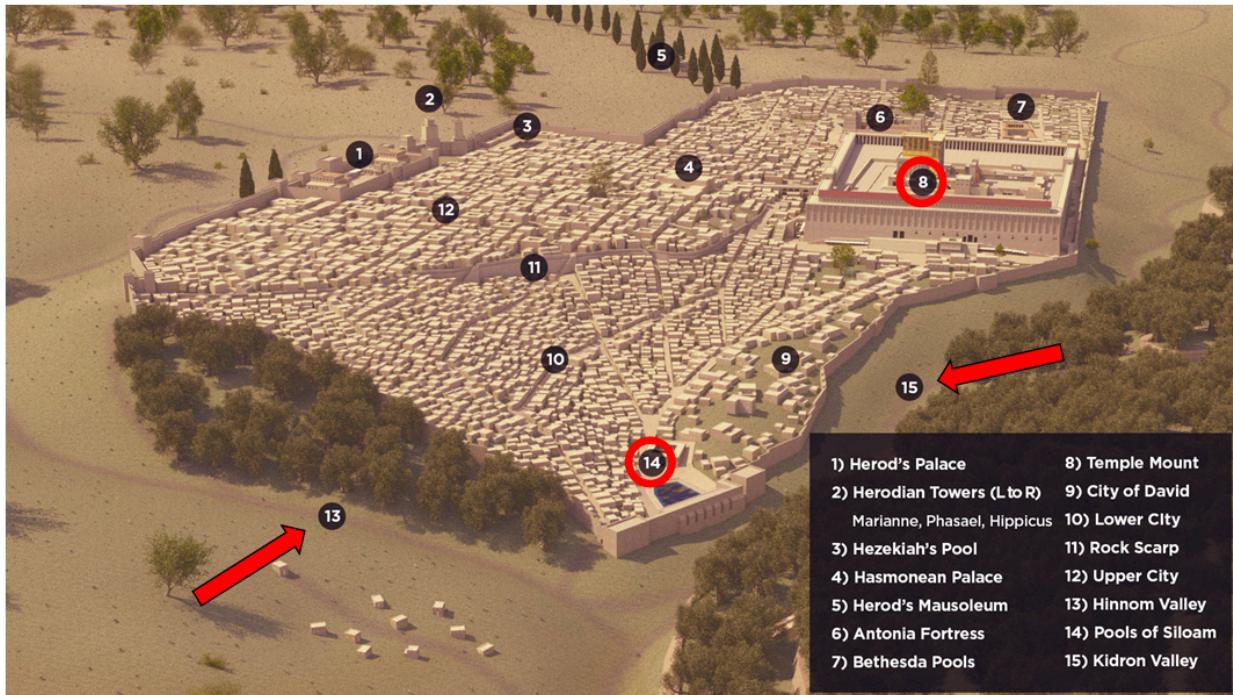
The essence of the biblical text has gradually been diluted to make it more appealing to a wider audience. However, in the straightforward language of Jesus, it is clear that striving and hard work are necessary to enter through the narrow door. Obviously, these verses require more than an infant baptism or a one-time decision at youth camp when you were 7 years old. Again, one of the best things that we could do is ask ourselves what Jesus' audience envisioned when He said this and then what lesson were they meant to take away from His statements.

Jesus' words carry a profound depth of meaning that can be appreciated from the plain text alone. However, when we consider the city of Jerusalem as Psalm 48 instructs, the vividness and significance of Jesus' statement are greatly enhanced. Remember that every Jew was commanded to go up to Jerusalem three times a year. During those feasts, they sang the Psalms of Ascent and worshiped at the Temple. You may remember this next slide from two weeks ago:



This was an artist's rendition of the pilgrimage road that led from the pool of Silom up to the Temple Mount. This is the main entrance to the Temple Complex of Jesus's Day. We showed you the picture so that you would be able to conceptualize the crowds that would traverse this road as all Israel approached the Temple three times a year. The picture is flawed in that it has several walls from the Crusader period, but it gives you an idea of the pilgrimage road.

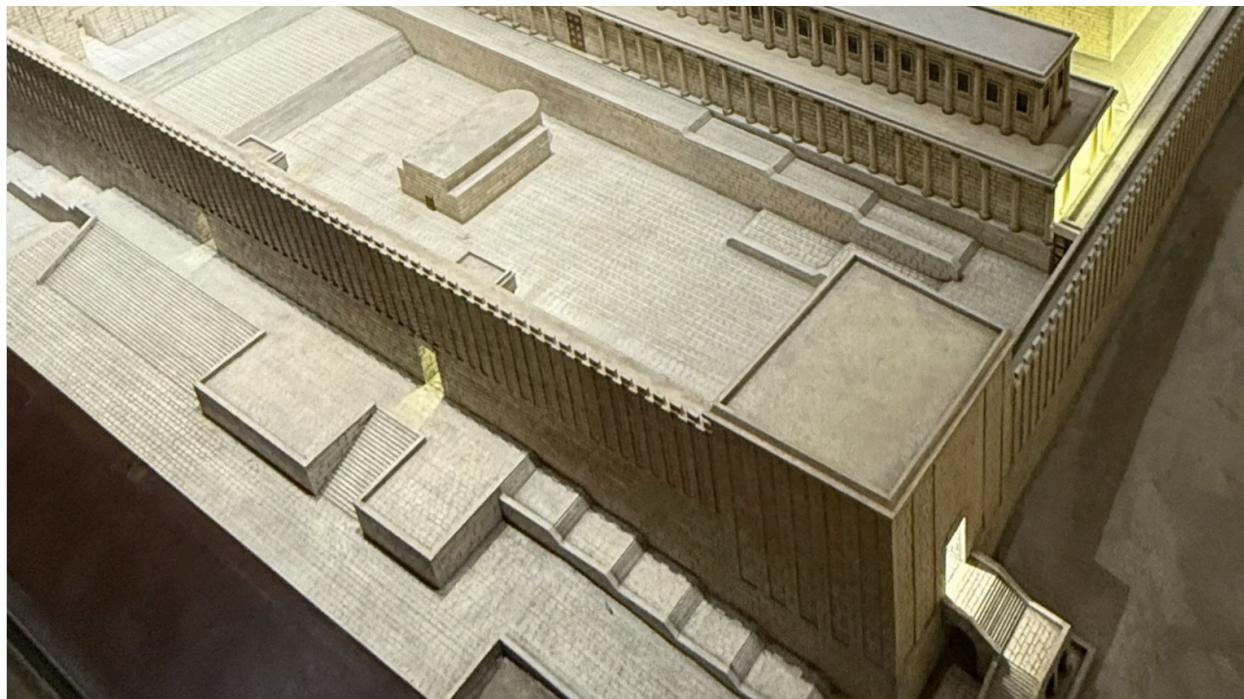
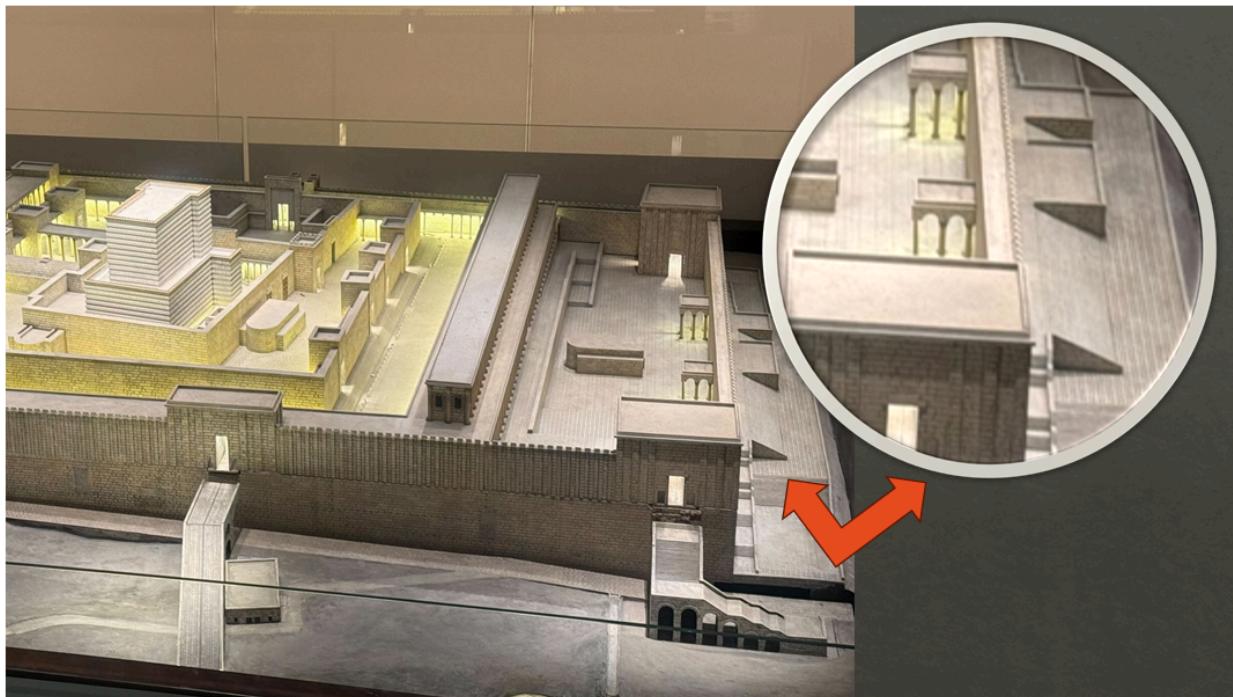
Now, let's look at a more accurate rendition of the city in Jesus's day. Next slide:



On this map, you can see the Hinnom Valley (#13) and the Kidron Valley (#15)

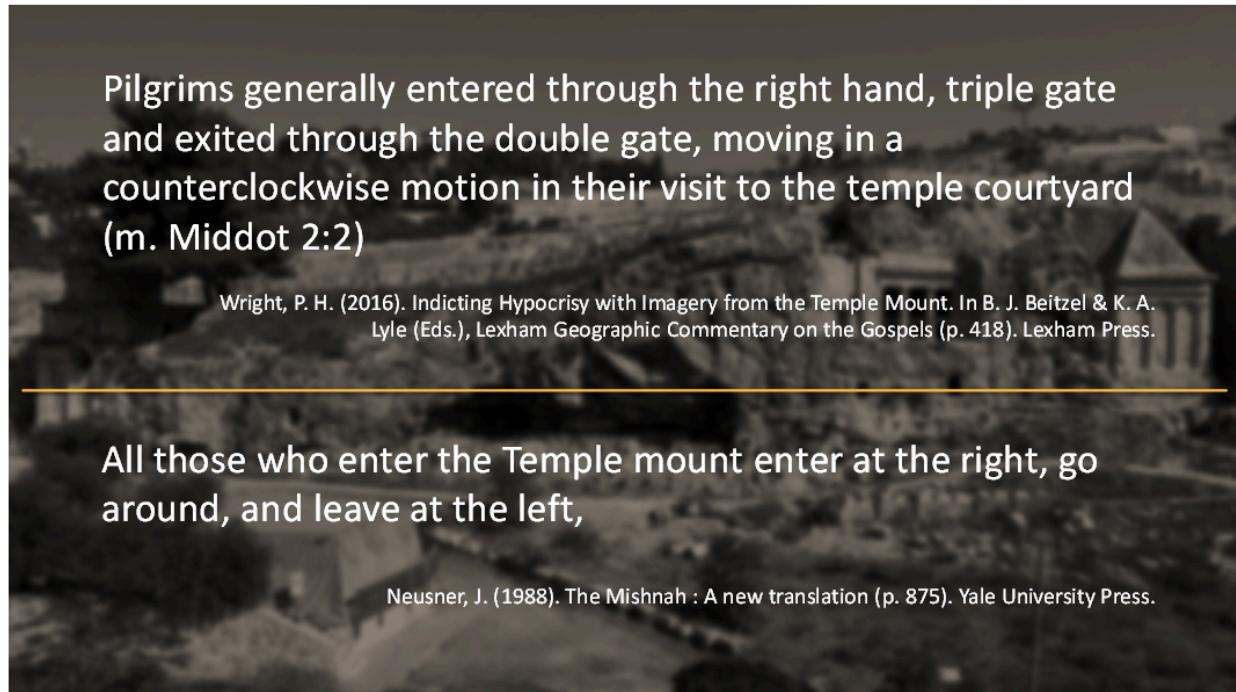
You can identify the Pool of Siloam (#14) and see how the pilgrimage road progressed from there all the way up to the Temple Mount (#8). This road and the entrance to the Temple Mount would have been the most recognizable landmark in the life of any Jew living in Israel during Jesus' day. All of them would have made this ascent along the pilgrimage road up to the Temple Mount three times a year, every year of their lives.

Here is a model of the Temple as it appeared during Jesus's time. You should know that we took this recently while on an Archeological tour under the Western Wall in a tunnel complex. The picture model features the most up-to-date information available anywhere in the world regarding accurate renderings of the Temple Complex. Although it is oriented slightly differently, we will guide you to ensure you understand its layout and features. Next slide:



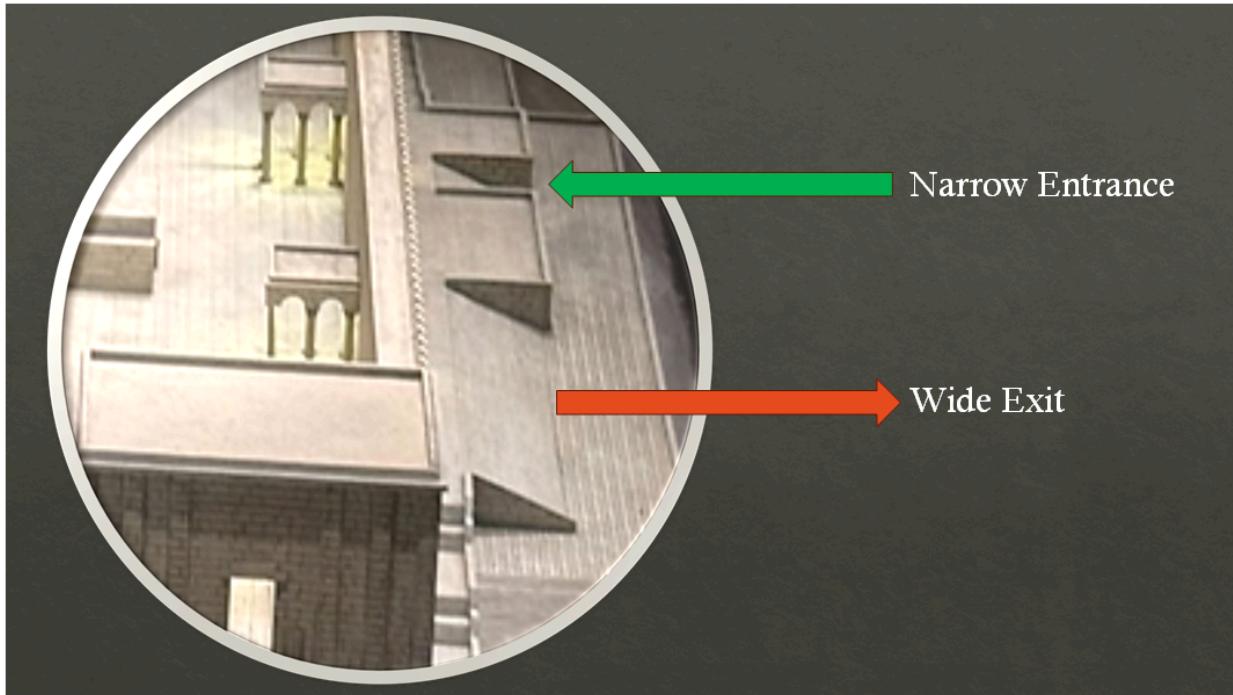
This picture is of the Western Wall of the Temple complex. That is still a place that you can go and stand or pray today. The area with the red arrows is the Southern side of the Temple complex, and it is the side that the pilgrimage road ascended to from the city of David that you saw on the last slide.

The circle on the slide is a zoomed-in view of how the steps to the Temple were arranged. This is particularly relevant when you consider what we know about them from the time of Jesus. Here is a quote from the Mishnah and a Geographical commentary on the steps that make the ascent to the temple complex. Next slide:



Now that you know the right side is the entrance and the left side is the exit. Let's look more closely at the picture of the steps that ascend to the Temple Complex:

Next slide:



Earlier, we said we should ask two important questions:

1. What did the people envision when Jesus spoke of the narrow and broad ways?
2. What was the lesson they were meant to take from it?

When Jesus spoke of striving to enter the narrow way that leads to life, the Jews likely envisioned the ascent to the Temple Mount and the narrow entrance to the life found at the Throne of God. Moreover, the Greek word that is translated as "striving" is literally to agonize! Conversely, when Jesus mentioned the broad path that leads to destruction, the people probably pictured the wide path that descends away from the Throne of God. Practically speaking, the pilgrimage road is far easier to descend than to ascend due to the elevation and the width of the exit compared to the entrance.

What lesson were the people meant to take away from Jesus' words and this imagery? We believe that it would be something similar to seeing the narrow

path as a very difficult ascent that is made repetitiously throughout your entire lifetime and with your whole family.

Additionally, there are always more people leaving on the wide path that offers the ease of descent until you reap the consequences of the action.

In modern times, people treat the journey of salvation as if it were a cheap and easy one-time decision, but the foundation for Jesus' statements involved an agonizing journey 3 times a year from every corner of Israel. Imagine walking from Northern Israel with all of your children, provisions, and necessary sacrifices. Then the final trek up to the Temple is an aggressive ascent that makes your legs burn. The entire time you are watching people walking the opposite direction on what seems to be an easy descent.

Any understanding of Jesus' statements and their relationship to the journey of salvation must take into account the presence of contrasting terms like: Narrow vs. Wide, Hard vs. Easy, and, of course, his use of the phrase "**strive** to enter the narrow gate" or "**agonize** to do so"!

While you are thinking about that, we want to show you another image. Next slide:



Do you remember how the way that leads to life was on the right side and was narrow? The monument on the right belongs to a man named Zechariah, who was martyred for his convictions.

Do you remember how the way that was wide, easy, and led to death was on the left? The monument on the left is Absalom's

Let's show you a close-up of these two monuments side by side. Next slide:



Much like the narrow and wide ways at the temple, these two monuments are right next to one another. We are going to develop this more as we learn more about these two men, but take note of the fact that these two monuments are just a few meters apart.

Let's start with the life of Zechariah. Zechariah's whole back story is not within the purview of this message, but we want to refresh a few key details with you.

Zechariah was:

- The son of a priest named Jehoida. In prior years, Jehoida had saved the last remaining member of David's line, raised him, and then helped him regain the kingship.
- This son that Jehoida saved did well while Jehoida was alive, but later turned away from the Lord and eventually conspired to kill Zechariah, the son of the man who saved him.

His life and death are recorded in 2 Chronicles, the last book in the Hebrew ordering of the Tanakh. Let's pull up that slide as a reminder:
***Point out Chronicles**
The death of Abel at the beginning and the death of Zechariah at the end...

Books of the Hebrew Bible

תורה Torah Law (5)

Genesis
Exodus
Leviticus
Numbers
Deuteronomy

נביאים NEVI'IM Prophets (8)

<i>Former</i>	<i>Later</i>
Joshua	Isaiah
Judges	Jeremiah
Samuel	Ezekiel
Kings	The Twelve (Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi)

כתובים KETUVIM Writings (11)

<i>Pre-Exilic</i>	<i>Post-Exilic</i>
Job	Lamentations
Proverbs	Esther
Ruth	Daniel
Song of Songs	Ezra-Nehemiah
Ecclesiastes	Chronicles

This positioning makes the life and death of Zechariah of particular importance as he is the last of the prophets to lay down their life before the Newer Testament era.

Let's pick up in:

2 Chronicles 24:20–22 (ESV)

20 **Then the Spirit of God clothed** Zechariah the son of Jehoiada the priest, and he stood above the people, and said to them, “Thus says God, ‘Why do you break the commandments of the LORD, so that you cannot prosper? Because you have forsaken the LORD, he has forsaken you.’” 21 But they conspired against him, and by command of the king they stoned him with stones in the court of the house of the LORD. 22 Thus Joash the king did not remember the kindness that Jehoiada, Zechariah’s father, had shown him, but killed his son. And when he was dying, he said, “May the LORD see and avenge!”

Zechariah's life and ministry are short as far as the biblical record is concerned, but his impact was not. Jesus directly comments on Zechariah's life and ministry in passages like Matthew 23 and Luke 11.

After the death of Zechariah's father, Jehoiada, King Joash felt freed from the seeming constraints and agonies of walking in the narrow way. Slowly but surely, he began to make small decisions that eventually led to a radical outcome—King Joash killed the son of the very man who had saved him and given him life. Because of his own wicked actions, Joash found himself far away from the righteous path. Instead of repenting, he felt like his only course of action was to kill the man who was presenting the truth of God's Word to him.

For Zechariah to stand in righteousness, it required him to not only stand up to the King but also to all of the other leaders. This ultimately cost him his life but left a monument to what a faithful man looks like... one that would not love his life so much as to shrink from death.

Remember, Zechariah's monument is on the right side and just a few meters away from another monument on the left. The monument on the left is Absalom's. Let's pick up in:

2 Samuel 18:18 (ESV)

18 Now Absalom in his lifetime had taken and set up for himself the pillar that is in the King's Valley, for he said, "I have no son to keep my name in remembrance." He called the pillar after his own name, and it is called Absalom's monument to this day.

An entire sermon could be dedicated to this man's vanity and rebellion, as it directly reflects the modern church world. However, some meaningful points that you should know about him:

- He was known for his physical beauty
- He murdered his brother and then tried to usurp the throne of his father, David.
- He won hearts through flattery, not truth.
- 2 Samuel 14 records that he did, in fact, have 3 sons, but somehow they were lost as a result of his small choices and radical outcomes.

Absalom's monument was intended to be in his own honor, but is remembered forever as the man whose pride and vanity cost him everything. He died as a "brother murderer", a "father betrayer", and a "sonless" disgrace of a man.

Let's pull that slide up again:



These two monuments are right next to one another.

So remember Absalom is on the left. Not really the best story. But God did allow it to happen and he allowed this monument to a single man to be built just next to it. A stone's throw away is Zacharia's tomb, a man who did not shrink back from death and there is a monument to this day commemorating his faithful life and God allowed them to be put right next to each other. So we are teaching on two different themes, but beyond just a sermon that's highlighting it, God caused these to be in his city right next to each other in the face of the Temple Mount. These are a series of features like this that are in the exact same area And We're highlighting them to you now because it's applicable to our days and how we choose to wake up and go about the days that God's given us. You will see that

God has orchestrated all of Jerusalem to not only be representative of his divine plan, but also to be an object lesson.

Let's show you a short clip from our time in Israel. [*Play monument video](#)

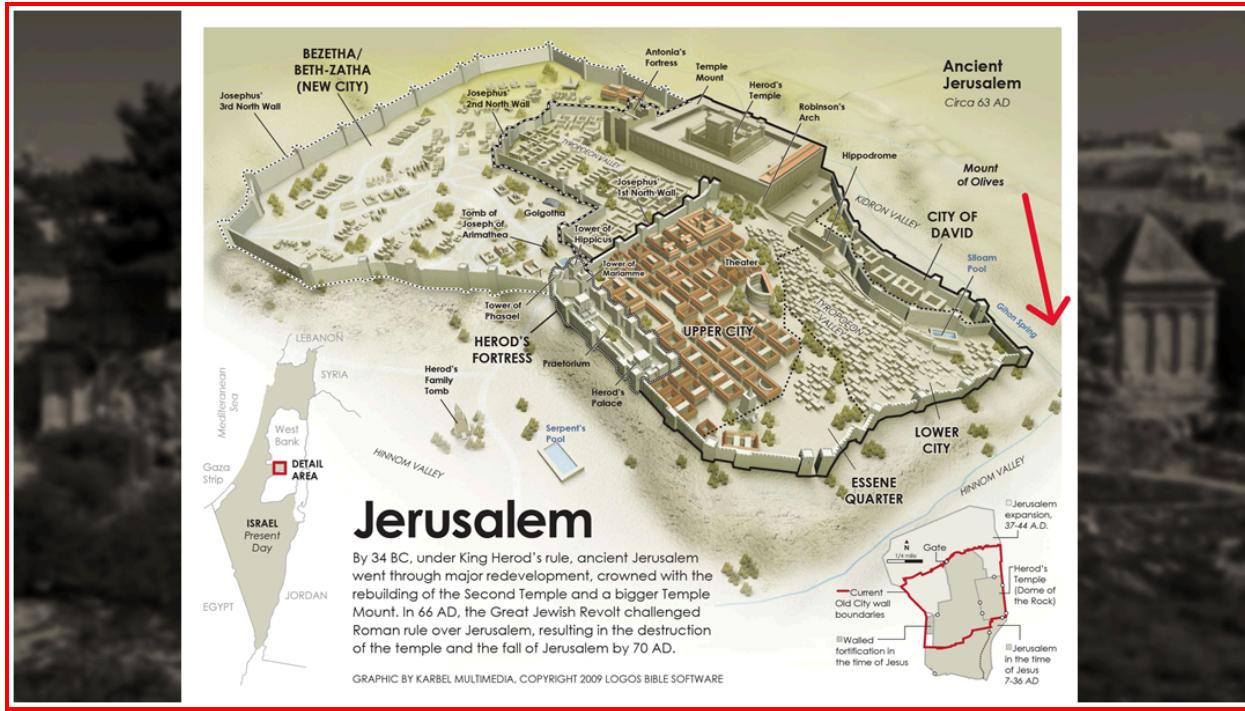
If you recall **Psalm 48** from the beginning of this message, there is only one city in all the world that Scripture exhorts us to consider, examine, and walk around—and that city is Jerusalem. We began by reflecting on Jesus' words about the narrow and wide door. In His day, these physical features were located on the south side of the temple, immediately adjacent to the Kidron Valley, where both Zechariah's tomb and Absalom's monument stood. In fact, these landmarks were little more than a stone's throw from one another. Moreover, if you were standing by the narrow and wide stairs in Jesus' time, you would have had a clear view of a striking geographic feature: the place where two valleys converge—the Kidron and Gehenna.

*Connect to the narrow and wide door.

- **Ecclesiastes 10:2 (ESV)**

A wise man's heart inclines him to the right,
but a fool's heart to the left.

- Let's **walk around** Jerusalem a bit together on our next slide: [*Don't read*](#)



At elevation, at the top center of the map, is where the temple was located. The south side of the temple is on the right side, and that's where the narrow entrance steps and wide exit steps were located. Again, in Jesus' day, if you were to stand by the narrow and wide pathways facing south, which is the bottom right of the map, you would be facing the point where the Kidron Valley and the Hinnom Valley meet together and merge. This would also be the general location of Zechariah's Tomb and Absalom's Monument. All three of these sites would be clearly within eyesight while Jesus was teaching!

To help you understand the importance of the merging point between the Kidron and Hinnom valley we need to cover a few passages. Let's begin with:

Jeremiah 7:30–33 (ESV)

30 “For the sons of Judah have done evil in my sight, declares the LORD. They have set their detestable things in the house that is called by my name, to defile it. 31 And **they have built the high places of Topheth, which is in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom**, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire, which I did not command, nor did it come into my mind. 32 Therefore, behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD,

when it will no more be called Topheth, or the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, **but the Valley of Slaughter**; for they will bury in Topheth, because there is no room elsewhere. 33 And **the dead bodies of this people will be food for the birds of the air**, and for the beasts of the earth, and none will frighten them away.

Momentarily, we will address the Newer Testament connections and the Greek derivation of the Hebrew word Hinnom. For now just notice what the prophet Jeremiah connects the Hinnom valley to. Prior to the judgment through Babylon under Nebuchadnezzar, reprobate kings of Israel had been burning their children alive as offerings to gods like Molech, Baal and Chemosh in the Hinnom valley. These practices began to strongly associate the valley of Hinnom with hellish pagan practices and it became a place that the faithful among Israel avoided for all of these reasons. Furthermore, Jeremiah predicted the Hinnom valley would become the site where dead bodies were disposed of after the Babylonian sieges took place. The combination of the valley of Hinnom's pagan history with the burning of children as offerings and its history of being a mass graveyard for the dead bodies of Israelites that God purged out of the nation all contributed to this area being viewed typologically like hell.

Let's take our second passage in Jeremiah:

Jeremiah 19:1–6 (ESV)

19 Thus says the LORD, “Go, buy a potter’s earthenware flask, and take some of the elders of the people and some of the elders of the priests, 2 and go out to the **Valley of the Son of Hinnom** at the entry of the Potsherd Gate, and proclaim there the words that I tell you. 3 You shall say, ‘Hear the word of the LORD, O kings of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem. Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Behold, I am bringing such disaster upon this place that the ears of everyone who hears of it will tingle. 4 Because the people have forsaken me and have profaned this place by making offerings in it to other gods whom neither they nor their fathers nor the kings of Judah have known; and because they have

filled this place with the blood of innocents, 5 and have built the high places of Baal **to burn their sons in the fire as burnt offerings to Baal**, which I did not command or decree, nor did it come into my mind— 6 therefore, behold, days are coming, declares the LORD, when this place shall no more be called Topheth, or the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, **but the Valley of Slaughter.**

The Hinnom Valley, over time, became infamous as a center of Baal worship. Near the Pool of Siloam, potters worked outside the Potsherds Gate, but nearby lay the dreaded Tophet, where children were sacrificed to the god Baal. Kings such as Ahaz and Manasseh offered their own children there, perpetuating this dark practice. Later, King Josiah sought to end these horrors by defiling the Tophet, halting the sacrifices. Yet after his death, the kings of Judah rebuilt the high places and revived the worship of Baal as well as other gods, reinstating child sacrifice in the valley.

Because of these abominations, the Lord declared that the valley's name would be changed from Hinnom to the Valley of Slaughter. This prophecy came to pass in 586 B.C., when the Babylonians invaded Jerusalem. As they entered through the Middle Gate, King Zedekiah and the people fled through the Potsherds Gate near the Pool of Siloam. Babylonian forces lay in wait, slaughtering the fleeing Jerusalemites and casting their bodies into the Tophet, where they were left to be consumed by birds and beasts.

Now let's take a moment to understand the connection between the valley of Hinnom and what we are all more familiar with in the Newer Testament stated as Gehenna or often translated as hell. Next slide:

The term “Gehenna” is derived from the Hebrew phrase “valley of Hinnom” or “valley of the son of Hinnom”[1][2]. This valley was historically a site of horrific idolatrous practices, including child sacrifices to the pagan god Molech, and later became a place of abomination polluted with dead bodies, garbage, and rubbish[1][3]. As a garbage dump where fires continually smoldered, it became a graphic symbol of woe, judgment, and eternal punishment[1][4].

In the Hellenistic and Roman eras, **the Hinnom Valley was transliterated as Gehenna** and came to serve as an image of supernatural and eschatological judgment, specifically representing the place of final punishment[3][5]. Gehenna specifically denotes “eternal fires” and is typically used in connection with the final judgment, suggesting an eternal punishment[1].

[1] Carpenter, E. E., & Comfort, P. W. (2000). In Holman treasury of key Bible words: 200 Greek and 200 Hebrew words defined and explained (p. 303). Broadman & Holman Publishers.

[2] Ewing, W. (1979–1988). Gehenna. In G. W. Bromiley (Ed.), The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Revised (Vol. 2, p. 423). Wm. B. Eerdmans.

[3] Meeks, C. (2016). Hinnom, Valley of. In J. D. Barry, D. Bomar, D. R. Brown, R. Klippenstein, D. Mangum, C. Sinclair Wolcott, L. Wentz, E. Ritzema, & W. Widder (Eds.), The Lexham Bible Dictionary. Lexham Press.

[4] Youngblood, R. F., Bruce, F. F., & Harrison, R. K., Thomas Nelson Publishers, eds. (1995). In Nelson’s new illustrated Bible dictionary. Thomas Nelson, Inc.

[5] Gehenna. (2003). In C. Brand, C. Draper, A. England, S. Bond, E. R. Clendenen, & T. C. Butler (Eds.), Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary (p. 631). Holman Bible Publishers.

As you can see on the slide what comes to us as Gehenna in English based on the Greek rendering of the Hebrew word Hinnom. The point is not really a lesson in the semantics between languages and pronunciation. Rather, the point is that you understand everything we just read about the valley of Hinnom is the same valley as what is called Gehenna in our Newer Testaments.

With that understanding in place let's read what Jesus said about this valley:

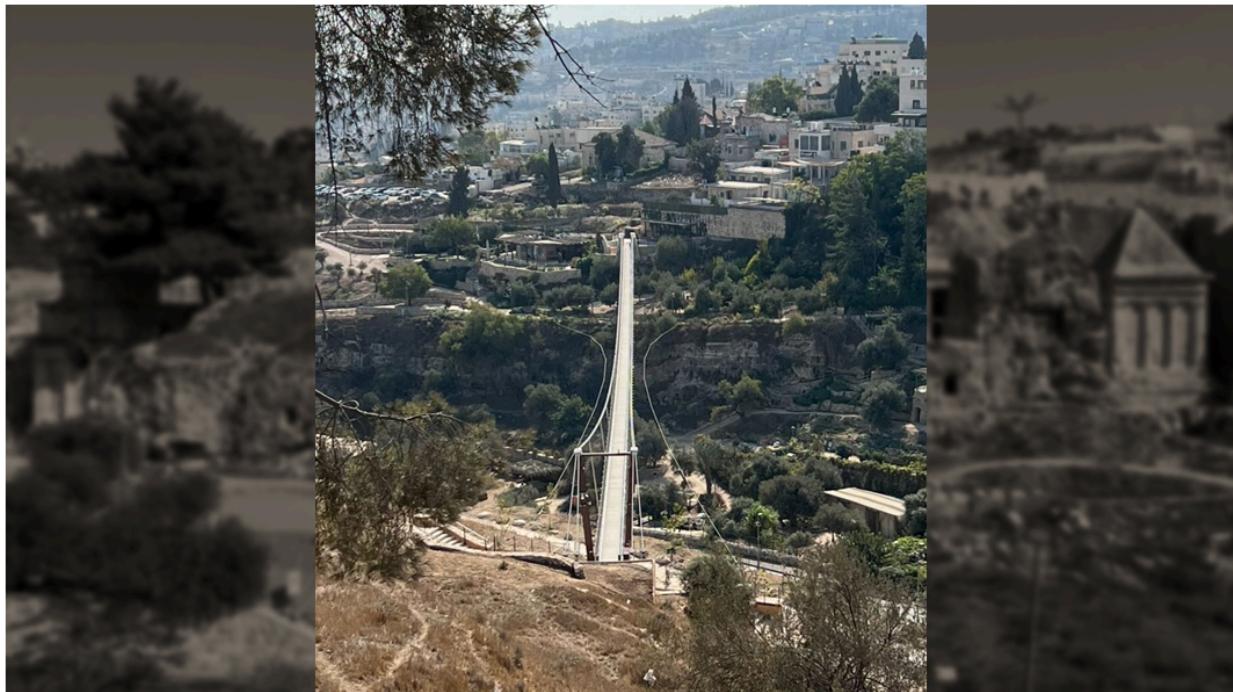
Mark 9:42–48 (ESV)

42 “Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him if a great millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea. 43 And if your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than with two hands to go to hell (**Gehenna**), **to the unquenchable fire**. 45 And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame than with two feet to be thrown into **hell (Gehenna)**. 47 And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into **hell (Gehenna)**, 48 ‘where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.’

The rampant idolatry and hellish practice of child sacrifice that took place in the Hinnom Valley, along with its association with a garbage dump, made it a perfect metaphor to illustrate an eternal punishment that we typically refer to as Hell or more specifically the Lake of Fire that is the 2nd death in the book of Revelation. As always, metaphors work best when grounded in a tangible or real example.

The Valley of Hinnom or Gehenna is not literally Hell, which should be obvious because it is not presently on fire, but it is a geographical location in Israel whose history and function serve as a poignant illustration of eternal punishment.

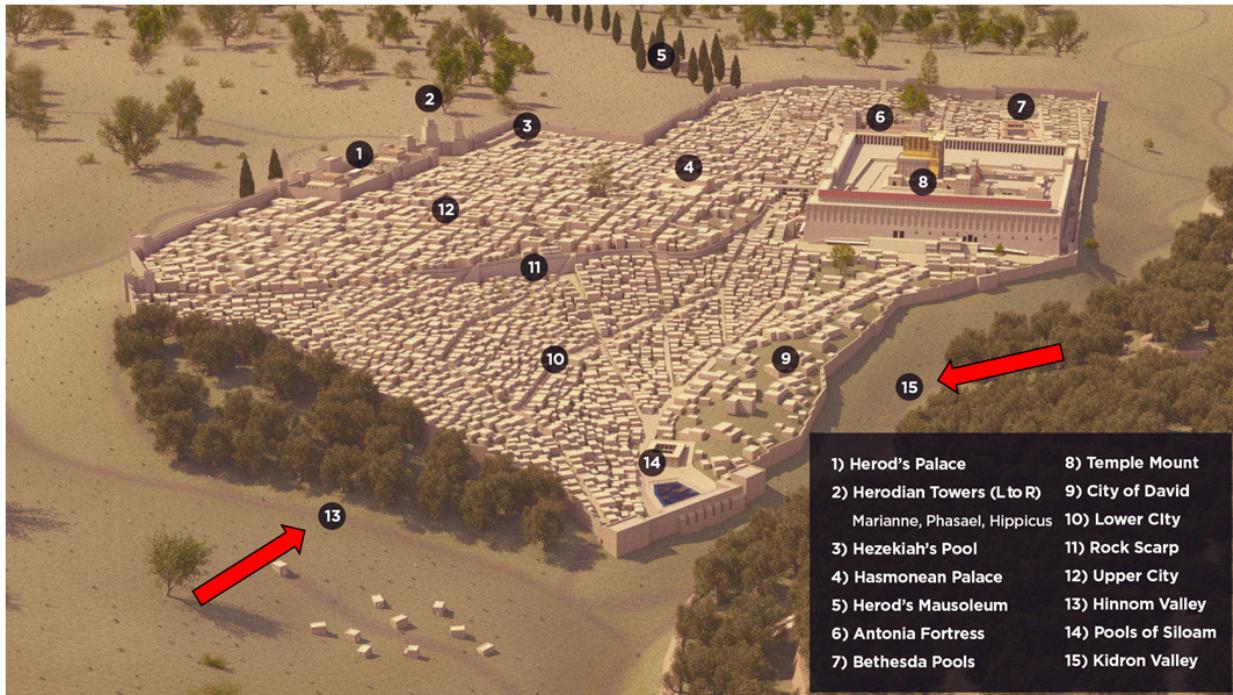
This next slide is interesting:



This is a suspension bridge that spans the Valley of Hinnom. It is not uncommon for people familiar with the Newer Testament to jokingly refer to themselves as dangling over Hell while standing on this bridge. The imagery makes for a good joke; however, the truth is far less humorous.

Becoming familiar with the linguistics of the Bible is informative, but becoming familiar with the geography of the Bible is enlightening. The bridge in the picture

is indeed over the Hinnom Valley, but the location of the actual garbage dump was never in this location. The place referred to as an illustration of Hell was at the intersection of the Kidron Valley and the Hinnom Valley. You may remember that the valleys met on this slide that we showed you earlier. Next slide:



The Hinnom Valley or Gehenna is identified by the #13 on this map and the Kidron Valley is identified by the #15 on this map. In the days of Jeremiah, this was the place where broken pottery was thrown; in Jesus' day, it was the location of the garbage dump—and this is the same area where these two valleys meet! Would you like to see a picture of the area today?

Next slide:



We have not adjusted the contrast of this picture or altered it in any way. What you are seeing on the left is the Mount of Olives where Jesus ascended and where his feet will touch down upon his return. The Mount of Olives is the site of the resurrection of the dead. What you are seeing on the right side of your screen is the Southern end of the Kidron Valley very near its intersection of the Hinnom Valley or Gehenna. This was the site of hellish idolatry, child sacrifice, and an illustration of Hell. (Today it is an Arab Muslim section of Jerusalem... but let's not digress) Our point is that Hell is not a suspension bridge located a considerable distance away from Holy things... Hell is right next to the Site of the Resurrection. A small decision in minor directional changes has a radically different outcome!

Close:

[Play second video here](#)

Every day you stand at the same intersection Jesus described, and the one that Eric described in the video you just saw. On one side is the narrow gate, the hard choice to obey when it costs you, to repent quickly, to forgive, to kill your sin instead of entertaining it, to follow Jesus when the crowd is streaming past you,

going the opposite but easier way. On the other side is the wide gate—the small compromise, the "one-time exception" that just feels easier.

- The narrow path and the wide path are right next to each other. It's a small choice, with a radical outcome.
- Zechariah's tomb and Absalom's monument are a stone's throw away from each other. It's a small choice, with a radical outcome.
- And as you can see in this picture, hell and the resurrection of the dead are right next to each other. It's a small choice, with a radical outcome.

Our end destination is the sum of many small choices—but those small choices have the largest consequences that you can imagine.

What kind of monument are you building?

What you just heard is that small, bad decisions have radical outcomes. However, small but righteous decisions also have radical outcomes!

Deuteronomy 30:11–14 (ESV)

11 “For this commandment that I command you today is not too hard for you, neither is it far off. 12 It is not in heaven that you should say, ‘Who will ascend to heaven for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?’ 13 Neither is it beyond the sea, that you should say, ‘Who will go over the sea for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?’ 14 But the word is very near you. It is in your mouth and in your heart, so that you can do it.

The decisions for righteousness are not too hard for you or too far from you. They are very near to you! The Word of God is in your mouth and in your heart. Now obey it!

Escalation

“But if anyone hates his neighbor and lies in wait for him and attacks him and strikes him fatally so that he dies, and he flees into one of these cities, *Deut. 19:11 ESV*

²¹ “You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.’ ²² But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; *Matt. 5:21-22 ESV*