

BULLETIN

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THOUGHTS FROM THE EDITOR

Jane S. Hancock

I am thoroughly enjoying re-reading the Book of Acts. I want to know more about Peter and Paul and the other characters who walk onto the Acts stage, some who are named and some who are not. I appreciate the stories that go along with these characters, stories about faith and miracles and violence and love and vengeance. And I am curious about the role of the Gentiles—before Acts 28:28.

Those of us here at The Word of Truth Ministry believe that the dividing line between the Acts Period and the Dispensation of Grace is Acts 28:28: *“Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it.”*

Before Acts 28:28 the message went to the Jew first. When Peter and Paul, the two main characters, along with others who were spreading the Gospel, travel and minister to people, it is always to the Jew first.

Israel had been a privileged people for centuries, but God has a plan, a plan for the nations to hear His word, a plan that is culminated at Acts 28:28.

We read about this plan that begins with Paul, who has been chosen for a special mission. This mission is told in a vision to Ananias in Acts 9:15. Ananias has heard of Saul (later renamed Paul), has heard about the evil he had done in the past. *“But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto Me, to bear My name before the Gentiles (nations), and kings, and the children of Israel.”*

And Peter has a special mission as well. In Acts 10 we meet Cornelius, a centurion in the Roman army, fears God, prays to God, gives alms to the poor. In a vision, an angel of God tells him to send for Peter in Joppa. Which he does. Meanwhile Peter has a dream. Acts 10:11-16. And although he is unsure what the dream, the vision means, it becomes clear when the men Cornelius sent arrive.

“Arise therefore, and get thee down, and go with them doubting nothing: for I have sent them” (Acts 10:20). And Peter does. He preaches to Cornelius and all his household and baptizes them in the name of the Lord. *“Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth Him and worketh righteousness, is accepted with Him”* (Acts 10:34-35).

Sergius Paulus in Acts 13:7 wants to hear the word of God, but a sorcerer tries to keep him from the faith. Paul causes the sorcerer to go blind and upon seeing this Sergius Paulus believes, *“being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord”* (Acts 13:12).

In Acts 13:16 we find Paul speaking to the Jews and to the Gentiles (nations): *“Then Paul stood up, and beckoning with his hand said, Men of Israel, and ye that fear God, give audience.”*

And again in Acts 13:26: *“Men and brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, and whosoever among you feareth God, to you is the word of this salvation sent.”*

Let’s continue in Acts 13. Paul, in the synagogue, has just finished a short history of the Old Testament, ending with this statement: *“Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man [Jesus] is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by Him all that believe are justified from all things”* (Acts 13:38). The Gentiles want to hear this same message and ask that it be preached to them the following week. And it is. And, according to the Scripture, almost the whole city comes to hear the word of God, upsetting the Jews. Paul and Barnabas tell them: *“It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles (nations). For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth”* (Acts 13:46-47).

Many Jews were violently opposed to Paul’s preaching to the Gentiles, violently opposed to them not obeying the Law of Moses. Just to make it absolutely clear, Paul and several others speak on this issue in letters to the Gentiles: *“For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things: that ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well”* (Acts 15:28-29). (See also Acts 21:25.)

Paul tells of *“the things God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry. And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord”* (Acts 21:19-20).

The stage is set for Acts 28:28.



GOD’S WORD CONCERNING DEATH

By Otis Q. Sellers

The subject of death is not a popular one. Few like to think of it. If I were seeking support or a following I would leave it alone. However, I am not interested in my following but in God’s leading.

One fact that is evident to the careful observer is that those who profess to believe the Bible have not been informed as to what is said there concerning death. Furthermore, they are not only uninformed, they have been misinformed as to what is declared there. Thus most professing Christians are living in a constant state of ignorance and unbelief so far as God’s revelation concerning death is concerned. They refuse to inform themselves, they close their eyes to all Biblical facts, and thus they stand as truth rejecters in the sight of God.

It is my conviction that we would all be healthier spiritually if we accepted what the Bible declares concerning death, faced up to it honestly, and quit trying to hide from it. There is no value in deluding ourselves about the reality of death. On this subject God has spoken. It is our sacred duty to discover and believe what He has said.

The salient Biblical fact concerning death is that it is the end of life, not the beginning of a new one. In other words, the Bible teaches that the dead are dead until they are raised from it. If this is not true, then death is meaningless and resurrection is more so. If death is a reality, then resurrection is also. The only possible answer to the question, "If a man die shall he live again?" is that he will live again only and if God raises him from the dead. If there be no resurrection of the dead, "then they also which have fallen asleep in Christ have perished" (1Cor. 15:18).

These Biblical truths are believed by very few, and they are openly rejected by the world. The widespread view is a philosophy that makes death to be the open door or introductory event to a larger and fuller life. Thus the role of resurrection is assigned to death. This is not right.

While the above statements may seem dogmatic, they are not a dogma based upon ignorance. For almost a half-century I have assiduously searched out and considered every fact in the Bible that has any bearing upon this subject. What I have found has brought about great changes in my own thinking, leading to my present understanding of God's Word concerning death. In view of this I feel it is my duty to bring to bear upon the minds of all who profess to believe the Word of God the facts declared there on this subject.

Jesus Christ said, "Thy word is truth." The one who knows and believes what God's Word says about death is one who knows and believes the truth. I am happy in the fact that I now believe and proclaim what God has to say about this subject.



TRUST, BUT VERIFY

By Rusty Hancock

I thoroughly enjoy reading the letters and e-mails that come into The Word of Truth Ministry. The fellowship, support, and encouragement are inspiring. We are all students, and I often read of individuals who greatly appreciate the messages and lessons they learn from the various publications offered by the Word of Truth.

I recently received a letter from a good friend of the Ministry, who lives in Florida. She has been a student of Otis Q. Sellers for decades. But her continued study and devotion to the Truth is remarkable. She recently read a pamphlet from The Word of Truth Ministry written by the late John C. Ribbens in 2003. The booklet, *The Nations Trusting In Christ*, has a detailed chart in it covering "Post Eonian Times."

There are several Scripture references in the chart. One reference was to Habakkuk 2:11. Our good friend, being the diligent student that she is, had looked up and read each reference. She did not just rely on, and accept, what was printed on the chart. Our good friend furthered her study, and searched to learn more. As it turns out, the reference was incorrect. It should have been Habakkuk 2:14. (A typographical error.)

Our good friend pointed this out to me in her letter. What I found most amazing about the letter, though, was her continued devotion to finding the Truth. Her own study, and attention to what she is learning. Her inspiration motivates me to keep looking for the Truth.

In regards to United States-Russian diplomacy, President Ronald Reagan said, “Trust, but verify.” I believe that applies here also.



WE GET LETTERS

“His [OQS’] work is so clear that I often wonder why other professing Christians miss the boat.”

“Thank God we have you to carry on the work Mr. & Mrs. Sellers started. . . . I look forward to the Bulletin and read it as soon as it comes. I enjoy it so much.”

“I just read the book *The Churches* by Otis Sellers you sent me. It was absolutely wonderful.”

“Thank you for all you do to keep Mr. Sellers’ messages alive. I have learned so much from these messages.”



THE THIRD HEAVEN—IS IT RELEVANT?

By Rusty Hancock

What would the response be if I were to ask readers of The Word of Truth Ministry, “Is Earth, not Heaven, our future home?” The answer would be a resounding “Yes.” Of course, the Earth is our future home.

Another question may not have as clear an answer. What does the phrase “third heaven” mean? I read this in one of Otis Q. Sellers’ pamphlets some time ago but I did not pursue it as I was more concerned with the main content of the study. Later, in **Seed & Bread** No. 85, Paul’s Desire to Depart, I came across the phrase “third heaven.” See 2 Corinthians 12:2 in the King James Version.

As far as I know, there is no reference to a “second heaven.” The only reference I could find to a “first heaven” is in Revelation 21:1. What does the phrase “third heaven” mean?

In pursuit of an answer, I sought out opinions from Word of Truth followers, students, teachers who I respect and trust. I received three different opinions. The following replies are brief versions of the original answers; they are paraphrased to show the differences between each answer.

Answer No. 1: The Heavens are time periods, in order of importance. The “first heaven” would be our existing period now in the Dispensation of Grace. The “second heaven” would be

the future Kingdom of God and Millennium, when God's will shall be done on Earth as it is in Heaven. The "third heaven" would finally be the New Heavens and New Earth.

Answer No. 2: Heaven is over and above. The "first heaven" is the Earth's atmosphere. It is the heaven that birds fly in and clouds and rain come from. The "second heaven" is outer space or the starry heavens. It includes the sun, moon, and all the stars when mentioned in the Bible. The "third heaven" is the place where God and the holy angels dwell. It is beyond the space and stars. It will become God's throne when Earth becomes His footstool.

Answer No. 3: Levels of God's government. This may be a reference to three different levels of God's future government and positions or rankings within the government. From a position to govern the Earth from Heaven, to positions given to David or the Twelve Disciples to govern here on Earth, or to a lesser title or rank.

Three different answers, all with limited information to prove or disprove. Can an accurate answer be given, and is it relevant? Does the question and answer move me any closer to understanding God's word and future Kingdom? Or am I being side tracked unnecessarily?

As many of you know, I am now retired after 30 years in Law Enforcement. I spent my life "proving" an individual's guilt in court. Not an easy task. Jurors would sometimes ask a question that, although interesting, was not relevant. I could put on a murder trial with several eyewitnesses, DNA evidence, fingerprint evidence, a video of the crime, other forensic evidence, and a confession. Guilt was never an issue. But someone would want to know, where did the killer get the gun he used in the crime? Although an interesting question, the answer may not be known. The question had no relevance as to the suspect's guilt or innocence.

I'll keep looking for an answer to the "third heaven," but is it relevant?

(Editor's Note: Sometimes we ask questions that are not necessarily relevant. But we want to know anyway. What we do know is that in God's Kingdom our most irrelevant questions may be answered. God speed the day when we see His Kingdom and all things will be made known.)



BIBLE STUDY AUDIO DISKS

By Otis Q. Sellers, Bible Teacher

The entire Tape Library (TL) series, consisting of numbers TL-001 to TL-570, is available on MP3 compact disks. A complete subjects list may be obtained from our Web site, www.seedandbread.org, or the home office in Pasadena, CA, or writing/e-mailing:

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SEED & BREAD VOLUMES 1 & 2

Would you like to read the **Seed & Bread** references given in Joanne Johnson's or Jane Hancock's articles? You can now purchase the entire amount of Seed & Bread articles in both volumes in hard cover or soft cover editions, called **Seed & Bread Volumes 1 and/or 2**. These two volumes are printed in large type and are easy to read. The price for the soft-cover volumes is \$19. The cost of the hard-cover volumes is \$25 each volume. Please add \$3 for orders up to \$30 and 10% for orders over \$30. Kindly make out checks or money orders in U.S. dollars to **The Word of Truth Ministry** and mail to **228 N. El Molino Ave., Pasadena, CA 91101-1675**. Please allow 3-6 weeks delivery time for small orders (or more time for large orders).



WORSHIP ONLY JESUS

By Joanne L.H. Johnson

Jesus Christ, our God, is the only one who should be worshipped and one can worship Him anywhere at any time—there are no restrictions. However, most of us have had some experience with a church and its widely accepted function as a place of worship and assembly. Remember what Christ said, “*Know ye not that ye are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?*” (1 Cor. 3:16). In the Acts Period the men of the Christian “church,” including the Twelve Apostles, were sons of God and able to act as mediators, based on the gifts they were given. Today we call ourselves “children of God,” but in the Kingdom we will be “sons of God,” “out-called ones” for the special service to the Lord that is related to the gift of grace in this dispensation. The real meaning of the word used for “church” in the Bible is the Greek word *ekklesia* and means “out-called ones” (see **Seed & Bread** No. 79, *What Does Ekklesia Mean?*) in most occurrences in the New Testament.

In the Acts Period the salutations of the letters to the various groups or *ekklesia* were instructions to specific locations (Corinth or Thessalonica). In the Dispensation of Grace, the salutations were to the “saints” (after Acts 28:28); for example see Ephesians 1:1, Philippians 1:1, Colossians 1:1-2. The word “saint” is a description of a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. Don't equate the “saints” of the Bible with the Catholic-Church-designated saints. Past good works and dubious faith in Jesus Christ are NOT qualifications for sainthood at all. We would not compare ourselves to these selected and dead “saints.” The Mormons claim that they are “saints,” but they call themselves “the latter day saints of Jesus Christ.” “Saints” are actually those believing in and being in or having faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. The Twelve Disciples were called “saints” because they taught about Jesus Christ and all the converts of the Acts Period were also “saints.” Only Jesus Christ should be worshipped and not all of the idols/icons

and designated angels of the Catholic Church. Idols and icons are worthless representations of false gods. Angels are messengers of God and likewise NOT to be worshipped.

A man who wanted to follow Christ wanted to know what the most important commandment in the Law was. Christ told him one should *“love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and all thy soul and with all thy mind”* (Matt. 22:37). Also, in the Ten Commandments, it says that the Hebrews were not to make any likeness or graven images in stone or wood. This does NOT say to love or worship the supposed saints or idols/icons of the Catholic Church.

Catholics believe in worshipping Mary, the mother of Jesus. In Scripture it says Mary should not be worshipped, but honored for being the implement of bringing Jesus Christ to this earth as a man. Mary is NOT Jesus Christ, she cannot remit sins, only Christ can, so why should she be worshipped and made a false god? She was serving God to bare Jesus Christ, so that He could be a man and die on the cross for the sins of the world. Without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin. That’s why Christ died for our sins. Besides, Mary is dead and buried like everyone else and NOT in Heaven. She is NOT *“the Queen of Heaven.”* Like God/Christ said to the Israelites in Exodus 20:3, *“Thou shalt have NO other gods before Me.”*

Why did Christ say to the Pharisees that *“I and My Father are One?”* (John 10:30). That means that Jesus Christ is God the Father, the God from before the beginning of the universe. Like it says in John 1:1-4: *“In the beginning was the Word (the Expression of God) and the Word was with God and the Word was God (the Word personified is Jesus Christ). The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him and without Him was not anything made that was made. In Him was life and the life was the light of men.”* The late Otis Q. Sellers identified the Jehovah Messiah of the Old Testament as the Jesus Christ of the New Testament (see **Seed & Bread** No. 2, *The Lord Jesus is Jehovah*).

But Jesus is the only one who should be worshipped. Remember the vision that Peter, James and John had on the Mount of Transfiguration? They saw Moses and Elijah with Jesus Christ and Peter suggested that a booth or tabernacle should be built for each one. Then what happened? When Peter tried to give them a place of importance beside Jesus, Moses and Elijah disappeared and they saw JESUS ONLY. Sellers says in the **Seed & Bread** No. 18, *Jesus Only*, *“The recording of this event in the Word of God provides a lesson that teaches every man that no matter how great or important a thing may be by itself, there is nothing that is important when placed with or alongside the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus we are taught the all-sufficiency of the Lord of glory.”* God in Christ is a jealous God, as He permits NO equals (Exod. 20:5), and He alone is to be worshipped.

The Bible says that there is one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus (1 Tim. 2:5). There can be no other mediators in this dispensation. The Catholics have a pope, and other religions have preachers, pastors and ministers, none of whom can take the place of Jesus Christ. They are not God; they cannot grant people salvation. Only Jesus/God can do that (see **Seed & Bread** No. 17, *The One Mediator*). No other beings, whether Mary, the angels or saints can do what He can do, for they are all dead or not in power. And Christ is the one and only Son of God expressing God to man and Son of Man expressing man to God. That’s why He ALONE should be worshipped.

