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Beverly E.C.C., Chicago, IL

“THE WAY, THE TRUTH, THE LIFE”
John 14:1-7

**There is a way that appears to be right,
but in the end it leads to death.** (Proverbs
14:12)

{Stevenson} Actually, the original Hebrew is more emphatic than that. **“There is *indeed*,”** there is *absolutely*, there is *irrefutably* **“a way that appears to be right” – “but in the end it leads to death.”**

To make certain we do not miss this vital admonition, Solomon repeats it verbatim in Proverbs 16:25:

**There is a way that appears to be right,
but in the end it leads to death.**

☠ This is a warning against choices that kill the soul.

We are surrounded by zombies. Have we not seen frantic busyness, crass materialism, and coarse sensuality turn people into the walking dead, figuratively speaking?

☠ This is a warning against choices that kill the body.

The LORD instilled in humans a robust, deep-seated survival instinct. But how many kill themselves with food, alcohol, and drugs? How many perpetuate cycles of deadly violence? How many commit suicide?

☠ This is a warning against choices that kill the spirit.

{Eccl 3:11; Ro 6:23} The Creator has **“set eternity in the human heart.”** Yet how many forego God’s free **“gift of”**

eternal life in Christ Jesus” by giving themselves over to **“sin,” “the wages of [which] is death”** in hell?
“There is a way that *appears to be right*.”

It would be difficult to overstate the persuasive power of false appearances. Frequently these ways appear to be beneficial, expedient, or necessary.

{Ge 3:6, NLT} Eve and Adam did not eat the forbidden fruit *in order to* experience guilt, shame, fear, alienation, frustration, pain, and mortality. They were convinced that doing so would *make them “wise.”*

Disobedience *seemed* like the best option.

“But in the end it [led] to death.”

Moses did not murder an Egyptian *with the goal of* leaving everything behind, fleeing into the desert, and tending sheep for 40 years. It *felt like the right thing to do* when the man brutalized a Hebrew slave.

Violence *looked* like justice. **“But in the end it [led] to death.”**

I did not embark on a lifestyle of moralistic legalism so *as to* alienate myself from God, estrange myself from others, and teeter on the brink of suicide. I believed I would *earn God’s approval* by those means.

Religiosity gave the *impression* it was effective.

“But in the end it [led] to death.”

**There is a way that appears to be right,
but in the end it leads to death.**

{Mt 7:13} Not only *one way*: there are *many* paths that destroy the soul and/or the body and/or the spirit.

“For wide is the gate and broad is the road that

leads to destruction... But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life.”

? What road are we on? Does it lead to life?

? Starting down the right road is one thing; remaining on it is another. Are we continuing to walk in the way of life, or have we turned aside?

▣ Please turn with me to John 14:1-7.

The disciples are distressed. To say the evening has been disturbing would be an understatement.

{Jn 13:1-12; Mt 20:28} The Master kicked things off by washing their feet. By itself, that is not so surprising: about a week ago he said, “[I] **did not come to be served, but to serve.**” Yet the washing had an air of finality to it.

{Jn 13:21} Then they ate the Passover feast. During the meal the Lord announced, in a troubled tone, “**One of you is going to betray me.**”

{Mt 26:26} A few minutes later he took bread, prayed the blessing, broke the loaf, and said “**Take and eat; this is my body.**” They all ate of it.

{Mt 26:27-28} He also took the cup, gave thanks to his Father and said, “**This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.**” And they all drank from it, except Judas Iscariot who had gone out into the night.

{Jn 13:33} Next Jesus told them, “**I will be with you only a little longer. You will look for me, [but] ... where I am going, you cannot come.**”

{Mt 26:31} And just a moment ago the Lord foretold, “**This very night you will all fall away on account of me, for it is written: ‘I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep... will be scattered.’**”

{Mt 26:33} Peter was quick to protest, “**Even if all [of them] fall away on account of you, I never will.**”

{Jn 13:38} But the Master corrected him: “**Very truly I tell you, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times!**”

What is more, these tidings of separation, betrayal, desertion, and denial closely follow a series of disquieting events.

{Mt 16:21-23; 17:22-23; 20:17-19} Over the last weeks Messiah has predicted three times that “**he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things...and that he must be killed.**”

{Lk 11:14-23; 11:53-54; Jn 8:58-59} His enemies are more strident and frenzied than ever. They have accused him of casting out demons by the power of the devil, “[besieged] **him with questions**” to trip him up, tried to stone him to death for saying, “**before Abraham was born, I am!**” Their tactics have escalated from debate to rumor-mongering to verbal assault to homicidal conspiracy.

{Jn 11:16} That they are plotting murder is no longer a secret. It is so obvious that last week, when Jesus decided to go to Bethany (which is no more than a hop, a skip, and a jump from Jerusalem), Thomas told the others: “**Let us also go, that we may die with him.**”

Until recently the Twelve had been positive that they were on the right road. Messiah was going to defeat Rome, restore the Davidic monarchy, reform the Temple establishment, and purify the nation.

It would be the Golden Age all over again, only far better. YHWH would bless Israel with unsurpassed peace, prosperity, power, and prestige.

{Is 65:19-20} There would be a profusion of life for God's people! In the words of Isaiah,

**“the sound of weeping and crying
will be heard no more.
“Never again will there be in [Jerusalem]
infants who live but a few days,
or older people who do not live out their
years;
those who die at a hundred
will be thought mere youths;
those who fail to reach a hundred
will be considered accursed.”**

This is what they have hoped for, but now their survival is in doubt. Is Jesus leading them to death?

❖ In John 14:6 the Savior speaks into their distress, declaring **“I am the way”** (the ὁδός [hodós]), **“and the truth and the life.”**

■ **“Do not let your hearts be troubled”** (verse 1), **“I am the ὁδός and the truth and the life.”**

■ **“Trust in God; trust also in me”** (verse 1), **“I am the ὁδός and the truth and the life.”**

■ **“My Father's house has plenty of room ... I am going there to prepare a place for you”** (verse 2), **“I am the ὁδός and the truth and the life.”**

■ And, **“I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am”** (verse 3), **“I am the ὁδός and the truth and the life.”**

{Mt 16:24} Nevertheless, the Apostles' fears are not entirely unfounded. Jesus himself has cautioned, **“Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.”**

“There is a way that appears to be right, but in the end it leads to death.” The Jesus Way is radically different, for it begins with death, the death of self.

{Mt 16:24} However, death is not where the Jesus Way ends! **“For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for [Messiah] will find it.”**

{1 Co 1:18} From a natural perspective the Jesus Way **“appears to be [wrong].”** Hence, **“the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing.”**

{1 Co 1:18} But contrary to all appearances, **“it leads to”** life **“in the end.”** **“To us who are being saved”** it is indeed **“the power of God”** for life abundant and eternal!

Messiah declares: **“I am the ὁδός and the truth and the life.”**

📖 Ὁδός literally means way, path, or road. A tangible path suggests corporeal movement and the image of Jesus as **“the way”** evokes spiritual movement.

✈ First, as we follow a physical path, so we follow the Jesus Way.

{Mk 12:30-31} Discipleship is not an abstract concept; it is a practical way of life. To follow the Jesus Way is, first and foremost, to **“love the Lord your God with all your heart... soul... mind and... strength”** and to **“Love your neighbor as yourself.”** If we are not living this lifestyle, we are not on the Jesus Way.

{Heb 12:1-2} Take heart! There is no need to blaze our own trail. It has already been **“marked out for us”** by **“the pioneer and perfecter of our faith.”**

✈ Second, as we move on a path toward a physical destination, so we move on the Jesus Way toward a spiritual destination: the actual, somehow tangible, glorious presence of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

■ John 14:2-3: **“I am going”** to **“My Father’s house”** **“to prepare a place for you”**. **“I will come back and take you to be with me...”**

{1 Th 4:16-18} **“For the Lord... will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God... And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage one another with these words.”**

✈ Third, the Jesus Way is not only a lifestyle, and it is not just a means to a future end: it is union with God in Christ here and now.

{Jn 15:4; 6:35, 57} Jesus also invites his followers to: **“Remain in me, as I also remain in you.”** **“I am the bread of life”** he says, and **“the one who feeds on me**

will live.” **“I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you.”**

**There is a way that appears to be right,
but in the end it leads to death.**

Not the Jesus Way! He is **“the way and the truth and the life.”**

John 14:1-7 is the Word of the Lord.