

BULLETIN

THE WORD OF TRUTH MINISTRY

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Updates from the Director

Mr. Otis Q. Sellers, the founder of The Word of Truth Ministry and its first Director, stated in his February 1955 version of the pamphlet *The Study of Human Destiny*: "It is a great tragedy that to many minds the very idea of reexamining and reinvestigating the subject of man's nature and destiny is felt to be disloyal to the Lord Jesus Christ. They feel that a blind acceptance of traditional ideas is the only way to honor Him, that Bible study along these lines cannot lead us into any truth, that it will only result in the loss of what truth we have... There came a time in my own experience when I determined that the entire subject of man's nature, man's destiny, and the nature and duration of future punishment needed to be thoroughly investigated and studied. This determination had slowly developed through a previous decade. It was no sudden inspiration. In time it became a powerful conviction, and this has kept me steadily engaged at the task throughout the years that have passed."

Though Mr. Sellers has passed into the state of death himself and is currently awaiting resurrection and his place in the manifest kingdom of God on earth, the need for a study of these important topics is still as great as ever. It remains true that many in Christian circles believe it their duty to be the guardians of what is orthodox rather than students who come to God's Word in order to learn and discover the truth. Yet at *The Word of Truth Ministry*, we allow the singular, important fact that God has spoken and it is our privilege to discover what He has said, to drive our studies of the nature of man and the nature of human destiny. This is what Mr. Sellers learned to do, and it is our desire to continue that legacy of searching the Word of God for the truth taught there regarding these topics.

Back in 2015 at the Midwest Bible Conference, we studied this important topic, using as our theme the title of Mr. Sellers' series of pamphlets on the issue: *What Is Man?*

What Is His Destiny? Now in 2022, we wish to return to this topic, and examine it from a slightly different angle. Throughout Christendom, there are "favorite passages" that have been isolated by the orthodox and unorthodox alike. These passages have been used to promote ideas contrary to what we believe is the reality of human destiny and the nature and duration of future punishment. We wish therefore to present our own study of human destiny from the aspect of *Problem Passages Regarding Human Destiny*. What did Christ mean when He said, "In My Father's house are many mansions"? What was Paul talking about when he said, "To be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord"? What exactly was the gain he was thinking of when he said, "To live is Christ, and to die is gain"? And what exactly was the Lord teaching in the story of *The Rich Man and Lazarus*? Join us on August 20-21, 2022, at our Midwest Bible Conference in Milwaukee, Wisconsin to find out!

We are also pleased to present the long-awaited 200th issue of Seed and Bread! Before he settled on the Seed and Bread format, Mr. Sellers tried publishing studies in several formats, one of which was four-page leaflets. Two of these have been published under Special Studies on our website, but a third, rediscovered recently, has been, as far as we can tell, unpublished since its original issue. We are now publishing it under the title of *Seed and Bread* as the long-missing issue #200 of the first 200 issues written by Mr. Sellers, before other authors took over from issue #201 as *More Seed and Bread*. Please enjoy this final issue of *Seed and Bread* from Mr. Otis Q. Sellers.

Nathan C. Johnson

The First Lies Ever Told

By Nathan C. Johnson

Jesus Christ says of the devil in John 8:44, *'When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it'* (New King James Version throughout). The first lies ever told to the human race were told by the devil in the Garden of Eden to our first mother. Eve believed these lies and acted on them, eating the fruit that God had forbidden and giving that fruit to her husband with her, who also ate. This brought about the fall of man and the introduction of sin and death into the world. The lies the devil told in the Garden were arguably the most important and fundamental lies ever told. They formed the basis of the rebellion of Adam's race against God, and have formed a foundational error for our thinking ever since. As such, it is important for every student of God's Word to learn what these lies were, what they implied, and how to extricate our minds from all thinking based on them.

The first lie Satan told was in the form of a question. *"Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?'"* (Gen. 3:1). Of course, God had not said this. What He had said is: *'Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die,'* (Gen. 2:16-17). God had freely given them trees of every variety from which to eat. They were only forbidden to eat from one tree. Satan's suggestion was that God's Word was unreasonable. How foolish it would have been to surround His newly-made creatures with an amazing variety of food, and then forbid them from eating any of it! His lie, then, was this: that the Word of God is somehow inadequate, and that those who believe it are silly, childish, or naïve. Adam's race must sit in judgment on God's Word, deciding what it says that is too strong, too weak, or simply not reliable. Rather than responding to God's Word with faith, mankind ought to determine if it matches up to our wise, knowledgeable standards.

Eve answered Satan's question, *"We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden, but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, neither shall you touch it, lest you die,'"* (Gen. 3:2-3). While she answered Satan's question in the negative, she accepted his implication. She toned God's Word down, "we may eat," leaving out "freely," which omits God's loving generosity. She also toned down "you shall surely die," belittling the certainty of God's Word with, "lest you die." She accepted Satan's premise that the Word was not good enough for those truly knowing and wise.

Satan's second lie was an outright denial of God's clear statement, *'You will not surely die,'* (Gen. 3:4). His claim was that God's Word was simply untrue. He denied the reality of death, and Eve believed him, taking the fruit; confident that it would not, in fact, kill her. Eve is no longer alive, proving that God's Word, not Satan's lie, was again true.

Finally, Satan suggested an alternative outcome to that suggested by God, *'For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil'* (Gen. 3:4). Satan suggested God had knowledge Eve did not have, and that He was holding back knowledge from her. He implies God would feel threatened if they knew what He knew, and so that is why He had lied to them. This third lie suggested that God's Word did not have their good at heart; it was not reliable because God didn't really want what was best for them.

We learn the outcome of this lie when Eve and Adam ate the fruit. Genesis 3:7 tells us, *Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked.* Satan's lie in this case was based on a partial truth. Their eyes were opened by eating the fruit, but not in the way they expected. Instead of becoming like God, they became aware of their nakedness. While we do not deny that they were literally naked, to be naked in the Bible often symbolizes lack of protection. As long as Adam and Eve were sinless and in unbroken communion with God, they were protected from all danger and all harm. Once they ate the fruit, that protection was gone. Suddenly, they were thrown on the mercy of time and chance. Any fearsome animal, any natural disaster, or any wandering, malignant being like Satan himself, might harm them at any time, and they were entirely reliant on their own resources to protect themselves. They had been covered in safety, yet now they were naked and without protection, and they knew it. They tried to solve the problem and resolve their own fate by making themselves coverings of leaves, but this did not work. Again God's Word was true and Satan's lie was false. God had held their best interests at heart after all.

These three, fundamental lies still affect the thinking of most of humanity. God's Word is thought by many to be inadequate, childish, or simply wrong. We can only excise this lie from our thinking by placing our faith in the infallibility of all that God has said. Secondly, death is still thought by many not to be death at all. They insist death simply means going to another place, and they deny the fundamental truth that all people are either dead or dying. We can only rid ourselves of this lie by believing in the reality of death, and that only resurrection can rescue us from this final fate. Finally, most people believe themselves capable of procuring their own protection. Many and varied are the fig leaves that people sow together in an attempt to protect themselves from the ravages of time and the caprices of chance, and yet all such coverings ultimately prove to be inadequate. Safety is still only found in right relationship with God, and the covering He provides is the only one that can truly make us safe.

So what about our thinking? Do we doubt God's Word, deny death, and trust in our own resources for protection? Or have we gone against the flow and rid ourselves of the first lies ever told?

All the Prophets Agree: My Journey

By Andrew Brown

Many years ago, I believed in a fiery hell where God sends unbelievers to experience eternal torment. This idea is so common, regardless of religion, that most Bible believers suppose it to be true. The theory of an immortal soul is a pill of presumption people swallow which includes the idea that death is life somewhere else: heaven or hell. One of Satan's original lies to Eve included immortality, *'You surely will not die'* (Gen. 3:4, NASB 1995 throughout). The common presupposition unwittingly carries on the lies, redefining Scripture's clear definition of death. Yet there are Christians who are not carried along by the pervasive mainstream force. They have wrestled with the topic in the Word. Before I went through this wrestling myself, I was pulled into tradition. I had some members in my family who stood firmly on conditional immortality, but I was flip floppy. *'How long, O naive ones, will you love being simple-minded?'* (Prov. 1:22). I knew that the Bible had the answers, and if one could put aside biases and diligently seek, God would respond. In college, I became alive to Christ after I glued myself to His Word. I studied it tenaciously and became very familiar with it, and my questions multiplied. The leaders around me were not able to answer satisfactorily.

I was pondering the lack of evidence regarding the mainstream views of eternal torment, immortal souls, and sudden death/sudden glory. At this time my parents gave me a pamphlet by David Norrie called "Eternal Torment and Evangelical Teaching." Norrie stated the Biblical truth so plainly, in so many different ways from all over the Bible, that it opened my eyes and humbled me as a student. How could there even be a debate on the subject? It was so thorough. How had I not seen it? *Satan has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ* (2 Cor. 4:4). After Norrie, I read Dr. Bullinger's and Otis Sellers' works on the subject. They satisfactorily answered many difficult passages.

Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! (2 Cor. 13:5). During seven weeks of summer break, I set off through the entire Bible again. It took me from morning until night. I documented each passage pertinent to death and human destiny. Any words the Bible spoke regarding heaven, hell, spirit, soul, life, death, etc. were noted. It was laborious work. The goal was not to gather and glue together related Bible verses in order to prop up a pre-assumed belief, but to understand the summation of what the Bible says. The eternal torment view did not explain the full scope of what we are given. Conditional immortality was an explanation of evidence.

Following my efforts to grasp the Bible's definition of spirit, soul, death, resurrection, *Sheol*, *Hades*, *Gehenna*, etc., I went back to study some of the recommended best writings in favor of eternal conscious torment. What I found, and continue to

find, is that while these authors claim to trump all, they neglect to touch the true view of the Bible. Adam was created "immortal," but a condition was placed on that immortality, and death was the punishment. Death was not the gateway to eternal life; death was an enemy to be abolished (1 Cor. 15:26). Resurrection is the hope of believers. *If the dead are not raised...your faith is worthless....Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished* (1 Cor. 15:16-18). Sleep is a metaphor for death and Christ will awaken the dead in resurrection. The fate of the wicked is destruction. Many translations work with a bias that hides facts about the different words for "hell," "forever," and the soul. God breathed life into Adam, and he became a *living soul*. A living soul without God's breath makes a dead soul (Heb.-*muth nephesh*, a Biblical phrase). The Bible never speaks of an immortal soul.

There are a few passages which are always brought up in this debate; these passages are outliers to the full body of Scripture's truth rather than the central, defining point. When these verses are isolated and emphasized, they can be made to prop up biases. The truth takes all the facts and explains them all without setting any text aside. When handled consistently, the entirety of the Bible fits together and agrees. The Bible is 100% consistent throughout the historical books, the Old Testament Law, the prophets, the poetic Psalms, riddles from Ecclesiastes and Proverbs, and even the apostles' testimony. All portray in unison the same declaration about the state of the dead and the outcome of the wicked. *All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work* (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Dozens of authors writing over a lengthy period spoke synonymously, despite Satan's original lie and the ensuing brainwashing. This is a great proof of the inspiration of Scripture.

Passages that traditionalists force to compete with each other actually work together within the cohesive teaching of Scripture. Seeing the cohesion on this one subject, my discoveries in the Word continued to expand. This put me on the path to rightly handling the Bible. While still a college student, I next followed the topics of charismatic teaching, "spiritual gifts" (prophecy, tongues, etc.), and hearing God's voice. This led me to new contemplations, as I had dear and sincere friends in the movement. I struggled through to discover the truth. *To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because they have no dawn* (Isa. 8:20). There is much to say regarding this study as well; however, one of many things that became clear was that a prophet would never give a word "from God" that was inconsistent with the rest of the Word. One way I could test these "prophets" was with the truth of human destiny. God's word is rock-like. Praise God that all true prophets agree!

GOD MUST INTERVENE

By Otis Q. Sellers

We live in a world that is sick unto death, a world beset with all kinds of complex maladies. One period of peril follows another, and the old optimistic illusion that we can do something about it has given way to doubt. Sober-minded statesmen are admitting that the problems of nations and races are beyond solution. Even the American dream of a compassionate and vigorous nation fighting for a world of order and decency has given way to disillusionment and despair.

All the while *'evil men and seducers... wax worse and worse'* (2 Tim. 3:13) as the Apostle Paul declared. Daily it becomes more evident that we are not just passing through another of those crises which are common to mankind, but that we have reached a cataclysmic junction in the history of the world where something has to happen. It has been said that we are now living in "the golden age of the criminal." If evil men continue to wax worse and worse for another decade, life on this planet will hardly be desirable. Man has continued to ruin this world until he has brought it to a state where he can no longer endure the appalling conditions he has brought into existence.

In view of this desperate situation the question is asked by some demanding inquirers, "Why doesn't God do something?" Others more reverently say "God must do something." And since He has not seemed to act, some are concluding that He does not exist or that He is dead.

The Biblical answer to these questions is that God is going to intervene. He has declared this in His Word. It is His purpose to inject Himself into the flow of history, to reverse that flow and turn it toward Himself. This is the substance of many declarations and promises. He will break the strength of evil and wicked men, and bring their wickedness to an end (Ps. 10:15). He will assume sovereignty over all men, and become the governor among the nations (Ps. 22:27, 28). He will cut off all evil doers (Ps. 37:9). He will speak from heaven and cause wars to cease, destroying all instruments of war by His voice (Ps. 46:6-10). He will stop the flow of iniquity (Ps. 107:42). He will lift up a standard against the enemies of righteousness (Isa. 59:19). He will turn His hand upon Israel and begin to fulfill His wonderful promises to that people (Isa. 1:25, Ezek. 34:11-31). He will pour out of His Spirit upon all flesh (Acts 2:17). He will send forth His judgments unto victory (Matt. 12:18-21).

All these things God will do through His Son Jesus Christ, while He remains in His place at the right hand of God. Not one of these promises are dependent in any way upon the return of Jesus Christ to the earth. The day is surely coming when God will assume sovereignty over all mankind, take the reins of government into His own hands and the kingdom of God will be a reality upon the earth. May God speed the day.

*Word of Truth Ministry
Summer Conference 2022*

"Problem Passages Regarding Human Destiny"

**Saturday August 20 and
Sunday August 21**

*Hilton Garden Inn Milwaukee Airport
5890 South Howell Ave.
Milwaukee, WI 53207*

Book before August 3rd to receive a rate of \$109 per night.
Reference "The Word of Truth Ministry" when calling the hotel.
Breakfast and lunch will be provided both days of the conference.
You may also RSVP to rustywofit@aol.com or write to the ministry.
We hope to see you there!