It isn't logical to die for people who hate you. How can you see past our black marks and broken hearts and dare to love us after everything we did to you, everything we will do, everything we *are* doing? We don't deserve your love.

None of us could ever hope to repay you.

But that's not what love is.

Love is giving freely of yourself with no plan of getting it back. Love is sacrificing yourself for people you know will spit in your face. Love is doing it anyway.

Our King died.

The universe knew it. The sky went black as death. The earth shook. The curtain in the temple – the thick divider that had separated his goodness from our wickedness for so long – was torn in two. Three days passed, and the people despaired. They thought their King was gone forever.

But they were wrong. Because, on the third day, he came back. He beat death in its own game and returned. He rose and the world rejoiced!

In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us. (1 John 4:10)

Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends. (John 15:13)

His name was Jesus. This isn't some make-believe story. It really happened. The perfect, all-powerful King of Creation came down and gave his life for *you.* He took *your* place, *your* punishment. He didn't just die for a group. He died for every one of us individually.

You may think you're not good enough. And that's right: you're not. But he loved you anyway. No matter how flawed we are, *he is enough*. He is always enough. He gave himself freely to pave the way to your freedom. No matter how far you run, he will never, ever stop loving you.

So what are you going to do about it? Are you going to ignore this priceless gift? Reject everything he went through for you? Or are you going to live your life for him? Because he lives, you don't need to be afraid. You can face whatever comes. He's given you his love; don't waste it. Love others. Live for his glory.

He died for you.

You might as well live for him.

We Get Letters

Letter: In Matthew 24:32 Jesus refers to the fig tree, and says that we should learn a lesson from it. Could Jesus be saying of the end times that the fig tree is Israel? And that the lesson is that we will understand better the coming end, and that the fig tree references the spiritual condition of Israel?

Nathan: The fig tree in the Old Testament most often seems to symbolize Israel's prosperity in the land. The one clear reference where Israel is compared to a fig tree is in Hosea 9:10, "**I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness; I saw your fathers as the firstfruits on the fig tree in its first season. *But* they went to Baal Peor, and separated themselves *to that* shame; they became an abomination like the thing they loved.**" So it certainly would not be without Old Testament precedent that Israel would be called the fig tree.

The parable of the fig tree of Matthew 24:32 has to do with how it grows, and it seems to me a stretch to attach it necessarily with the withered fig tree.

I think the fig tree Christ withered was indeed a symbol of Israel in the person of its rulers at that time. Christ came to them expecting them to bear fruit ahead of season, meaning ahead of His kingdom. When He looked for fruit from them, however, He found none. Christ therefore determined to destroy that fig tree and to replace it with His Own plant, His Israel based around the disciples/apostles He had chosen.

Letter: Isaiah 65:17 has been bothering me. I was told it meant I wouldn't remember things and it has caused me a lot of anxiety because I want to be able to remember my loved ones.

Nathan: Isaiah 65:17. "**For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered or come to mind.**"

In this context, *remembered* indicates that the former earth will never be celebrated, and will never be looked at with fondness or nostalgia. No commemoration of the old heavens and earth will ever be made. No one will speak of those times as "the good old days," or wish they could go back to them. We will be able to remember the old earth, but we will never long for it. What is new will be so much better!

When Isaiah 65:17 adds "nor come to mind," this does make it sound like no one will ever think about the former earth. But consider that Christ's death for our sins took place on the former earth. If the old earth and all that happened on it would never come to mind, then we would have to forget that Christ ever died for us. That would be a tragedy of staggering magnitude. No words could describe such a loss! No, this is not what God means.

The Hebrew word is not "mind" but *leb*, meaning heart. Your heart is your inner being, the seat of your motivations. Often we do things because something inside us, some inner motivation, prompts us to. We may not even know where the motivation comes from, without careful self-examination. Yet this passage assures us that no one will want to return to the past. It will be perfectly clear that life will be much, much better! But we will never forget the precious things God did for us on this old earth. Never! This is a case where a mistranslation promotes a sad untruth.

The Word of Truth Ministry

BULLETIN

Otis Q. Sellers, Founder November 2025

Updates from the Director

II Timothy 4:3 warns, "**For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, *because* they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers.**" This verse seems to describe the character of many today, who simply want to hear things from preachers and teachers that please them, rather than sound teaching based on God's Word. Whether it is beliefs they have been taught since they were young, or self-indulgent teachings that promise them their best life now, most have a priority for what they hear that is not simply guided by the question, "Is it the truth?"

Years ago I heard a sermon in which the speaker prayed and asked that God would give power to his words if he spoke the truth, and weaken his words if they were false. He asked God to make his words fall to the ground if they were wrong, so that he himself would see the inaccuracy and turn from them to the truth. I thought this was a fascinating prayer, actually asking God to disable his words if they were not true! I wonder how many preachers and teachers would be willing to pray such a thing? But this attitude is just the kind of attitude we must have if we are to be true students and honest teachers of God's Word. I have since used this prayer myself from time to time in beginning my own messages.

This same kind of attitude was displayed by our founder at *The Word of Truth Ministry*, Mr. Otis Q. Sellers. He often proved willing to change his mind and his teaching when he received new and greater light from God's Word. He would say that if anything he taught contradicted anything he had said or written earlier, that was because his latest teachings were his latest light. He continued to change his stance, even though it lost him friends along the way. Yet his great goal was the truth, and at *The Word of Truth Ministry* we attempt to continue living up to his legacy of ever seeking the truth, rather than just teaching what we have always thought or taught before.

At our annual conference, we taught much in the way of truth regarding Paul's epistles. These epistles may be divided between those written in the dispensation of grace and those written during the Acts period. On Saturday we examined the dispensation of grace epistles, and on Sunday those written during the Acts period. If you were unable to attend, please know we are in the process of posting the videos of the conference on our YouTube channel, *The Word of Truth Ministry*. We had a new videographer this year, and tried using multiple cameras and microphones to produce a better final video of the conference talks. Please visit our channel to see the results!

In our *Knowing God in the Word* radio program, our study is up to Acts 8 and the mission of Philip. In the weeks ahead, we will consider the salvation of Paul, the resurrection of Tabitha, and by the end of the year we will have reached the pivotal events that took place in the household of Cornelius. We continue to reach over the airways with the unique teaching from the perspective of the Acts 28 dividing line and the premillennial kingdom of God. Many in our listening audience have never heard this message before. Listen to the radio program if you live in one of our markets, or look us up on our podcast channel *Knowing God in the Word* on Apple Music and Spotify.

And enjoy the articles in this issue by our excellent writers as we continue our labors for the truth!

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Overcoming Lies about Hell

By Nathan C. Johnson

I recently was attracted to a video on YouTube about hell. The video maker claimed he was going to deal with the idea that "you've been lied to about hell." I wondered what lies he was going to expose and what he was going to say about the truth. Sadly, I found that generally all he did was say you've been lied to if you've been told God would never send you to hell. As far as popular lies, he repeated many of them. I wrote a comment on his video accusing him of this fact and showing him the specific lies he repeated, along with the Biblical evidence that they are lies. He never responded to my comment, and I think he may have even deleted it. Clearly, he had no desire to deal with my rebuke.

What are common lies told in the evangelical and Christian world about hell? One I have heard many times is that Christ spoke more about hell than He did about heaven. Of course, to confirm or deny this point is difficult, for one must ask what constitutes speaking of hell? In the Greek, Christ used the word *hades* and He used the word *gehenna*, both of which are often translated *hell*. Are we to take a reference to either one as being a reference to hell? If so, He referred to *hades* four times and *gehenna* eleven times, for a total of fifteen references. It is difficult also to determine when He was speaking of heaven. Was a reference to "the kingdom of heaven" a reference to heaven? What about when He referred to the sky as the Greek *ouranos* or heaven? If I try to eliminate the obvious references to the sky, I still get that the Lord Jesus referred to heaven around ninety times, meaning that He spoke of heaven six times more than He spoke of hell. How did anyone arrive at the lie, then, that He spoke more of hell than of heaven?

Another lie that is often told about hell is that only wicked people will ever go there. The Hebrew word often translated hell is *sheol*, and the very first time this word is used is when the man Jacob, believing that his son Joseph has been torn apart by a wild beast, claimed that in his sorrow he would go to *sheol* after his son, Genesis 37:35. **And all his sons and all his daughters arose to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted, and he said, "For I shall go down into the grave** [*sheol*] **to my son in mourning." Thus his father wept for him.** (*New King James Version* throughout) The fact that Jacob expected to go to hell is often hidden from the English reader by the translators, who often will translate this word as *grave* when it refers to good people like Jacob and *hell* when it refers to bad people. Nevertheless, the Hebrew reveals the truth: that Jacob expected to go to hell, if *sheol* indeed means hell. Yet the Lord Jesus Christ makes clear that Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and all the prophets will be in the kingdom of God in Luke 13:28. "**There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and yourselves thrust out."** This proves to us that Jacob was one of God's people, not a wicked person without salvation. The claim that only wicked people go to hell is not true, then, if the Hebrew word *sheol* indeed means hell. Yet if *sheol* does not mean hell, then hell is never mentioned in the Old Testament at all, since this is the only Old Testament word that is ever translated as hell! How did anyone arrive at the lie, then, that only wicked people go to hell?

Another lie about hell is that once one goes to hell, one can never get out. We are clearly told that Christ went to *hades* and got out in Acts 2:27, "**For You will not leave my soul in Hades, nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption.**" I Samuel 2:6 tells us of *sheol*, "**The Lord kills and makes alive; He brings down to the grave** [*sheol*] **and brings up.**" The Psalmist in Psalm 49:15 rejoices and says, "**But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave** [*sheol*]**, For He shall receive me. *Selah***" These verses make it clear that it is possible for the Lord to act to bring people out of hell after they have gone there. How did anyone arrive at the lie, then, that once one goes to hell, one can never get out? In this case, we may have a clue. They got it from biased and inaccurate translations!

Many lies that are told about hell will be justified by referring to the Lord's discourse about the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16:19-31. Those who prefer lies to the truth will often reference this passage as if it justified every wild idea they have had or false claim that they have made about hell. Yet this passage is seldom dealt with honestly because many wish to use and misapply it, simply because they have an axe to grind. Abraham and Lazarus are not said to be in heaven, as traditionalists would like to believe, but simply "afar off" from the rich man (Luke 16:23), and with Lazarus in Abraham's bosom. The rich man is tormented neither for wickedness nor for rejecting Christ, but because, in the words of Abraham in the passage, "**Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented**" (Luke 16:25).

A true search for Biblical facts about hell will reveal that hell and death are always closely associated. Hosea 13:14, a verse quoted by Paul in the New Testament (the only time Paul ever referred to hell!) says of Ephraim-Israel, "**I will ransom them from the power of the grave** [*sheol*]**; I will redeem them from death. O Death, I will be your plagues! O Grave** [*sheol*]**, I will be your destruction!**" Hell proves to simply be "the state of death" in verse after verse. To search the Scriptures and discover this reality is to truly overcome lies about hell.

Willing To Die

By Karise Brown

Imagine the most wonderful King you've ever known.

Now imagine that King willing to die for you.

Once there was a King so kind, so perfect, and so amazing, that people could not look at him. He also had great power. He made a beautiful land and placed his beloved people in it. They lived a wonderful life of peace and joy. The animals were tame. Death and disease didn't exist. Poison and pain were unheard of.

But that peace was not to last for long. For in every story, there is a wicked villain, and our story is no exception. The most beautiful in all the court, the cleverest, most talented courtier: he became our villain. He knew he was beautiful. He walked with his King in the midst of the fiery stones, but his heart became twisted. He was so much better than the others, could he not be better than his King?

There was a battle in the court, but the King prevailed and cast down the treacherous one. So our villain went down into the perfect world that the King had made for his people. He was a charmer. In no time at all, he had convinced the people to do the one thing the King had warned them not to do. The King had given them the power of choice because he loved them too much to dictate their lives to them. They had the power to break the world. Thanks to the deceiver, they did break it.

And the King's heart with it.

The world was broken, and it became chaos. Before, there had been no pain, no heartbreak, and no death. Now, destruction raged rampant. Evil had crawled into the hearts and minds of every human. And worst of all, there was no way they could save themselves. They were lost.

Luckily, the King had a plan. Though his people had turned their backs on him, he could not, he *would not* turn his back on them. He loved them too fiercely, too passionately. It was a selfless love that defied all bounds. Who would give themselves to die for a people who could never love like that in return – who would probably just shrug it off and ignore his passionate, fatal sacrifice?

Our King, that's who. He loved us too much to let us go without a fight.

But there was only one way, and it was a horrible path to take.

The great King, the one who had created everything with only a few words, the one who should have abandoned us long ago, that King came to us. Not in royal robes, nor festooned with gold or jewels or every indulgence he could have. He came as an infant. And did he come to the emperor of Rome? The governor of Judea? No! He came as a tiny, helpless baby to a poor family. He grew up in poverty because he loved us enough to give up all the riches and power in the world for our sake.

The people loved the King. But the rulers of the kingdom were jealous of his gentle strength. He was helping people, healing them, making them whole again. The leaders began to worry about uprisings. Greedy for power, they tried to trick the King in any way possible. But he was far too clever. He could catch them in their own traps with only a few words. Naturally, they were terrified. The people loved him, he was too perfect to be made wrong, and therefore it was high time he was out of the way.

They took their guards and came to him in the dead of night. He could have fought. He could have blasted them into pieces with a look or called down his angels to do it for him. Did he? No. They could barely stand in his presence! But he didn't fight because *this* was his plan all along.

He was tortured in unimaginable ways. They whipped him until he was unrecognizable. Blood upon blood, welts upon welts, wounds upon wounds. They struck him, pulled out his beard, crowned him with thorns – even though he was the king of the universe.

Then they gave him his instrument of death and told him to carry it to his execution site.

Tell me this: how can you die for someone who won't even acknowledge you?

Crowned in thorns, robed in wounds, he couldn't even make it there on his own. The pain he was taking on was unimaginable. Not only was it one of the most horrid, humiliating, excruciating deaths existing, but that pain was insignificant compared to the torment he was feeling inside. All the sins that had ever been committed, every lie, every lust, every bit of malice ever felt or that ever would be felt was placed on his shoulders. He held all our wickedness, and the punishment for our wickedness was death. He was perfect. He had *never* sinned! And yet. . . he chose to look past all the filth and see our lonely hearts.

He chose to fill those hearts.

Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! (John 1:29, NKJV)

He was a lamb. He was innocent. He had never done anything but love us.

He taught us how to live.

We taught him how to die.

Why, Lord?