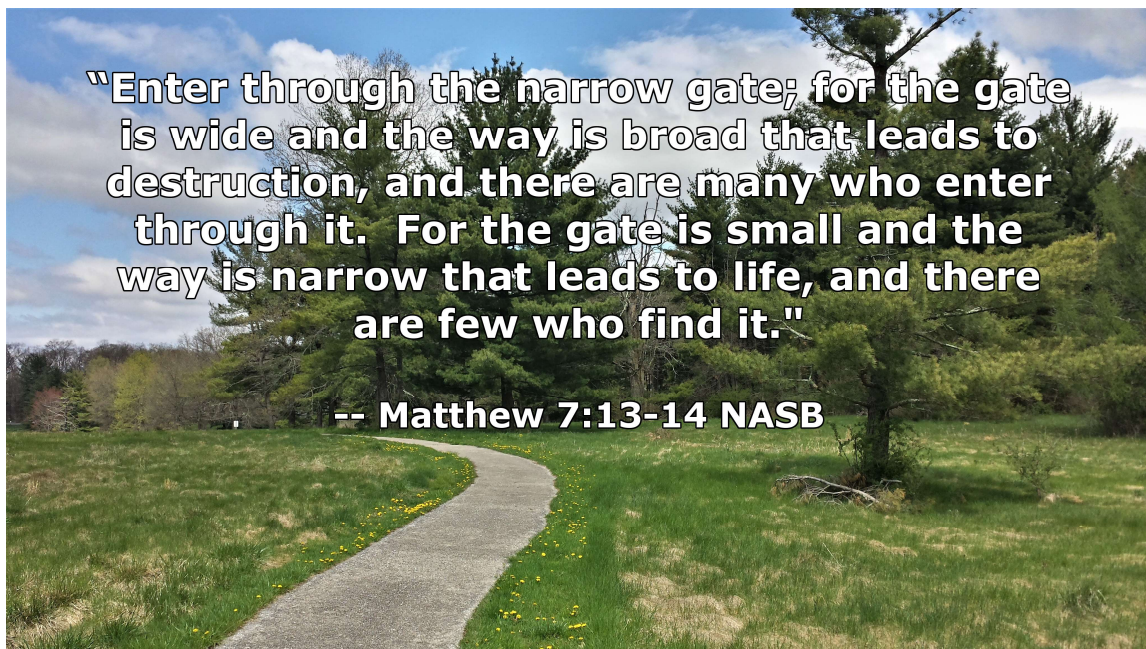


What Does “The Way” Mean in the New Testament?

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Gettysburg National Military Park Path with Matthew 7:13-14

- Photo by Whitney V. Myers

“Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it” (Matthew 7:13-14).

This article is the fourth in a series on the topic, "About the Way."

Consider. In the Old Testament, the scriptures describe God’s way as keeping God’s commandments (Deuteronomy 5:33, Deuteronomy 5:1-21, Deuteronomy 8:6, Psalm 119:1-3).

The New Testament builds upon the description of God's Way in the Old Testament. In the New Testament, the main Greek word for "way" is *hodos* (Ref. 1). The following paragraphs describe the meaning of "way" (*hodos*) in the New Testament.

A "way" is a traveled road (Matthew 2:12, Acts 8:26, Acts 26:13). In Matthew 7:13-14 Jesus taught a challenging truth. The way [*road*] that leads to *life* is narrow, and there are few who find it. The Greek word for *life* in this verse is *zoe*, which means *the blessing of real life after the resurrection* (John 11:25, Ref. 2).

A "way" is a journey. In Acts 8:39, the Ethiopian eunuch went on his way rejoicing after Philip led him to believe in Jesus Christ as the Son of God (Acts 8:30-37).

A "way" is a manner of thinking, feeling, or deciding. Acts 18:24-25 describes the teaching and speaking ministry of Apollos, who was instructed in the way of the Lord, though he knew only the baptism of John. Acts 18:26 tells us, "He began to speak boldly in the synagogue, but when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him *the way of God* more accurately." (italics added)

In Acts 16:16-18, Paul and Silas were near Philippi when they encountered a slave girl who had a spirit of divination. Acts 16:17 tells us the slave girl's remarkable statement. "She followed Paul and us, crying out, 'These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to you *the way of salvation*.'" (italics added)

The name for Christianity in the early church. Many believers today may not know that in the Book of Acts "The Way" was the most widely known name for the early Christian church. The first use in Acts of the name, "The Way," occurs in Acts 9:1-2. "Now Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest, and asked for letters from him to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, both men and women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem."

Acts 19:8-9 describes how the Apostle Paul in Ephesus moved the disciples to another location when "hardened and disobedient" people spoke evil about the Way. Acts 19:23 says "About that time there occurred no small disturbance concerning the Way." The disturbance about the Way led to the near-riot in Ephesus described in Acts 19:23-41.

Later, when Paul was brought under Roman custody to Caesarea, he testified before Felix, the governor. When Paul was given the opportunity to speak at the hearing, he said, "This I admit to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect I do serve the God of our fathers, believing everything that is in accordance with the Law and that is written in the Prophets" (Acts 24:14).

In comparison to "The Way," which is mentioned several times in Acts, the term, "Christian," is mentioned only three times in the entire New Testament (Acts 11:26, Acts 26:28, 1 Peter 4:16).

Apply. Are you living on the narrow path that leads to real life beyond the resurrection? Do you trust in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior?

Related Lessons

"The Way of the Lord (Old Testament)" -- Deuteronomy 5:33

"Jesus is the Way to the Father" -- John 14:6

References

1. <http://biblehub.com/greek/3598.htm>
2. <http://biblehub.com/greek/2222.htm>