

BULLETIN

THE WORD OF TRUTH MINISTRY

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Otis Q. Sellers, Founder

VOLUME 3, NO. 29

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JUNE 2018

Dear Reader:

I am writing to you from my lanai overlooking the Pacific Ocean in Hawaii. Otis and Mildred Sellers spent six weeks here each year, enjoying a similar view. I had the privilege to join my grandparents for a week about 37 years ago, when I was just twenty-one. Hawaii was their destination to avoid the “cold and rainy” Los Angeles winter. (I’m sure all my Northern and Midwest friends have to be laughing at that.)

I am enjoying a vacation in one of the most beautiful regions of the world. But more importantly, my wife and I are visiting my youngest son, Kevin, who lives on the island of Maui. Although Otis and Mildred vacationed here, my grandfather’s work and study of the Bible never ceased. A vast majority of his written works (**Seed & Bread**) were conceived, outlined, and written from his lanai in Hawaii.

Times and circumstances regarding travel have changed immensely since then. Grandpa would pack up half his library and take it with him to Hawaii. The two of them would board a plane with about 10 suitcases. Hawaii would then become his private oasis, his office, a place to write. It is easy to understand how they found such solace and inspiration in this tropical paradise.

I wish I could have that week back. A week alone with O.Q.S. to discuss anything and everything! I have so many questions now that I did not know to ask then. But, I was on vacation with my grandparents, not my Bible teacher. We focused our discussions on a myriad of topics: family, current events, the Dodgers, my life ahead of me as a rookie police officer.

We discussed the Bible also. Grandpa had been my sole Bible teacher. I had never gone to a church, and did not know the varied opinions in regard to “rightly dividing” the Word of Truth. I did not fully comprehend what a gifted teacher I had until after he was gone.

Almost all of you folks took journeys before you found The Word of Truth Ministry. Through various churches, groups, or independent study, you discovered the “truth.” Some of you paid the “penalty” of being ostracized from your peer groups for understanding a truth that was out-

side your church’s doctrine. I’ve been told of some individuals who know and understand the Truth, but refuse to openly express the Truth to their church friends for fear of being shunned. I know some of the hardships that my grandpa, grandma, and mother endured when he left his position with the “church” and struck out on his own with his independent ministry.

Although I am never excluded, friends often give me quizzical looks and comments when I discuss my views regarding death, resurrection, and our future here on earth, living in the Kingdom of God. That’s why it is so wonderful when you write to the Ministry and express how your knowledge of God’s word has impacted your lives. I recently received an email from a gentleman asking several questions and requesting as much printed and audio lessons I could provide. He wrote, “I have learned more from Mr. Sellers in this past year than I did in 30+ years of going to church. Thanks so much for everything.”

My grandpa has been gone a long time, but followers from decades ago remind me of what he meant to them. “What’s so amazing about Mr. Sellers is that he understood all of our Biblical problems and was willing to correct them, no matter how long it took. He taught us how to rightly divide the ‘Word of Truth’ which has stuck for almost 45 years.” And this simple declaration from a believer, “I feel so blessed and really love my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. My life is so much happier because I know the truth. I await the Kingdom of God.”

We do not know the exact details, but we all know this story concludes with the Kingdom of God, the Parousia of Jesus Christ, and finally The New Heavens and New Earth. I pray daily for the Kingdom to arrive, but until then, I will also enjoy my current time here on earth. I am fortunate enough to be able to travel to Hawaii and visit my son. I am blessed with the memories, and teachings of my grandfather. But I also have been blessed to be surrounded by other students/teachers who have taken up the task of “rightly dividing” the Word of Truth. We read their words in each of the Bulletins and issues of **More Seed & Bread**. May God bless your work as you study further.

Rusty Hancock

One Story in Four Stories

By Nathan C. Johnson

When it comes to the most crucial elements of our faith in Jesus Christ, few can equal the importance of His resurrection. Thus the passages that record that resurrection are among the most important in the Bible. Yet just here where we are most desirous of finding plain, clear, ordered truth, we find ourselves faced with much confusion and difficulty. For it seems that the four gospels among them cannot agree on the details of just what happened with the women at the tomb.

The difficulties that face us as we compare the four gospels are many. For example, what women exactly came to the tomb? Was it Mary Magdalene alone (John 20:1)? Was it Mary Magdalene with Mary the mother of James and Salome (Mark 16:1)? Was it Mary Magdalene and the other Mary (Matthew 28:1)? Or was it the whole group of women who came with Him from Galilee (Luke 23:55-24:1)?

Furthermore, how many angels were there, and where were they? Did they find one angel sitting on the stone outside the tomb (Matthew 28:2-5)? Or was one angel sitting on the right side inside the tomb (Mark 16:5)? Or were there two angels who appeared in the tomb while they were standing perplexed (Luke 24:4)?

And how did the women respond to what they found at the tomb? Did they run and tell Peter and John that someone had stolen the Lord's body and laid Him elsewhere (John 20:2)? Did they fail to tell anyone what they saw out of fear (Mark 16:8)? Or did they return to tell the eleven and all the rest (Luke 24:9), even running to do it with joy rather than fear (Matthew 28:8)?

Various attempts have been made to harmonize these glaring differences. Some have struggled to explain this last, for example, by saying that the women at first were afraid and intended not to tell anyone, but then as they calmed down and realized what they had seen they decided to go tell the disciples after all. Yet this clearly leaves Mark's record at fault. Suppose I were to learn a piece of information and for a while, say five or ten minutes, I considered not telling it to anyone, but then I made up my mind that I should and immediately went to tell what I had heard. Would it be accurate for anyone to say of me, "Nathan decided not to tell anyone what he had learned"? Of course not!

Others have tried to make out that differences like this are a good thing and that they even help strengthen the record. They say that eyewitness accounts are often confused. They point out that any investigator knows that two witnesses of an event will almost always give conflicting details, especially regarding minor points. In fact, an investigator might look on a story with suspicion if multiple

people told it the exact same way, since this would suggest they had gotten together to concoct their story. Thus, they claim, these different details are proofs that these are eyewitness accounts and thus reliable.

Yet consider what we are arguing when we argue the inspiration of Scripture. We are not simply saying that here we have Matthew's story, Mark's story, Luke's story, and John's story. We are saying that in all four of these gospels we have God's story, told by inspiration of the Holy Spirit. And what would we think of a witness who told one story four times and changed the details every time? Would we view that witness as reliable?

But what if we take all four of the records seriously, yet unshackle ourselves from the idea that there was only one, single visit of the women to the tomb? Just removing this one unnecessary assumption can open up a whole new picture to us that enlightens the record of all four gospels. What if Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome came first, trying to get an early start on the other women, and were the first to find the stone rolled away (Mark 16:1-4)? Then what if Mary Magdalene ran to tell Peter and John (John 20:1-2), while the other two went into the tomb to see the sitting angel and receive his message (Mark 16:5-7)? It would be natural for two women alone to be overwhelmed by this and afraid, and so run off and tell no one (Mark 16:8). Then later a large group of women from Galilee came to the tomb, including some of the previous three, who as Mark says had kept quiet and not told the others anything. They found the same empty tomb, had a visit from the two angels, and learned the truth. There being courage in numbers, they believed and ran to give the disciples word (Luke 24:1-11). Meanwhile Mary met the Lord in the garden and believed (John 20:11-18). Finally the two Marys, believing and wanting to see the empty tomb once more, returned and not only met an angel but finally the Lord Himself (Matthew 28:1-11).

If this is what we are being told, then we would find, instead of conflicting accounts, that the gospels are carefully, purposefully, and intelligently weaved together to tell four different threads of one glorious story. No one gospel contains the complete story, and in fact, the four barely even share any of the same elements at all. Each tells a story complete in itself, yet when taken together the four gospels weave a fuller, more complete story, communicated in a fourfold way by One Master Storyteller. If considered this way these four stories, far from providing a challenge to our faith, not only back up our faith but also provide an indisputable proof of a single, guiding Hand behind the writing of four such uniquely independent but perfectly complimentary accounts.

The Law of Primacy

By Robert Juneau

Like many pilots, I became a flight instructor early in my career to gain the flight experience required for a job at an airline. Teaching others how to fly prepares one for the challenges associated with a career in aviation. One of the first things learned in becoming an effective instructor is the law of primacy, which was first postulated by Frederick Hansen Lund in 1925. It holds that the side of an issue presented first will have greater effectiveness in persuasion than the side presented subsequently. This is where we get the adage, "What is learned first is learned best."

It is human nature to cling to the ideas formed when we first learn something new. With respect to Christian theology and Biblical truths, the law of primacy holds very true. Whenever a Biblical truth previously not known to a person is presented, the reaction is almost always something along the lines of, "That can't be true; I have never heard of that before." Why do we think that if something were true, we must have already heard of it? This is the reaction I get from believers when I attempt to share the Acts 28:28 dispensational divide and the meaning of words like "church" (Gk.-*ekklesia*), "baptism" (Gk.-*baptizo*), "death" (Gk.-*thanatos*), "hell" (Gk.-*hades*), or the "kingdom" (Gk.-*basileia*). This reaction seems to be irrespective of a person's longevity as a believer.

None of us can honestly claim to have nothing more to learn from God's word, so what is it that prompts this kind of response? The rejection of something new or previously unlearned concerning the Bible can sometimes stem from arrogance or fear, but most often it is because of the law of primacy. The attitude of most believers is, "If my pastor, my Bible teacher, or my parents have not taught me something, then it must not be true." The thing they learned first is not in line with what I am trying to share with them, so they conclude that what I am saying must be wrong.

With respect to arrogance or fear, it has always been the practice of religious leaders to teach their followers to avoid listening to the voices that exist outside their circle of influence. In the early days of Christianity blind obedience to the interpretations of the hierarchy was expected, and sadly, this attitude is alive and well today in the minds of religious men. Since it is impossible to Biblically defend falsehoods and half-truths, the required obedience and obligation to the religious systems is handily implemented. Anyone who is honestly seeking truth should never fear an idea or a doctrinal position that he or she has never previously learned.

When someone first becomes a believer they are en-

couraged to go to church. Once they are there they begin to learn that this "church" started at Pentecost in Acts 2, and that all believers today are part of that same church, also known as "the body of Christ." They are taught that they must partake in a ceremony performed by the leader who says the proper words over them while they are being sprinkled or dipped in water. They learn that when a man dies, he continues to exist in one of two places. All who attain to a particular church's comprehension of salvation will go to heaven; all who do not are sent to a fiery torment, both lasting forever. Within Covenant theology they are taught that the kingdom of God is the thing we see today advancing on earth through the efforts of "the church." Within most of dispensational theology they are taught that the kingdom of God on earth is the destiny for Israel, and that heaven is the destiny for "the church." These are the things that most believers learn *first*, and because of the law of primacy, they are the things learned *best*.

Since much of Christian doctrine is based on falsehoods and mistaken ideas that have been imbedded in the minds of believers for centuries, those who seek only the truth of what the Bible teaches are saddled with the difficult task of dispelling these falsehoods. The things that a new believer first learns are often wrong. I can attest to this from first hand experience, and anyone who has made any progress toward the truth that God has revealed to us in His word should be able to attest to the same.

When attempting to share further and deeper truths with our Christian friends, we have to overcome the law of primacy. How do we drive out these wrong ideas that have been so firmly planted? How do we bring our fellow believers along in the further truths that we have learned? The first thing we must do is to study God's word, keeping things rightly distinctive so that we have the clarity of truth required to make sense of it. 2 Timothy 2:15 says: *Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth (KJV)*. Once we are in possession of God's truth, we can share what we have learned with others, but we are urged to always do so with the kind of love and grace that God shows us. This is made clear when Otis. Q. Sellers' translation of Ephesians 4:32 is read: *And become kind to one another, tenderly compassionate, dealing graciously with one another, even as God also in Christ deals graciously with you.*

God has chosen to deal with us in the Dispensation of Grace only by means of His attribute of grace. Since this is the means by which God deals with us today, He compels us to do the same with our fellow man. May we all continue to study God's Word so that with grace, we can share with others what we have learned and overcome the law of primacy.

Desperate for Christ

By Andrew Brown

Can you remember a time in life when you desperately wanted something? Driven by hope, your actions may have been reckless in pursuit. The gospels stir the heart with numerous accounts of desperate people brought to reckless behavior to take hold of Jesus. Many were rewarded for their efforts. Imagine how frantic Jairus, the synagogue ruler, was as his only daughter was dying. Can you hear the longing in his voice as he fell at His feet and begged Him earnestly, saying, *“My little daughter is at the point of death; please come and lay Your hands on her, so that she will get well and live”* (Mark 5:23, NASB throughout)? Jesus complied. Or the woman who had the flow of blood for twelve years, but spent all her money on doctors only to have her sickness grow worse. We can almost see her desperation as she says, *“If I just touch His garments, I will get well”* (Mark 5:28). She accomplished this and was healed. Blind Bartimaeus was blind no longer after he found Jesus. The royal official in John 4 who begged Jesus to heal his son, the ten lepers of Luke 17, and many others make up an incredibly long list of those in desperate pursuit of wholeness through Christ.

Consider the despair in Martha’s words: *“Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died”* (John 11:21). Then, before He raised Lazarus to life, Jesus told Martha, *“Did I not say to you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?”* (John 11:40). The Lord was going to do more than she thought to ask. This comment was NOT about the resurrection of Lazarus, for everyone present saw that regardless of belief. What did He mean? It was not the miracle itself wherein Martha would see God’s glory, but rather she would see beyond it to comprehend Jesus for who and what He is. Martha would grasp Jesus’ words, *“I am the resurrection and the life”* (John 11:25). She would realize Jesus was God in the flesh, the image of the invisible God.

Being desperate for Christ goes beyond desiring manifest miracles. It is a gift connecting our hearts and minds to Him. At any second the Lord could speak and end all injustice, selfishness, and unhealthiness, yet desiring to know Him goes past the benefits of His reign. It is about intimacy with the Healer.

The Bible exposes a lack in our best efforts. *“No man can by any means redeem his brother or give to God a ransom for him”* (Psa. 49:7). *“And all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment;”* (Isa. 64:6). We are unable to redeem anyone; we are left desperate for a Savior. Jesus holds out freedom from bondage by offering us a trade: our slavery to sin for His righteousness. From this swap for redemption we are given

an opportunity to align our hearts with Christ’s even when we cannot cling to His garments or hear His answers directly in our ears. We choose whom we will seek and serve in the thoughts we have through every minute of each day.

When asked about the greatest commandment, Jesus quoted Deuteronomy 6:5: *“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.”* Our primary focus in life should be to orient our inner beings, desires, and efforts toward esteeming God. The following verses highlight that His Word, *“shall be on your heart”* (Deut. 6:6). Jesus made it clear that from the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks. What do we mainly speak about? Moses continued, *“You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up”* (Deut. 6:7). Doing something with diligence is not automatic; it requires effort and intention. We find ourselves most satisfied and alive when God’s Word permeates and overflows our thoughts and words throughout the day. The Lord even instructed Israel to make visual reminders: *“You shall bind them [His Words] as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house”* (Deut. 6:8-9). You can see your hands frequently.

Anything hanging from your forehead would also trigger thoughts and conversations. You would be seeing, thinking, and talking about it. You could not be a secret God worshiper. The people were to wear their faith for all to see. These are specific instructions to Israel and are lofty aspirations, but what if we took the lesson in them seriously? Having God as not just part of our lives but the center of them is THE magnificent ambition of life.

Philippians 3 gives profound encouragement to believers to pursue knowing Christ: *“More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him”* (Phil. 3:8-9). Let us not let this excellent pursuit pass us by! Let all of our beings resonate with the thought *“that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection”* (Phil. 3:10). This is the purpose for which we were made and brings life that flows with life: *“And this is eternal life, that they may know You”* (John 17:3). Let all of us who believe be reminded that all else is “rubbish” in comparison to the surpassing value of knowing Christ and give diligence to press on to know Him.

