

BULLETIN

THE WORD OF TRUTH MINISTRY
228 NORTH EL MOLINO AVENUE
PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91101-1675
www.seedandbread.org

Otis Q. Sellers, Founder



David R. Hettema, Director

Volume 3, No. 15

Jane Sellers Hancock, Editor

June 2014

THOUGHTS FROM THE EDITOR

Jane S. Hancock

UPDATES FROM THE MINISTRY

Recently, we had a visitor from South Carolina, Randy Bettilyon and his family. They were spending a week in California visiting our national parks, Disneyland, and The Word of Truth Ministry. “I don’t know how you accomplish all this,” he said, shortly after arriving. “I don’t know how we accomplish it either,” I laughed.

Looking back on the last year I find we have much to report about our accomplishments and the people who have made it happen.

New Writers and Old. We have always invited those on our mailing list to write articles and submit them to us but the submissions are few and far between. But now we welcome **Andrew Brown** and **Nathan Johnson**, who are not only writing articles for the Bulletin but for **More Seed & Bread** as well. Young, energetic, enthusiastic and devoted to the study of Biblical truths, they will be regular contributors to our publications. In this issue we feature “God’s View of Death” by Andy and “Near Death Experiences” by Nathan. Joanne Johnson’s article is entitled “The Resurrection of the Dead.” These three articles complement each other. Also in this Bulletin is “The Sin Question” by Nathan. Be sure to have your Bible open as you read this one. You will want to look up all the references. In addition we are enclosing two new **More Seed & Breads**: one by Andy, “Active Faith,” and the other by **Milt Hammond**, “Our Infinite and Magnificent God.”

Louis Tonetti has reformatted the six **Seed & Bread** issues written by Otis Q. Sellers which he called the Resultant Version of the book of Ephesians into one easy-to-read volume, “Ephesians Study.” It is now available on our website, www.seedandbread.org. We hope soon to have it available in hard copies through amazon.com. Don’t order it now. We’ll let you know when it is ready.

The Conferences. We didn’t know what to expect when we advertised a conference for last October but it turned out to be successful. So we’re having another one, this one in the city of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, where **Andy Brown** lives. See the ad on Page 5 of this Bulletin. The theme: “What Happened after Acts 28:28—Considering God’s Current Work.” We mentioned the conference in the last Bulletin; we have sent out letters to all our readers in the Midwestern

States, and now we are mentioning it again—in a little more detail. The dates are Sunday, September 21 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Monday, September 22, 2014 from 1 p.m. to 9 p.m.; the place the Holiday Inn Express (Milwaukee Airport), 1400 W. Zellman Ct., Milwaukee, 53221, 414-563-4000. We will meet in a conference room at the hotel; we have also arranged a nightly rate of \$75 per room for out-of-town guests. Simply tell the receptionist you will be attending “The Word of Truth Conference.” **Nathan Johnson, Andy Brown, Bob Juneau, Hal Booher, and Milt Hammond** will be speaking among others who have not yet been confirmed. The schedule has not been finalized at this mailing but once we know you are coming, we’ll keep you informed. Plan on a full two days (or one if that is all you can make).

My son Rusty and I are looking forward to this opportunity to meet some of our friends from the Midwest and beyond.

Tech Support. **Bob Hammond** is in charge of our website (www.seedandbread.org) and what goes on it with the help of two women we have never met, **Cindy Fajardo**, our web administrator from the beginning, and **Candace Davis**, who recently stumbled onto our website at the moment of our greatest need and did an independent review of all the studies. Over the years many of you have bought tapes and then the MP3 CDs and then the flash drives so that you could listen to all 570 messages produced by Otis Q. Sellers during his life time. Now you can have them FREE. (See our ad on Page 5.) We have also placed all of the **More Seed & Bread** issues (Nos. 201-273) on the website. We thank all of you for your financial support to make this bold move possible.

What Else Do We Do? **Rusty Hancock** is our office manager. He opens the mail, fills the orders, pays the bills, goes to the post office, keeps the records, deals with the government. Without him we would not be able to do anything; The Word of Truth Ministry would have closed its doors forever. His grandfather, Otis Q. Sellers, would be so proud of him. And Rusty is a student of the Bible as well. He has all of his grandfather’s studies on his computer and he listens or reads, his Bible at his side. I’m proud of him too.

In addition to writing articles, **Joanne Johnson** reads, edits, and formats everything before it goes to the printer.

David Hettema, Director Emeritus. When Otis Q. Sellers died, it was David Hettema who kept the Word of Truth Ministry going. It’s been a couple of years since David has attended any of our meetings and we miss him. If you want to send him a message, just address it to us (e-mail or snail mail) and we’ll forward it. (**Note:** David Hettema died on June 20, 2014 after this Bulletin went to press. Condolences can be sent to the Hettema Family by way of the Ministry.)

Our Readers. Yes, you are among those who make it happen, who make it possible for our little group to continue this work begun by Otis Q. Sellers eighty years ago. We are grateful for your continued support. We like hearing from you—just a postcard, an e-mail, or a quick note. Thank you.



NEAR DEATH EXPERIENCES

By Nathan C. Johnson

At any given time at any Christian bookstore, one can be certain that there will be several books on the shelf written by or about some person who supposedly died, went to heaven, and came back to tell the story. These books always sell well, and so they are never in short supply, varying only as to which are current and popular at the time.

Of course, the people who write these books were never really dead, for once death is complete, there is no coming back from it without the power of God. Therefore, this phenomenon is often referred to as “near death experiences” or NDEs. Books about NDEs appeal to those who find in them comfort from the fear of death. These qualify, in the words of Hebrews 2:15, as “*them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.*” They have little confidence in the One Who rose from the dead, and so they find solace instead in those who supposedly “died and came back.” Yet many Christians love these books, believing they “back up their faith” in heaven.

In high school, I took a Christian apologetics class wherein NDEs were put forth as a “proof” of Christianity. I immediately began to wonder about people who are not orthodox Christians and what kind of NDEs they might experience. I later learned that people from all different religious backgrounds and persuasions claim to have had NDEs, but their accounts do not involve going to heaven or to hell. The universal rule of NDEs is that they will always confirm what the one experiencing them already believed about death. An orthodox Christian sees heaven and meets his loved ones there. Yet someone who believes that salvation is by works reports seeing his life in review, and when it is found that his good works outweigh his bad works, he is told he is all right. A Hindu visits the god of the underworld, a Buddhist reports meeting the Buddha, and a humanist goes back in time to see the big bang and discover the “meaning of life.” If the NDE of a Christian proves heaven is our future home, then what do these NDEs of non-Christians prove?

Another argument against using these experiences as “proofs” of anything is that they would seem to necessitate God making a mistake about whether or not a person is dead. Those from other religions who have NDEs often report being “sent back” because they have been taken by mistake. Christians who experience NDEs seldom come back saying God made a mistake, but rather claim they are sent back because God has more for them to do. But why did He take them in the first place, then? Am I to believe God will be mistaken and think people are dead when they are not?

Whether experienced by a Christian or someone of any other religion, NDEs will almost universally contradict what the Bible actually teaches about death: “*The dead know not any thing*” (Ecclesiastes 9:5), and, “*The dead praise not the LORD, neither any that go down into silence*” (Psalm 115:17). The Bible never speaks of going to heaven when you die. The solution to death set forth by the Bible is resurrection. The hope the Scriptures speak of is being resurrected into the premillennial kingdom here on Earth. NDEs contradict the Scriptures, but usually no more than what the person who experienced them already believed. So what does this tell us about them?

I would conclude that NDEs are a very vivid sort of dream or vision that people sometimes experience when close to death. When one is ill, dreams can seem much more real than dreams do normally, as I myself have experienced. When one is on the point of death, dreams can be experienced that seem tenfold more realistic. The person knows he is close to dying, and the

brain is struggling to deal with such a situation, never having experienced dying before. One way it can attempt to deal with it is to produce a comforting dream that supports what the dying one believes will happen to him after death. Perhaps God even graciously wired our brains to do this. A comforting dream seems more gracious at such a time than a terrifying one! But the sad part is that so few know the truth about life after death that these dreams are usually far from the truth. Yet they seem so vivid and real to the one experiencing them that once he recovers, he is convinced he actually experienced them.

People try to support the reality of NDEs by claims that those who experience them predict things they could not have known otherwise. If we are to admit these claims as true, which is questionable, we might wonder if here we have the supernatural stepping in. Our enemy loves to deceive people about death, and NDEs often convince people that their beliefs, no matter how unbiblical they are, are actually true. Evil forces could strongly support the deception by stepping into such visions and imparting information that could not be known otherwise.

Ultimately, the Bible never says anything about NDEs. Jeremiah 23:28 warns, *“The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath My word, let him speak My word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the Lord.”* Since these NDE dreams contradict what the Word of God says about death, they are not to be trusted by a believer. What the Bible says about death is true. What people who have had NDEs say about death is just a dream, and should not lead anyone to doubt the sure testimony of God. No matter how real these things may seem to those who have experienced them, if they are not according to the Word, they must be utterly discounted.



BELIEVING GOD’S VIEW OF DEATH

By Andrew Brown

“We do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep” (1 Thess. 4:13). Are you informed of the Biblical comparison of death and sleep? If standard theology were correct, then God confuses His audience when He compares death to sleep. The Lord spoke, *“Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I go, so that I may awaken him out of sleep” (John 11:11).* If Lazarus was alive in heaven or the Pharisees’ fictitious place of Abraham’s bosom, then Jesus could not say that Lazarus was sleeping or that He would “awaken him.” The disciples thought the Lord spoke of literal sleep. *“Jesus then said to them plainly, ‘Lazarus is dead’” (John 11:14).* We should allow His Word to correct and establish our view of death, tossing aside assumptions that don’t match the truth of Scripture. The Lord used sleep as a metaphor for death. Do you know what death is like? I don’t. Nobody does. Do you know about sleep? I do. Therefore, Scripture compares something we all know about to something nobody knows about. The Bible compares death to sleep. We must take Him at His word and not read in the traditions of men.

The many occurrences of this Bible comparison should not be disputed or twisted, but should be carefully studied. David wrote, *“I will sleep the sleep of death” (Psa. 13:3).* Luke later explained: *“For David...fell asleep, and was laid among his fathers and underwent decay”*

(Acts 13:36). No distinction is made between David and his body. The “true David” is not detached from his body. Stephen “*fell asleep*” (Acts 7:60). Many of the Corinthians “sleep” (I Cor. 11:30). With the exceptions of Enoch and Elijah, all of past humanity has experienced the sleep of death. There will come a time when the dead will “awake” in resurrection. Daniel stated, “*Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake*” (Dan. 12:2). Why does Daniel say the dead are “sleeping in the dust” if the dead are really alive? Many are deceived by Satan’s lies when they redefine death and disagree with God’s Word.

The Creator God “*formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being (soul)*” (Gen. 2:7). This is man’s beginning. He did not exist before this. God did not create him from nothing; He molded man from the ground. This formed body received God’s breath of life and he *became* a living soul. It did not possess a soul. He was a soul. If the breath of God leaves man, *he* (not just a body-shell) returns to dust. Scripture does not divide man from his body and the believer should not either.

God made Adam to live and not die, but put a condition on him. Adam would live continually if he believed and obeyed God. The punishment for disobedience was “*dying you will die*” (Gen. 2:17, Bullinger). Adam possessed conditional immortality. If he disobeyed God, he would start to die until death was completed. Adam would die, not live. God further explained the punishment was toiling “*till you return to the ground because from it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return*” (Gen. 3:19). Adam would return to dust, his previous state. Anyone who does not believe that Adam is dust right now does not believe God from the beginning. It is absurd to think that Adam thought his punishment would be “immortality in hell.”

The Bible speaks of dead souls many times, never about immortal souls. This is part of Satan’s lie. The serpent said to the woman, “*You surely will not die...and you will be like God*” (Gen. 3:4-5). Sin and death came into God’s perfect world due to this rebellion against Him. **Rebellion’s curse (death) is not the gateway to God’s gift of aionian life!** God emphatically declared that “*the last enemy that will be abolished is death*” (I Cor. 15:26). **Death is an enemy.**

Scripture gives a clear view of David’s death, “*As David’s time to die drew near...[he said], ‘I am going the way of all the earth’*” (I Kings 2:2). “*Then David slept with his fathers and was buried in the city of David*” (I Kings 2:10). David fell asleep. He was not alive anywhere. David understood the truth about death: “*What profit is there in my blood, if I go down to the pit? Will the dust praise You? Will it declare Your faithfulness?*” (Psa. 30:9). No, dust cannot praise the Lord. Only the living can praise the Lord. The dead know nothing. “*David is not ascended into the heavens*” (Acts 2:34, KJV), declared Peter. Even after Christ’s resurrection, righteous King David was not in heaven. Peter’s audience could see the grave where David had returned to dust.

Moses proclaimed to God, “*You turn men back into dust*” (Psa. 90:3). Our gracious God is “*mindful that we are but dust*” (Psa. 103:14). He has spoken of a glorious future for David. As Christ was raised from the dead, so David will experience resurrection. The next thing David will know is that he has been “awakened” by God’s voice calling him out of the state of death into the Kingdom of God. “*You will call, and I will answer You; you will long for the work of your hands*” (Job 14:15). **God’s solution for death is resurrection!**

Countless tragedies have followed in the wake of Adam's pivotal choice to walk contrary to God's command. Death is unavoidable. Yet Christ will raise the dead! Those who have been identified with His death and resurrection will be raised into the magnificent future He has promised to those who believe. God's Word provides perfect information on all things related to this topic. Our thoughts ought to be brought into conformity with Scripture's clear truth and not muddled by traditional fables. Do you believe God and hold His view of life and death? Or do you believe Satan that "*you surely will not die?*"



THE SIN QUESTION

By Nathan C. Johnson

Question: We have recently been studying/discussing the meaning and definition of "sin." Does the definition change between the Old Testament, the Gospel Period, the Acts Period, and now in the Dispensation of Grace?

In 2 Corinthians 5:20-21, since Jesus "*knew no sin,*" it has been suggested that His only sin was the fact that He died. Can the unavoidable reality of death be a sin? I have a hard time accepting this concept. I lean towards the belief that death is the consequence of the original sin, not a sin itself.

Answer: To "sin" is to miss the mark. 1 John 5:17 offers further information: "*All unrighteousness is sin.*" So the "mark" is righteousness. Everything that misses that mark is sin. Let us consider the things the Bible specifically mentions as sins.

In the Old Testament, Sodom's behavior was sin, Genesis 18:20. Joseph's brothers selling him into slavery was a sin, Genesis 42:22. Pharaoh refusing to let the Israelites go was a sin, Exodus 9:27, 34, 10:16. To worship a god other than the true God was a sin, Exodus 23:33. The worship of the golden calf was a sin, Exodus 32:30, 32, 34. To fail in the holy things of the LORD was a sin, Leviticus 5:15, 16. To find something that was lost and then lie about it was a sin, Leviticus 6:3. The Israelites refusing the LORD's command to enter the land was sin, Numbers 14:40. The complaints of the people against the LORD and Moses was a sin, Numbers 21:7. Balaam going with the messengers of Balak against the LORD's command was a sin, Numbers 22:34. For a woman to return to her former husband after she has married another man was a sin, Deuteronomy 24:4. Achan taking from the things devoted to the LORD was a sin, Joshua 7:11, 20. To eat meat with the blood was a sin, 1 Samuel 14:33, 34. Rebellion and witchcraft were sins, 1 Samuel 15:23. For Saul to attempt to kill innocent David was a sin, 1 Samuel 19:4, 5. David's actions with Bathsheba and Uriah were sins, 2 Samuel 12:13, Psalm 51:2, 4. David's pride in numbering the Israelites was a sin, 2 Samuel 24:17. Israel worshipping the golden calves of Jeroboam was a sin, 1 Kings 12:30. Manasseh's idolatry was sin, 2 Kings 21:16. If Nehemiah had hidden for fear when God had given him a work to do, that would have been sin, Nehemiah 6:13. Solomon sinned by marrying foreign wives and following their ways, Nehemiah 13:26. To curse God in your heart was sin, Job 1:5. To charge God foolishly was sin, Job 1:22, 2:10. To speak a curse against one who hates you was a sin, Job 31:30. To despise your neighbor was sin, Proverbs 14:21. To swear something you cannot fulfill was a sin,

Ecclesiastes 5:6. To cause your sons and daughters to pass through the fire to Molech was a sin, Jeremiah 32:35. To depart from the LORD's precepts and judgments was a sin, Daniel 9:5. To make idols was a sin, Hosea 13:2.

In the Gospels, the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit was a sin that cannot be forgiven, Matthew 12:31. Betraying innocent blood was a sin, Matthew 27:4. The actions of the prodigal son were a sin, Luke 15:21. Adultery was a sin, John 8:11. The religious leaders were sinners because they claimed to see, and yet still rejected Christ, John 9:41. The leaders who delivered the Lord to Pilate had greater sin than Pilate, John 19:11. In the Acts period, the stoning of Stephen was a sin, Acts 7:60. Whatever was not of faith was sin, Romans 14:23. Fornication was a sin, 1 Corinthians 6:18. To wound the weak conscience of a brother by eating food offered to idols was a sin, 1 Corinthians 8:12. Showing bias towards people because of wealth or status was a sin, James 2:9. Sin was the transgression of the law, I John 3:4.

In the dispensation of grace, we don't really have any specific sins listed, other than the "divers lusts" of silly women in 2 Timothy 3:6, and being a sectarian (separating yourself from God's truth to form your own little group) of Titus 3:11. Adultery is mentioned as a sin in 2 Peter 2:14.

Other than a few things that have to do with Israel's law, most things that were sin in previous dispensations still are sin, at least in principle, in our day. The definition of sin did not change much. What changes took place had to do with our position as believers "in Christ" today apart from Israel and her law.

Death is a consequence of sin, not sin in and out of itself. Death as we experience it in this life is a result of sin and death being in the world. It is not necessary to sin specifically to die, as is shown by the many little children that die too young to have sinned a specific sin. They simply die because sin and death are in the world. Death is a natural consequence of sin, not a sin in itself. The fact that Christ was made to be sin does not refer to His death.

Christ being "made sin" is explained in Isaiah 53:6: "*All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.*" The Lord Jesus was made sin when God laid on Him the iniquity of us all. It was not for anything He did (like dying) that He became sin, but by imputation, by the sins we committed being laid on Him. It is the very opposite when we believe. We are made the righteousness of God in Him, not for any righteous deed we did, but merely because we are "in Christ" by faith His righteousness is imputed to us. This is identification (baptism). He was identified with our sin on the cross, and we are identified with His righteousness as believers in Him.



SAVE THE DATE

***Sunday, September 21 &
Monday, September 22, 2014***

**A Word of Truth Ministry
Midwest Bible Conference in**

Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Theme: "What Happened After Acts 28:28--Considering God's Current Work."

Speakers: Nathan Johnson,
Andy Brown, Bob Juneau, Hal Booher and Milt Hammond.

Place: The Holiday Inn Express,
Conference Room
(Milwaukee Airport),
1400 W. Zellman Ct.,
(414) 563-4000.

Times: Sunday, September 21, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Monday, September 22, from 1 p.m. to 9 p.m.

For reserving a \$75-per-night room, tell the receptionist you will be attending "The Word of Truth Conference."

Think you might come either Sunday or Monday or both days? Let us know. E-mail or write us. (More info to come.)



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THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD

By Joanne L.H. Johnson

The “resurrection of the dead” is a very old Jewish belief, and one not too well understood today. Not all Jews believed in it at the time of Jesus Christ, however. The Gospels record that there then were two ruling parties in Palestine. The one party, the “Pharisees,” believed in the resurrection of the dead, and the other party, the “Sadducees,” did not.

Let’s go to the Word of God to see what it says about this old Jewish belief. *“I know that My Redeemer liveth and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth. And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me” (Job 19:25-27). (All verses are from the King James Version.)*

Here Job knows that he will die but he also knows that in the future (Kingdom of God) he shall see God, in other words, he knows that he will be raised from the dead. In contrast, Job was saying that “after my skin will be destroyed, this Redeemer will stand” and that “He shall stand at last upon the Earth.”

This is an example of the resurrection of the dead in full view of the future Kingdom of God. As believers in Jesus Christ, this should be our future hope and expectation, rather than “going to Heaven” when we die.

We know that Christ died for our sins and was raised from the dead on the third day. Like the Scriptures say, *“Blessed be the God and (even) Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively (living) hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1 Peter 1:3)*. Acts 4:10 says: *“Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, who ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead”*

These words following are a picture of death. God had declared that at the time of Adam, “. . . For dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return” (Gen. 3:19). Psalm 115:16-17 says: *“The heaven, even the heavens, are the Lord’s: but the earth hath He given to the children of men. The dead praise not the Lord, neither any that go down into silence.”* Another, Psalm 146:3-4, says, *“Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help. His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish.”*

God had to change this. Without death there can be no resurrection. But God raised His Son, or Expression, Jesus Christ from the dead, Who died for our sins. Like it says in 1 Corinthians 15:13-22: *“But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: and if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. . . . For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: and if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. . . . But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.”*

Remember, when Christ was on earth, He raised Martha and Mary’s brother, Lazarus, from the dead. Lazarus did not “go to Heaven.” In John 11:11, Jesus tells about going to see Lazarus: *“Our friend Lazarus sleepeth (he had been ill and died); but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep.”* John 11:23-27 records a conversation between Jesus and Martha: *“Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again. Martha saith unto Him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die. Believest thou this? She saith unto Him, Yea, Lord: I believe that Thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.”* And Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead *“that they may believe that Thou (God) hast sent Me” (John 11:42).*

We now have a picture of the resurrection of the dead and contrast it with the promise of eonian life. As the Gospel of John says: *“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should (may) not perish (die the second death), but (may) have everlasting (eonian) life” (John 3:16).* And God warns us that: *“He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him (John 3:36).”* In other words, that person will suffer the second death after being raised from the dead by NOT believing in Jesus Christ.

That is why it is so important to be a believer in God in Christ and know that when we die, we will not go to Heaven but will be raised from the dead, as He was many years ago, to live again on Earth.

