

A way, truths, and a part of our lives...

I'm quoting something Jesus Christ (Yeshua ha Messiach) said. Most of you, hopefully, will be quick to point out that I'm actually *mis*-quoting Him. What's unfortunate, though, is that most of us who claim to be believers live our lives according to the title above. But isn't that ok? After all, the bible says we have *grace*, and that it's not possible for man to live The Way, and that Christ lived it for us, so as long as we're *sincere* in our *faith* we'll be saved. After all, God knows our heart, right? Just look it up in II Apostasies 3:16. Whoops! Caught again, I hope!

First, let me begin by saying that the following is in no way an endorsement of the organization calling itself "The Way International", or of its doctrines.

I'm sad, actually forlorn and deeply troubled, by the fact that today's *believers* are living the *If you can't beat 'em, join em'* gospel. We have managed through an intense series of trial and error and deep theological study to find and utilize "every excuse in the Book." We have mis-interpreted and out-of-contexted the epistles to the Romans, the Galatians, and of course Ephesians 2:8-9 into today's *gospel of grace* that bears little resemblance to the Gospel of Yeshua ha Messiach. Does that statement bother you? It should. It bothers me as well.

Many of you may be aware that *gospel* means "good news". It's not meant to be a burden, but to "lighten our load". It's God's way, directly from His mouth, delivered personally by His Son, of how to live to please Him, to be at peace with Him. In the composite Words of Yeshua there's no room for mis-interpreting exactly what He wishes. He carefully lays out what we need to do in order to give Him our wills so that He will be free to deliver us from the demonic forces and anti-God doctrines of the world, as well as from our own

sins. He must operate within His Father's own laws and decrees, or He would not be representing the God of Truth.

Israel spent thousands of years finding loopholes in the Law that God had provided to them for their own protection. Over and over they discovered that every time they would step outside of God's Laws they would be stepping out from "under the umbrella" of His protection. He even told them, repeatedly, what His "loopholes" were through His prophets, but, you see, the Jews wanted their *own* loopholes. They wanted control over their own lives, which, by the way, is the ultimate form of idolatry.

The writer of Ecclesiastes, most scholars say Solomon, stated, "There's nothing new under the sun", and, true to this proverb, the church has managed to repeat the mistakes of Israel, examining His Words and finding every space, jot, and tittle, and has filled in the blanks with doctrine that enables us to keep control, or *self*, in our religion. It's in these spaces that we will find the doctrines of men and of demons inserted, although many of the additions were inserted, taught, and followed *sincerely*.

When Yeshua showed this Truth to the Pharisees, and demonstrated that their self-appointed loopholes had allowed the access of demons to their very synagogues, they were quite offended. (By the way, something to keep in mind as I continue, what were these demons doing hanging around in the synagogues, and how is it they had gone unnoticed and/or undealt with? Also, the Jews took great offence when Yeshua indicated to them that they weren't "saved".) In fact, when Yeshua wasn't talking about who He was, or dying to self, or the consequences of *not* dying to self, He was pointing out to the Pharisees that their in-depth knowledge of these loopholes was leading people directly to Hell ("Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves. Matt. 23:15). I know

it's a harsh commentary, but we do the same today with our evangelical efforts, even if we *are* sincere about it. We aren't doing it *His* way, but our own way.

Yeshua said, "I Am...The Way,...The Truth,...and The Life. No one comes to the Father but *by Me*." We all, I think, know this statement and can rattle it off automatically at every apologetic opportunity. But have we thoroughly checked the Scriptures to see what He *meant* when He said it? Unfortunately, and unknowingly for the most part, we have created a plethora of Jesus Christs to apply this saying to. And all but One of them are counterfeits. As evidence, exhibit A is the denominations and exhibit B is the state of today's church, as was foretold by Yeshua, the apostles, and the prophets. A fact we often forget or disregard is that there is only One True Yeshua ha Messiach, and One Faith, One Baptism, One God and Father of all, and that One *Ecclesia* was called to holiness, to sanctification, to *separateness*. Holiness and sanctification mean to be set apart for God, and to be separate or *not of* the world.

Let's examine what He was saying, then, as scripture discloses to us. First we'll look at The Way. In Matthew 7:13-14, Yeshua states the following: "Enter by the narrow gate, for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are *many* who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and *difficult is the way* which leads to *life*, and there are *few* who find it."

Now, let's jump ahead to the recorded history of the guys who traveled around with Him, and ate and slept and prayed with Him, who ran away when things weren't working out as *they* had planned, who saw the miracles and the fulfillment of the entirety of messianic scripture take place before their very eyes. We know them as the apostles, who, *by the way*, are *the foundation* of the church, Yeshua ha Messiach being the chief cornerstone. Along with them, in the beginning, were the 120 or so disciples. (Satire ahead!) They, as we all know, were running around Jerusalem,

Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost (wherever *that* is), telling everybody they could find that they needed to become christians and vote their favorite politician into office so that by imposing their moral will on the heathen they could convert the world and button up God's Kingdom so that it would be all ready when Jesus Christ came back to earth, and we wouldn't have any of that nasty confrontational stuff to deal with because, of course, everyone will be in agreement with us, because God said that anyone who wasn't was going to fry in hell. And when that didn't fly in Eurasia, they all came to America and set up God's land.

Ok. So that's not in the bible. Let's look at what *is* in the bible.

What is it that these extraordinary examples of God's Grace called themselves? Was it the "First Institutional Christ's Church of the Redeemed Saints, Twice Removed"? Was it "Cephas' Way", or "Apollos' First Order of We're Better than You Are?" Was it "Paul's Sunday Go ta' Meetin' Club?" Did they put out signs saying, "We've got *great* worship?" Did they carry around banners saying, "We got the power and you don't, so come join us?" Did they devise a marketing strategy and start printing leaflets with the four basic steps to fire prevention? No. They had one corporate discipline that they *called themselves* and *lived by*.

The discipline that The Ecclesia went by was called, simply, "The Way." The individuals didn't call themselves *christians* (possibly until later), but saints and brethren and disciples and brothers and sisters.

So, Jesus Christ said that He is "The Way". The men and women who knew Him best, and their disciples, called their doctrine and discipline "The Way" (after Pentecost). But didn't Yeshua say, "I Am The Way...no one comes to the Father but *by* Me"? Were they all claiming to be Yeshua, then? Or were they, or Yeshua, lying? After all, they weren't calling themselves "The Way II" or "Another Way".

Let's look at the story of a mean ol' guy named Saul. He was *sincerely* zealous for God. He had, after all, been taught by Gamaliel, the most renowned teacher in Israel, and had earned his Phd. in Phariseism under the brilliant theological scholar. And thus equipped, he had set out to do battle against the enemies of God, the cult of demon-possessed fanatics who followed, and dared to live, the teachings of a false Messiah known as Yeshua ben Yosef. The authorities had taken care of the Head, so they believed, but somehow the Body lived on. So Saul's job was to chop up the Body. The Body of Yeshua. The Way.

Now, the Pharisees were the respected religious leaders of their day. They set the example of how to live, and they supported like-minded people in political positions to make sure that everyone followed that example or were called to account (stoned, crucified, etc.) if they didn't. They decided what the best way was to appease God for any sin committed, which just happened to fit in nicely with their "administrative costs". You know, kinda like many churches today. And this cult called The Way was like a bunch of nasty mosquitoes that wouldn't go away. They made "the institutional church" (Judaism) look bad. So the religious rulers sent Saul out to get the *christians*. No, wait! I'm sorry. It's The Way, isn't it?

If you'll read Acts 9:1-2 then read Acts 8:1, you'll see that The Way was also The Ecclesia. In those three verses, "true believers" or followers of Yeshua *and His teachings* are called The Way, the Ecclesia, and the disciples. And in his conversation with The Lord in Acts 9:13-14, Ananias refers to them as "Your saints" and "all who call on Your Name". (So I guess if you say, "I'm no saint", that pretty much counts you out of persecution and identification with the Ecclesia or Yeshua!)

Now, after Yeshua appeared to Saul and had a little chat with him on the road to Damascus, and Saul began going by *Paul*, then Paul, who had previously been quite popular amongst his peers,

got his shot at being identified with the Lord and was therefore persecuted. Now, what's interesting, is that when Paul gets hauled before Felix on trumped-up charges (made by his once-friends, the Pharisees), he makes this confession to the puppet-governor. He says, "But this I confess to you, that according to *the Way* (which they call heresy), so I worship the God of my fathers, believing all things that are *written in the Law and in the Prophets.*" So, Paul worships according to The (prophesied) Way.

For time's sake, let me add that in other places, it's referred to as *the Way of salvation, the Way of the Lord, the Way of peace, the good Way, the straight Way, the Way of righteousness, and a new and living Way*, among others.

Now, since Felix was greedy and a coward, Paul then got brought before the regent-King Agrippa to make his defense. After hearing Paul's testimony, King Agrippa makes an interesting comment. First, Paul tells him, "I know that you do *believe*", then Agrippa says, "You *almost* persuade me to become a *Christian.*" Hmmm.

You see, the term *christian* (it seems) was originally used as a derogatory term by the Romans. Also, you'll notice he said *almost*. Also, you'll notice, and quite importantly, both Paul and Agrippa were quite aware that *believing* wasn't enough. And Agrippa had no intention of abandoning his prestigious position to follow the *Way*.

Now allow me to pull one or two of *many* examples from the Scriptures that The Way, and Yeshua's walk as The Way, was prophesied ahead of time by, of course, the prophets. In Genesis 28:20-22, the Holy Spirit says: "Then Jacob made a vow, saying, "If God will be with me, and keep me in this way that I am going, *and give me bread to eat and clothing to put on* (repeated by Yeshua, 'Take no thought for tomorrow...' and by Paul, "food to eat and clothes to put on"), so that I come back to my *father's house in peace*, then the Lord shall be my God. And this *stone* which I

have set as a *pillar* shall be *God's house*,...). The Psalms are filled with the Way: "Righteousness will go before Him, and shall make His footsteps our pathway," and, "Teach me Your way, O Lord, I will walk in Your truth," and one more, "Good and upright is the Lord; therefore He teaches sinners in the way. The humble He guides in justice, and the humble (unselfish) He teaches His way." Another one that blew my mind was Jeremiah 6:16-19, which is *very* prophetic about today's church, in that it needs to return to The Way.

I believe I've made the point, by repeating what the Word has to say, that The Way Yeshua referred to and the Way that the Saints called themselves by was one in the same *Way*. My next question is this: how did they *live* it?

Well, for one, they lived in *one accord*. If you want an example of what this means, just look around you at today's "religious establishments" that call themselves *denominations*, and then do the opposite. I know that's a harsh statement, but it's true, is it not? How can we say that all the separate denominations are of one accord? (I Cor. 1:12-13)

Let's take a look at the *Apostles' doctrine*, the Way to Live Life as taught by those guys who walked, talked, ate, drank, and slept with Yeshua for three some-odd years, and then considered it joy to be persecuted and killed rather than change the Way they chose to live. Acts 2:38-47: "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Yeshua ha Messiach for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you, and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call. And with many other words he *testified* and *exhorted* them, saying, 'Be saved from this perverse generation.' Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them."

Allow me to share something. I get a bad taste in my mouth whenever conjecture is used, either by me or by anyone else. Why? Satan *loves* “truths”. Truths are his playground. Truths allow him to twist and insert and influence and mislead people. So let me state, **strongly**, that the following paragraph is my *observation*.

When I look at “and with many other words he testified and exhorted them,” I can’t help but believe that at this point he *testified* about what he had seen and heard while walking through the land with Yeshua, and that he *exhorted* them to count the cost, as Yeshua had said, and to live the life, *The Way*, as instructed by Yeshua. Ok. That’s my opinion. It doesn’t say what he said in the passage, but (in my mind) what else could he have been testifying about, except the Gospel of Yeshua ha Messiach? And what else could he have been exhorting them to do “with many other words” besides praying the sinner’s prayer and being baptized? “...Teaching them to do “whatsoever I have told you”? End of conjecture. Let’s move on. (P.s. Good guideline: if it can’t be proven in the full context of the Word of God, it’s conjecture. For example, scripture doesn’t record Peter’s additional statements anywhere.)

“And they *continued steadfastly* in the *apostles’ doctrine* and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. *Then fear* came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. *Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need.*”

(Kinda kills the “I don’t feel led” thing, doesn’t it?)

“So continuing *daily with one accord* in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And *the Lord added to the church daily those who were being (future tense) saved.*”

“Well, that’s all good and true and everything, but it’s just not practical today. And there’s no perfect church. Besides, we’re saved by faith, not works!” (Typical ‘christian’ response.)

It wasn’t “practical” for them either, but how else was everyone else going to tell them apart? They didn’t have cars to put fishes on in those days. And T-shirts hadn’t been invented yet, either.

Also, Paul tells us, “I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, but declared first to those in Damascus and in Jerusalem, and throughout all the region of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent, turn to God, and *do works* befitting repentance.”

“Wait a minute. *Paul* used the ‘*w*’ word!?”

“B...b...but he said we didn’t *have* to do any works! He said it was free! He said it was by grace, I don’t care what that James guy says!”

But, don’t you see, right there in Acts 26:20, that he told *all* those different people that good works were involved? And, by the way, if you’ll read the verse (vs. 10) right after that “grace, faith, and not works” verse in Ephesians 2:8-9, you’ll see he tells you there’s work expected of you. In addition to what that “James guy” says. By the way, “that James guy” just happened to be the stepbrother of Jesus, and maybe the head of the church in Jerusalem. It seems that the “faith/works” issue had arisen somewhere, and James clarified the issue. But what good works did he and Paul mean? Going to church on Sunday? Being on the worship team? “Giving your stuff to God” in the “spiritual” sense, without really giving it up? Tithing? Let’s go back to Acts 2:42-45.

They:

- Continued steadfastly (continuously in an ongoing manner) in the apostles' doctrine (teaching) and fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayers
- Feared God
- Who did signs and wonders through the apostles (more on this in another chapter, the Good Lord willing!)
- Were together and had all things in common
- Sold their possessions and goods (check out Proverbs 3:9-10!)
- Divided them among all, as anyone had need
- Continued daily with *one accord* in the temple, *and* breaking bread from house to house
- They ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart
- Praising God and having favor with all the people

No wonder the Pharisees didn't like them! They were stealing their show!

Now please bear with me as I point out once again, if the apostles didn't know what Yeshua required and expected, then who did? And how is it that God put His seal of approval (grace, the manifestation of the Holy Spirit) on what they were doing?

If you'll go to Amos 5:21-24, you'll see that God didn't much care for their tithes and sacrifices and feast days and songs and all that stuff, because He *also* wanted them to deny themselves and take care of each other. John even calls this the one commandment!

I asked a trick question at a house church I visited the other night. I said, "You guys want to worship God in your way, don't you?" They nodded their heads in the affirmative, as I rather sneakily led them to do, and then I told them, "God doesn't require that we worship Him the way we want to. He requires that we worship

Him *the way* He's told us to." Yeshua said that those who love Him are those who hear His Words and *do* them.

I began this chapter with Yeshua's statement about "the Way, the Truth, and the Life." The first subject I approached was The Way. The second subject I just approached was The Life. In the apostles' doctrine, they were living The Life. They lived the Kingdom Life the only way they could while still physically residing on earth. They took their vows, their covenant of belief, seriously. They knew the cost, and they gladly paid it. And the Holy Spirit responded.

So we've seen the Way and the Life. Now for The Truth.

Satan's favorite tool, his favorite weapon, his "fiery darts" of choice, is truths. Truths are his counterfeit to the Word of God. He uses them to appeal to our lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and pride of life. He used them on Eve in the Garden. He used them on Yeshua in the wilderness. He used them on the Pharisees. And he uses them, quite successfully, on us. Our only counter-weapon? "And they overcame him by the Blood of the lamb, the word of *their* testimony, and *they loved not their lives unto the death.*"

The Lord tells us that "My people die for lack of knowledge." The Word also says, "For this reason I will send them strong delusion that they *should* believe the Lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness."

In the Old Testament, called *the scriptures* in the New Testament, God equates "storing up stuff," and not taking care of the needs of the afflicted, with unrighteousness. It's "the wicked" who "store up for a rainy day". Yeshua said, "Take no thought for tomorrow, what you'll wear and what you'll eat." God knows what we'll need tomorrow. But because of our lack of faith, our disobedience, our *unrighteousness*, we store up, buy more stuff for our (God's?) house, save up for our kid's college so they can advance in "the

world”, we “don’t feel led”, we do all the things He said not to do. “But we’re under grace. My pastor told me!”

I hate to tell you this, but on that Day when an answer will be required, “but my pastor told me” won’t be adequate. We have more access to the Word of God than at any other time in history, with the exception of the access the apostles had to Yeshua. We have an individual, personal responsibility to search for the Truth “as if for silver and gold” (Proverbs 2:1-9). It’s up to us individually and personally to “hunger and thirst” for righteousness. We can say, “But nobody else is doing it!” and He’ll answer, “Then you should have brought it to their attention.” There are no excuses! Yeshua came and told us! Wake up!

Many truths are being taught from the pulpits of our “churches.” If we truly knew the Truth, we wouldn’t be sitting in a church, listening to a *pulpit*. We’d be diligently searching for what else we can give up as “loss.” We’d be living the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

We’d be “putting on Yeshua ha Messiach.”

My friend, who often serves me as devil’s advocate, asked me the logical question. “So what would you have me do? Sell my car, and quit my job?” Another friend said, “Well, I’m not going to sell my house!” Someone might say, “I guess you expect us all to go out and quit our jobs, and sell our houses, and leave our wives and kids, and get some sackcloth and a repent sign!” Well, actually, much of that *would* be according to the Word, but the responses are out of context with what the Word is telling us to do. Quit our jobs? Possibly, if our jobs are a stumbling block; we may need to change our professions. Leave our wives and kids? The Word says that they may leave us. Sell our houses? What does the Word say? This all is not my *opinion*.

Many people assume that I’m condemning them, and then they make excuses as to why the *answers from God’s Word* don’t apply

to them. Many times I can see why Yeshua was so frustrated with His “chosen peoples” unbelief and lack of faith. They didn’t want the truth, so they assaulted His character, assaulted *Him*, made excuses, and wove deceptive truths into questions to try to get Him to stumble. But they couldn’t stumble the living Word. The fulfilled Scriptures can’t be broken.

I’m going to make some suggestions, in the chapter entitled, “Living the Life By Dying The Death,” on how to live this Gospel of Yeshua in a Scriptural manner in today’s world. It may make some uncomfortable. My hope is to help the reader to see that we’ve been lulled by the enemy and the world into a false sense of holiness and salvation as prophesied in the Word. However, before that chapter I’m going to give everyone some Scriptural background describing what Paul meant when he made the comment, “But this I confess to you, that *according to the Way*, which they call a sect, *so I worship the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written **in the law and the prophets.***” Notice that Paul doesn’t mention *the Gospel* or *Yeshua* in particular here; Paul knew very well that the Gospel and Yeshua (the Good Way and Yeshua ha Mashiach) had been proclaimed before Yeshua came. I’d like to show you exactly how he knew that.

In the following chapters, beginning with “On the Way,” I’ll show you in the Law, the Kings, the Prophets, in Jesus’ Life and the Lives of the Saints, exactly what the Law and the Prophets meant by The Way, and what Jesus meant when He said He is the Way, and that we’re to follow Him in it.