

BULLETIN

THE WORD OF TRUTH MINISTRY

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Updates from Rusty Hancock

The Word of Truth Ministry Conference Tour will be returning to the Southern California area in the Spring of 2018.

About six years ago during a phone conversation, Milton Hammond and Nathan Johnson brainstormed an idea to meet for a Bible Conference. Once a cornerstone of The Word of Truth Ministry, none had taken place for several years. My grandfather (Otis Q. Sellers) made semi-annual journeys across the country, primarily to the Midwest and east coast, to continue his teachings and interact with students of the Word. After the passing of O.Q.S. over a quarter century ago, David Hettema continued to make some trips, but he could not sustain an annual schedule.

I was very young during my grandpa's travels and was never able to join him. I could only listen to tales of his trips and the wonderful people he encountered along the way. I would help my grandpa out in his home office and mailroom, where I would read letters from folks who were overjoyed by these conferences, and how much they meant to their studies of the Bible.

Milton and Nathan's proposal of having a Conference was an exciting prospect for me. And it became a reality in October of 2013. Held in Pasadena, CA, it was small and the meetings took place in the old office of The Word of Truth Ministry. I was overwhelmed by the enthusiasm and knowledge of the 20 plus folks in attendance. Their zest to seek knowledge, and the Truth, was inspirational.

What I found truly fascinating though was the different perspectives and roads traveled to The Word of Truth Ministry. I was born and raised in Southern California. I will refrain from making any societal or political comments about being raised in a Southern California lifestyle, but believe me, it is far different from the Northwest, the Midwest, the South, or the East Coast of this wonderful country. The attitudes and opinions toward religion differ vastly in other parts of the country.

Also, being the grandson of Otis Q. Sellers, I never attended nor was a member of any "church." I knew no other teachings. But listening to folks who were raised on several years of "church" doctrine and philosophy, and hearing how they came to fully understand and appreciate "rightly dividing the word of truth" was intriguing. The

responses they received when they questioned the leaders of their churches about the truths they had discovered by honestly seeking the Truth from the pages of God's word were inspiring.

Some people had to make difficult decisions relating to relationships that had been developed over generations: their standing within the community, their business and social contacts, and their friendships, and their family. Some people were flat out ostracized and shunned. Some had admitted that it took some time for them to fully declare their enlightened faith because of the negative repercussions that would occur.

Through these people I find strength, the strength to continue my work as an administrator for The Word of Truth to distribute the written word, and find the means to broadcast our weekly radio program, "*Knowing God in the Word.*" The strength to continue my own studies, and encourage those around me to seek greater knowledge. The strength to ask questions, and try to find answers to questions that seem to be unanswerable. (Sometimes the current and correct answer may be, "I don't know.")

After our initial Conference in Pasadena, we took the show on the road to the Midwest and have held four Conferences in either Minneapolis or Milwaukee. The bulk of our base resides in these areas and the location accommodated many folks. But with encouragement (and I believe some people's desire to just want to visit Southern California) we are planning a Conference on the West Coast.

Specifically, the Conference will be this coming Spring on March 24th and 25th in Glendale, CA (a suburb of Los Angeles). The meeting place will be the home of my mother, Jane Hancock. This also serves as a lovely location for informal discussions between teaching sessions, meal breaks, and an evening of fellowship.

I realize that travel can be expensive and somewhat exhausting. But I hope you can attend. I want to hear your story, and join you in fellowship as several speakers teach us God's word. I am sure that your attendance will strengthen and encourage you in the pursuit and knowledge of the Truth.

The theme of the conference is "The Acts Period."
(Refer to the enclosed flier for further conference details.)



Rightly Dividing Begins in Genesis

By Nathan C. Johnson

A common question that is supposed to stump Christians is, "Where did Cain get his wife?" The answer, however, is quite simple. Since Adam and Eve were the first two people in the world, they were the only parents from which she could have come. Therefore Cain's wife must have been his sister. Some might suggest that she could have been his niece. Yet if so, the only place a niece could have come from was if two of Cain's siblings married each other and produced her, so we have really only sidestepped the issue. The only way children could have come into the world after the first generation from Adam and Eve is by their offspring marrying each other.

The difficulty arises when we start to compare this concept to the laws of incest as contained in the law. Leviticus 18:9 sets forth the law regarding siblings and half-siblings. *The nakedness of your sister, the daughter of your father, or the daughter of your mother, whether born at home or elsewhere, their nakedness you shall not uncover* (New King James Version throughout). Since uncovering the nakedness is a euphemism for sexual intercourse, this verse makes marrying of siblings illegal. How, then, could Cain (or any of Adam and Eve's children) have gotten married at all, if they could not marry their siblings?

The problem here, as is so often the case, is a simple matter of wrongly dividing Scripture. The book of Leviticus was written roughly 2,500 years after the creation of Adam and Eve. It contains the first decrees that made the marriage of siblings illegal. There is no evidence that it was considered illegal or that it was in any way immoral before this time. The indications are all to the contrary. Abraham married his half-sister Sarah, and nothing was deemed to be wrong with it.

Yet even if we acknowledge these facts, we still might find this hard to accept since marrying a sibling seems simply foul to us. What we need to realize is that the problem with marrying a near relative today is largely caused by genetic mistakes. We have many such mistakes in our genes, some of them even being deadly, but they are recessive genes. That means that the mistake does not have a dire effect as long as you receive one good set of those particular genes from one of your parents. Most very severe dominant mutations, which appear even if you have only one set of genes that has the mutation, will often result in early death or the inability to procreate. Therefore most of the common significant mistakes are recessive, and as long as you marry someone not closely related to you, chances are that you both will not have the same, significant recessive mutations. But if you marry someone closely related to you, the chances are good that both you

and your spouse will give a baby the same badly mutated gene, resulting in a monstrous problem for the child, especially when many recessive mistakes are added together. It is for this reason that both God and society generally forbid marrying a close relative.

It is important to note, though, that God did not create us with genetic mutations. These mistakes are copying errors, and they have collected over time. Both Adam and Eve had perfect bodies with no genetic mutations. Thus their children probably also had no mutations. Since siblings had no genetic mistakes, marrying for them would not have been a problem. In fact, such a union would have been far less likely to produce a mutated child than the most distant marriage coupling of today.

At first the marriage of siblings was just practical, as there simply was no one else. But even beyond the first few generations, marrying a sibling might make good sense in some cases if it were not for genetic mutations. A couple who grew up in the same family would already know each other and know how well (or how poorly) they got along. Family background and traditions would be the same—a lot of positives. No wonder marrying a sibling or half sibling might have remained common.

After the flood widespread intermarrying had to happen again, yet now it was a different story. With over a dozen generations to collect genetic copy errors, marrying a close relative was now not as safe as it had been. Yet, at first, cousins or siblings were the only possibilities in the world, so it had to be done. Yet notice what transpired after the flood. Ages dropped from generation to generation in a rapid fashion, plunging from over 900 years down to our short life spans we experience today. In some cases longevity decreased as much as 200 years in one generation! Clearly intermarrying from only a few unique individuals after the flood was a problem, unlike right after creation.

Up to the time of Moses, marrying a close relative, even a full sibling, was not forbidden. The command of God that was in effect was what He said to Adam and Eve in Genesis 1:28, *Be fruitful and multiply*. In order for their children to keep this command they had to marry each other. There was simply no other way for them to obey God. At the giving of the law, however, God stopped sibling marriage, creating this law of incest.

Reading current rules back into ancient times before they were given will always lead to confusion. Even when it comes to answering common and sometimes hostile questions like this one, right division is the key that can bring us to the correct answer. Let us use it.



Destroying Fairy Tales

Andrew Brown

Potentially the most tragic pivot point in the history of mankind is Satan's visit to the Garden of Eden. The crafty salesman who sold aging, death, and disaster continues His deception in many subtle ways to undermine confidence in God's Word. What do you picture when you visualize the scene of Genesis 3?

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, NASB throughout). Children's Sunday school lessons and storybook Bibles do no favors in presenting cartoons of talking snakes wrapped in an apple tree before a gullible couple. The purpose of such portrayals may be to create a memorable visual; however, the false image of a talking snake reduces the magnitude of this scene into a mere fable. It plays into the hands of deception. A more accurate view of that critical interaction aids understanding of the perfection and significance of God's Word, and ultimately the reality of the gospel itself.

Figures of speech provide comparisons that engage the mind. Consider animal metaphors: "you pig," or chicken, busy bee, eagle-eye, sloth, mule, dog, gazelle, etc. Well-known characteristics of each creature make the description of a person more impactful. Such metaphors are straightforward to understand and are used in Scripture. For example, John the Baptizer addressed the Pharisees, "*You brood of vipers*" (Luke 3:7). Of course, the mind comprehends the Pharisees' snakelike poison John was commenting on. No sane person considers the Pharisees as literal snakes. In reference to Herod, Jesus said, "*Go and tell that fox*" (Luke 13:32). It would be laughable if someone concluded that Herod was an animal. These comparisons give light and life to the story.

It must be established that Satan, the guardian cherub, was NOT a talking snake in the garden. The Bible uses a metaphor in calling him a "snake." 1 Peter 5:8 compares Satan to a lion: "*Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.*" Of course, Satan is not a lion, nor a dragon as Rev. 12:9 describes. Rather, "Lucifer" had "*the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. [He was] in Eden, the garden of God... [He was] the anointed cherub*" (Ezek. 28:12-15). Satan was powerful and beautifully radiant as the anointed cherub, and that is how he appeared in the garden.

God created Adam and Eve perfectly without sin. Their brains worked intelligently and they had dominion over all the earth. "*God said to them, 'fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth'*" (Gen. 2:28). Given position over the earth and animals, including reptiles, Adam and Eve were obviously smarter than the animals. If a toddler came to you

and told you 2 + 2 is 0, you would hopefully correct him that 2 + 2 is 4, not 0. It would be foolish and bizarre to be deceived otherwise. In contrast, if a professor came, an elegant superior, not under your dominion, using "crafty" explanations (perhaps imaginary or negative numbers), could he convince you through negative number theory that 2 + 2 is really 0? There would be more potential to be deceived by this professor.

Eve must have thought it magnificent to meet and speak to a celestial being from outside the earth's dominion: a glorious cherub who guarded God's glory (the very thing he was attempting to taint by his visit)! She was likely awe-struck and welcoming. Eve had every reason to believe this higher being was an ally—except for his words. As much as we can tell, Lucifer's rebellion was unknown to her.

The deceit continues today. The wrong visual of Satan showing up as a snake reduces this account to an unbelievable tale and puts the Bible's accuracy in question at the very start. Does Satan have power to transform himself into a snake? Our belief must hold to all the given facts and not paint childish ideas which will only lead to weak study of God's perfect Word.

Some claim God's curse on Satan is proof he really was a snake: "*Because you have done this, cursed are you more than all cattle, and more than every beast of the field; on your belly you will go, and dust you will eat all the days of your life*" (Gen. 3:14). Why curse the vessel if Satan really possessed this snake? No, the curse is on Satan. Satan, not the snake, was cursed MORE than all the beasts of the field (including snakes). With man's rebellion, the perfect world was destroyed and all animals began to die. Satan would be cursed **more** than they. When Satan is described going "*on your belly*" it reveals a picture used elsewhere in Scripture of constant humiliation. He will continuously be put in subjection to God (now and in the future). Snakes do not eat dust. They never have. This figure reveals humiliation will be Satan's food in constant supply. In the end, He will be defeated and his failure and disappointment will be unceasing. Satan will LOSE.

However, that snake Satan has won the victory on millions. Eve ought to have held to God's instruction. She was deceived because she fell prey to Satan's **attack on her belief in God's Word**. Many who do not believe God's Word have fallen prey to the lie that "the Bible is filled with tales." This begins on the first pages for them when they think they are reading about talking snakes. To have the veil of unbelief removed we must pursue a different pattern: reading and holding fast to God's Word.



Praising God

By Joanne L.H. Johnson

How do you praise God? Do you go to a church that has a loud band with big speakers and amplifiers and singers on microphones? Or do you attend a church with a pipe organ and voices in the choir loft? Does it even matter how you praise God as long as you honor His great name?

In this study, the goal is to use samples of verses praising God, even our Lord Jesus Christ.

Leah, Jacob's first wife, thought that her husband hated her, but God opened up her womb and she bore him four sons. The fourth son was named "Judah" (Heb.-*Yehudah*) which means "**praised One**." She said, "*Now I will praise the Lord*" (Gen. 29:35, KJV used unless otherwise noted).

Moses, Israel's first leader, reminded the Israelites with warnings and exhortations: "*Thou shalt fear the Lord Thy God, Him shalt thou serve, and to Him shalt thou cleave, and swear by His Name. He is thy praise, and He is thy God, that hath done for thee these great and terrible (awesome) things, which thine eyes have seen*" (Deut. 10:20-21).

Deborah the prophetess, in the "Song of Deborah and Barak," when Israel defeated Jabin, king of Canaan, praised God with these words: "**Praise the Lord for the avenging of Israel, when the people willingly offered themselves. Hear, O ye kings; give ear, O ye princes; I, even I, will sing unto the Lord; I will sing praise to the Lord God of Israel**" (Judges 5:2-3).

Israel's King David wrote many Psalms, praising God. Consider the following selection of verses:

1) "*I will praise Thee, O Lord, with my whole heart; I will show forth all Thy marvelous works. I will be glad and rejoice in Thee; I will sing praise to Thy Name, O Thou Most High*" (Psalm 9:1-2).

2) "*I will declare Thy Name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise Thee. Ye that fear the Lord, praise Him; all ye the seed of Jacob, glorify Him; and fear Him, all ye seed of Israel*" (Psalm 22:22-23).

3) "*Let the people(s) praise Thee, O God; let all the people(s) praise Thee*" (Psalm 67:3; repeated in verse 5). See **Seed & Bread** No. 49, *A Psalm of Divine Government*, by Otis Q. Sellers.

4) "*Sing unto God, sing praises to His Name: extol Him that rideth upon the heavens by His name JAH, and rejoice before Him* (Psalm 68:4).

5) "*But I will declare forever; I will sing praises to the God of Jacob*" (Psalm 75:9).

6) "**Praise ye the Lord. O give thanks unto the Lord; for He is good: for His mercy endureth forever (in respect of the eon)**" (Psalm 106:1).

7) "*I will worship toward Thy holy temple, and praise Thy Name for Thy loving kindness and for Thy truth: for Thou hast magnified Thy Word above all Thy Name*" (Psalm 138:2).

8) "*I will praise Thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvelous are Thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well*" (Psalm 139:14).

9) "*The Lord will reign forever. Your God, O Zion, to all generations. Praise the Lord! (Heb.-Hallelujah; this means more than "Praise YAH;" the first*

part, hallel, means a joyous praise in song, to boast in God; the second part, YAH, is shortened from YHWH, the Creator)" (Psalm 146:10, NASB).

In Proverbs 31:10-31 is a wonderful rendering of a faithful woman of God. "*Her children rise up and bless her; her husband also, and he praises her, saying, 'Many daughters have done nobly, but you excel them all.' Charm is deceitful and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears (reverences) the Lord, she shall be praised. Give her the product (or fruit) of her hands, and let her works praise her in the gates*" (Prov. 31:28-31, NASB).

Zacharias, who was a priest of the Lord, lost his speech as punishment when he failed to believe an angel of the Lord (Luke 1:11-25). Zacharias was unable to talk until he wrote down the name of the child given to him by the angel. Then his speech was restored, and he spoke and **praised** God for the birth of John the Baptist, born to him and Elisabeth his wife (Luke 1:57-79).

When Jesus Christ was born, there were in the country shepherds tending their flocks by night. An angel of the Lord came with a message for the shepherds, and later, a multitude of heavenly host joined the angel and praised God. Then the shepherds went to see Jesus in Bethlehem. "*And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them*" (Luke 2:8-19, 20).

In Acts 3:1-10 an interesting story appears about a lame beggar. The beggar was brought to the temple to beg a gift of money from the temple visitors. Then Peter and John, the apostles, fixed their eyes on the beggar and told him to "*look at us!*" The beggar expected a gift of money, yet Peter said to him that he did not possess silver and gold, but that which he had he would freely give him: "*In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene—walk!*" And after seizing him by the right hand, "*he raised him up and immediately his feet and his ankles were strengthened. With a leap he stood upright and began to walk; and he entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God*" (Acts 3:6-8, NASB).

The narrative continues in Acts 3:11-26, and it contains a peculiar fact that we as Christian individualists should all take note of. In Peter's second speech to the Jewish people, he makes it clear that it was God that healed the beggar: "*And on the basis of faith in His Name, it is the Name of Jesus which has strengthened this man who you see and know; and the faith which comes through Him has given him this perfect health in the presence of you all*" (Acts 3:16, NASB). (This occurred during the beginning of the Acts Period.)

We have explored an assortment of verses for "**praise.**" Several ways we honor God with **praise** are through the silent medium of prayer or through the singing of Biblical hymns. Some people use *The Lord's Prayer* for this. **Praise** does not have to be for past things. **Praise** can be for things you're doing right now in your life. **Praise** can also be for future things God will be doing on this Earth.

May we all be found worshiping and **praising** our great God and Savior, even our Lord Jesus Christ.

