

I Am The Way

"I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."
—**John 14:6**

WHEN JESUS MADE THE statement recorded in our key scripture, he implied that his disciples should follow him in a way that would separate them from the general course of the world. This distinction was further made by our Lord in Matthew 7:13,14, when he said, "Broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat" (the entire world of mankind). He continued, however, saying, "Narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."

In this phrase 'I am the way,' Jesus was speaking about a way that began to be prepared at Jordan and was finished on the cross. The Apostle Paul in Hebrews 10:20 identified it as a "new and living way, . . . consecrated for us" through the blood of Jesus, and we sometimes speak of it as 'the way of the cross.' This is the only way available that leads to life, and there is no other way to come unto the Father except by the way of the cross of Christ.

NARROW WAY ESTABLISHED

While it is true that the Jews had an accommodation for a period of time to approach God through

the Mosaic Law, nevertheless that arrangement did not lead to life because they could not meet the conditions and requirements of that Law. In fact, when Jesus opened up the 'new and living way' to them they, as a nation, rejected him. Only a few believed and became sons of God and entered upon this way at Pentecost. (John 1:11,12) A few years later the Lord turned to the Gentiles to take out of them a "people for his name." (Acts 15:14) Today, as we near the end of the Gospel Age, in the closing days of the harvest, this same new and living way is still open. Many have been found joyously traveling this way and can testify to the great blessings, spiritual satisfaction, and peace of mind that has come as a result. How blessed indeed has been the lot of these, and we rejoice that this way is still open for others to enter upon.

The expression 'the way' is interesting to notice. Early Christians were called those of 'the way.' The Greek word translated 'the way' in our text means a road, implying progress in a journey toward a specific destination. How fitting this thought is to those who are following in the footsteps of the Master.

The early followers of the Master were not called Christians until after the time of Paul's conversion. In Acts 11:26, we are told that they were first called Christians at Antioch. Notice that they were not called "Bible Students" at that time, because they did not have the Bible as we have it today. The epistles and records of the New Testament gospel were mostly written well along in the ministry of the apostles, and most of the churches were established long before they had the benefit of the various letters that were sent to them. Even in this

there was very little chance for individual study of these letters as there were few copies, and they were read to the churches. No doubt many of the brethren then took notes, those that could write, as we often do today, so they could study these important truths later.

The Early Church depended largely upon the books of “the law and the prophets” (Acts 13:15)—the Old Testament—and there were likely very few copies available even of these. As a result, the doctrinal and spiritual instruction of the brethren then came largely through the oral teachings of the apostles, and the teachers they ordained in all the churches.

THE WAY OF LIGHT AND TRUTH

Prior to the conversion of Saul of Tarsus, the disciples were referred to by others as those of ‘the way.’ In Acts 9:2, Saul used this expression when he sought to bring bound to Jerusalem any that he found of “this way.” The *Marginal Translation* says “the way.” Jesus used this expression many times himself. One reference is in Mark 10:52, when Jesus restored the sight of a blind man, and it says “immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way.” This has been the experience of each one of the Lord’s footstep followers. We are reminded of the hymn that says, “Once I was blind, but now I can see; the Light of the world is Jesus.” What a blessed day it was in our lives when the Lord took away our blindness and we began walking in the light of Jesus in the way.

This way is the way of Truth. In Psalm 119, we have a beautiful testimonial of David that expresses

the heart sentiment of all those who are walking in the way. Notice how the expression ‘the way’ is used in these verses. “Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the LORD. . . . I have chosen the way of truth: thy judgments have I laid before me. I have stuck unto thy testimonies: O LORD, put me not to shame. I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart. Teach me, O LORD, the way of thy statutes; and I shall keep it unto the end.” (Ps. 119:1,30-33) This is the spirit of our consecration, and means that we must not only know the Truth, but also be “doers of the word” (James 1:22), keeping the statutes of the Lord even unto the end of the way.

THE HOPE OF THIS WAY

When Jesus said “I am the way,” he simply meant that the High Calling of God could be attained only by following in the way that our Master first trod—in his footsteps. This phrase describes a difficult way, a rugged and narrow way, which leads to life—immortal life—in the heavenly kingdom. This way also leads to the wonderful opportunity to share with our glorified Master in administering the earthly phase of his kingdom, in uplifting and blessing all the families of the earth.—Gen. 22:18

Thus, these two incentives are always before us in this way—the hope of the Divine nature, being made like our Lord and seeing him as he is, and the work of blessing all the families of the earth. This is what the Apostle Paul spoke of in the 6th chapter of Hebrews, verse 19, when he said, “Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within

the veil.” In the typical Tabernacle, what was within the vail that represented our hopes? It was the contents of the Ark of the Covenant—the Golden Pot of Manna, immortality; Aaron’s Rod, Divine authority; and the tables of the Law, the New Covenant.

LESSONS FROM ELIJAH AND ELISHA

Our hopes embrace both the heavenly and earthly phases of the kingdom. These two aspects of our calling were illustrated in one of the experiences of Elijah and Elisha, recorded in II Kings 2:1-8. “It came to pass, when the LORD would take up Elijah into heaven by a whirlwind, that Elijah went with Elisha from Gilgal. And Elijah said unto Elisha, Tarry here, I pray thee; for the LORD hath sent me to Bethel. And Elisha said unto him, As the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. So they went down to Bethel. And the sons of the prophets that were at Bethel came forth to Elisha, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the LORD will take away thy master from thy head to day? And he said, Yea, I know it; hold ye your peace. And Elijah said unto him, Elisha, tarry here, I pray thee; for the LORD hath sent me to Jericho. And he said, As the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. So they came to Jericho. And the sons of the prophets that were at Jericho came to Elisha, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the LORD will take away thy master from thy head to day? And he answered, Yea, I know it; hold ye your peace. And Elijah said unto him, Tarry, I pray thee, here; for the LORD hath sent me to Jordan. And he said, As the LORD liveth, and as thy soul

liveth, I will not leave thee. And they two went on. And fifty men of the sons of the prophets went, and stood to view afar off: and they two stood by Jordan. And Elijah took his mantle, and wrapped it together, and smote the waters, and they were divided hither and thither, so that they two went over on dry ground.”

In these events, Elijah represents our Lord Jesus, and Elisha the church, and we have provided a fundamental lesson regarding our calling of God. Here we see Elijah being sent by the Lord to Bethel, Jericho, and to the Jordan, just prior to his being caught up with a chariot of fire and a whirlwind. The meaning of Bethel is ‘the house of God,’ and surely our Lord Jesus had a great desire and hope to be with his Father in his heavenly kingdom. This prospect was one of the great joys set before him that made it possible for him to endure the cross. Elijah was then sent to Jericho. (vs. 4) In the Bible, Jericho pictures the world of mankind. Surely another of the great joys set before our Lord was the prospect of going unto the world as the seed of promise, to eventually bless all the families of the earth.

For these two hopes to be realized, concerning both the heavenly and the earthly phases of the kingdom, Jesus had to also go to the Jordan. (vs. 6) The Scriptures clearly show that the salty and poisonous waters of the lower Jordan, below Galilee, toward the Dead Sea, represent the curse upon mankind who are all represented as being in the Dead Sea condition—dead in Adam. When Jesus came to the Jordan and was baptized of John, he was picturing the fact that three-and-one-half years later

on the cross he would provide a means, through the merit of his blood, of ‘smiting the Jordan’—smiting the curse and rolling it back from off the faces of all people. In this picture, Elijah’s mantle was used to do the smiting. According to the *Revised Standard Version* (II Kings 1:8) his mantle was of haircloth, either of the sheep or the goats, and would seem to represent the merit of Christ’s sacrifice being applied first on behalf of the church at the beginning of the Gospel Age, the church being pictured by Elisha in this instance.

There was another smiting recorded later in the second chapter (vs. 14), using the same mantle. Elisha there seems to represent the Christ, glorified, as the second sprinkling of the merit occurs on behalf of the Jericho class, the world of mankind. We remember how Elisha, after smiting the Jordan, crossed over and purified the waters of Jericho, and in verse 21, we read, “I have healed these waters; there shall not be from thence any more death or barren land.” This is a beautiful kingdom picture!

CONSIDER CAREFULLY THE WAY

Let’s consider, however, the purpose of our reference to the first 8 verses of this chapter. Concerning each of these 3 places, Elijah said to Elisha, ‘tarry here, . . . for the Lord hath sent me to Bethel,’ Jericho, etc. Our first impression might be that Elijah did not want Elisha to go with him when he said, tarry here. This was not the case at all. The Hebrew word translated tarry here means to ‘sit down’ and ponder, to consider carefully whether you want to go with me or not. Elijah knew how

rugged was the way, the narrow winding trail through the wilderness and the dangers that were at every hand, and so he wanted Elisha to make up his own mind without any coercion on his part. In each instance, Elisha said to Elijah, 'I will not leave thee.' Think of the joy that came to Elijah when Elisha responded so enthusiastically.

Similarly, our hopes are the same as our Master. We are called to be joint-heirs with him in the Father's kingdom. We want to go to Bethel, to be with our Lord and see him as he is. We want also to go to Jericho, and realize the great joy of dispensing the blessings to mankind—wiping the tears from off all faces, and magnifying the name of our God in all the earth. These hopes will be realized if we are willing also to go with him to the Jordan in consecration, and there, through faith in the precious blood of Christ, be lifted up out of the condemnation in Adam, to newness of life in Christ.

This is a very important consideration and the Lord wants us to 'sit down' and count the cost also. He wants us to give careful thought to the matter of following in his footsteps. The decision must be wholly ours. Surely it brought great joy to our Heavenly Father and our Lord and Master when we, after considering the ruggedness of the way, the dangers unknown, and the sacrificing required, made our decision, enthusiastically, and said to our blessed Master, "I will not leave thee."

THE LORD IS WITH US IN THE WAY

Now, we are traveling on this lonely and narrow way through the wilderness of this present evil world, toward these wonderful hopes set before us.

Our Master is with us, for he has promised, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” (Heb. 13:5) Yes, he has hold of us by his own right hand, and is showing us the way, day by day, and we hear him speaking to us through his Word, saying, “This is the way, walk ye in it.”—Isa. 30:21

‘This is the way’—here we have those words again. For many of the Lord’s dear people it is indeed a lonely way, according to the flesh. We have no real fellowship with the world. Many of the Lord’s people are scattered, being isolated and having few opportunities for fellowship with others of ‘like precious faith.’ Let us remember, though, that we are never really alone. The Lord is with us constantly, and the light of his countenance is shining upon us, illuminating our pathway, no matter how isolated or alone we may be. We must allow that light to shine out in our lives that we might be a blessing and a righteous influence and example to those about us. If we are faithfully serving God, even if it be just in our own little corner, we will not have time to be lonely to the point of discouragement. We know this is true, having witnessed it in so many faithful followers of Christ from the past.

AN EXAMPLE OF FAITHFULNESS

One such example took place many years ago. There was an elderly sister in Christ who had been confined to a nursing home for many years. She was in constant pain, almost entirely deaf, and otherwise in very poor health. Brethren kept in close contact with her through correspondence, as she was very isolated, and could be visited only occasionally by those able to travel a great distance. Writing was

very difficult for her and painful, but the letters she did write were a beautiful expression of a consecrated child of God. On one particular occasion, some had an opportunity to stop and visit her, receiving a very great blessing as a result. The account of their visit was as follows: "When we entered the nursing home—and she did not know we were coming—we inquired where her room was, and were directed into this one wing of the rather large home. All of the bedrooms went off from one large sitting room where the patients congregated, watched television, read magazines, etc. At one end of this room, we found this dear sister, with her own special chair and a table beside it with her Bible, the volumes, and many small Truth booklets spread out, and she spent her time witnessing to and reading to anyone who would listen. When she had witnessed to everyone in that wing, she would ask to be transferred to another area where she would have others to witness to."

What a glorious example! Yes, she was alone, but she was not discouraged, because she was busy serving, praising and glorifying God. Jesus, too, had similar experiences. In Gethsemane, how glad he would have been if just one of his disciples had stayed with him, but they all fell asleep. Let us determine that we, as our Lord's disciples, are not going to 'fall asleep' on our brethren. There are those who especially need our fellowship and encouragement, and the Lord will bless such for their faithfulness in this.

MANY ASPECTS OF THIS WAY

Jesus said, 'I am the way.' It is a way of loneliness at times. It is a way of peace. It is a way of

great exultation and joy. It is also a way of sacrifice. It is a way of patience and longsuffering. It is a way of devotion and service to our God. There is no higher aspiration than to serve God, who is proving us in little ways this side of the veil. It is a way of humility, because this great treasure that we have is still in this earthen vessel. "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body."—II Cor. 4:7-10

We must see and understand the great responsibility we have toward our brethren, all of those similarly striving to serve the Lord. If we lay down our lives for our brethren, the Lord accepts it as being done unto him. If we neglect or criticize our brethren, speak evil of them, or cause divisions among them, the Lord accepts that also as being done unto him. We must think very seriously about this, and use our influence to heal any wound that might have occurred in the body of Christ. "Lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed." (Heb. 12:12,13) The flesh will use every opportunity to assert itself in our lives, but we must keep it under and allow our relationship to the Lord and to our brethren to be controlled by the higher standard of the New Creature.

The Christian way is a difficult and narrow way. Jesus said, 'narrow is the way' and few there be that find it. The Lord's truly consecrated followers have found it, but if we try to make this way too broad we will lose it. The terms and conditions of this narrow way were predetermined before we entered—we cannot adjust them to suit ourselves. Paul gives us these words concerning the way we have chosen. "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified."—Rom. 8:28-30 ■