

BULLETIN

THE WORD OF TRUTH MINISTRY

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APRIL 2022

Updates from the Director

Mr. Otis Q. Sellers, the founder of The Word of Truth Ministry and its first Director, started his independent ministry as the world entered a time of terrible turmoil and trouble. In his earliest writings, he speaks of the events of the Second World War, of the world leaders prominent at the time, and of what might and could happen in its aftermath and the post-war world. Yet in spite of trouble and turmoil, Mr. Sellers kept his focus firmly fixed on the Word of God, and his task of seeking and bringing forward its truth. As we face our own days of trouble, trial, and turmoil, we are determined to do the same. With tyranny seeming to spread and some speaking (hopefully not too seriously) of the possibility of World War III, we look to the Word of God for hope and inspiration in dark times.

Speaking of the early works of Mr. Sellers, we have started an exciting new publishing project to return these to print. Using Amazon's Kindle software for self-publishing, we have been reissuing some of Mr. Sellers' original pamphlets, with a new cover, but largely restored to much like their original format. The titles currently released include: *This I Believe*, *That Jesus Is the Christ*, *The Powers That Be*, *Sorting Prophetic Material*, *Christian Individualism: A Way of Life for the Active Believer in Jesus Christ*, *God's Present Purpose: What Is It? What Is He Doing?*, *God Has Spoken: Five Radio Messages*, *The Concluding Days*, and *The Study of Human Destiny: A Testimony and An Appeal*. Perhaps most exciting, we have reissued Mr. Sellers' pamphlet *The Good Olive Tree*, which is not on our website and has not been available for many decades. Restored from the personal collection of the late friend of the ministry Mr. Milton Hammond, this pamphlet explores the interpretation of Romans 11. More pamphlets and other material will continue to be issued in the months ahead. We may also

release some of them in Kindle format, or even in hard cover.

We are in the planning stages for our yearly summer Midwest Bible Conference, this year to take place in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Our theme is "Problem Passages Regarding Human Destiny," and we will be exploring many of the most difficult passages relating to the fate of Adam's race after death. Passages like Luke 16:19-31 (The Rich Man and Lazarus), II Corinthians 5:1-10 (absent from the body, present with the Lord), Philippians 1:21 (to live is Christ and to die is gain), and Revelation 20:10 (they will be tormented day and night forever and ever) will all be examined, and their relationship to what we believe is the true fate of man will be considered. Join us for a weekend of fellowship around God's Word. See the insert in this Bulletin for more information.

In the meantime, please enjoy our ongoing submissions to YouTube on our channel, "The Word of Truth Ministry," wherein both videos and audios of past conferences, as well as newly recorded lessons, will continue to be posted every week. The radio program, "Knowing God in the Word," continues our study of the gospel of Matthew. And our written material through the *Bulletin* and *More Seed and Bread* continues to spread the truth of God's Word and the unique message of God's coming, premillennial kingdom.

Enjoy the current Bulletin, and thank you for your continued support of The Word of Truth Ministry. In times of trouble and turmoil, it is good to know we have an anchor of truth in the Scriptures, the Word of the Living God.

Nathan C. Johnson

God Behind the Scenes

By Nathan C. Johnson

One of the strangest of the historical books of Scripture is the book of Esther. It is a post-exile history, along with Daniel, Ezra, and Nehemiah. Although it shares some similarities with these books (especially with Daniel, dealing with God's people in exile far from their land), it contains one feature unprecedented elsewhere in Scripture: it does not contain any name of God.

The only other book that seems the same at first glance is the Song of Solomon. That book contains no name of God in many English versions, but in Hebrew it is there, appearing in a compound word. In Song of Solomon 8:6, the Author declares that love and jealousy (which in this case I would define as the desire for marital exclusivity) are "Yah's flame," Yah being a shortened form of Yahweh. That *love is Jehovah's fire*¹ is perhaps the theme verse of the book, and so the name Yah appears very prominently in the Song of Solomon. Yet there is no such name of God in the book of Esther, even in a compound word. Why is a book apparently devoid of any reference to God contained in the Bible?

In the book of Esther, Israel was in captivity outside their land. While some Israelites were in Assyria and in Babylon, the book focuses on those within the territory of Persia under the powerful King Ahasuerus. This king had nearly absolute power, held back only by a Persian law stating that once he had officially written a law, even he could not change it. Apparently, this was an early attempt to codify what would later be written in England's Magna Carta: that the king is not above the law. Yet this law was the only check on this king, and every life within his realm, including that of the Jews, was in his hands.

The book of Esther records that the king became angry at his wife Vashti and divorced her, and that he collected a harem of women while searching for a new wife. At last, he favored Esther, a Jew, and made her queen, though she hid her Israelite background. Meanwhile, the king formed a friendship with a drinking buddy named Haman the Agagite. The king made it law that Haman be favored with near-divine devotion by all whom he passed. Mordecai, Esther's uncle who had raised her, drew Haman's wrath when, as a good Jew, he refused to give such devotion to a man. Haman was so wicked that he scorned getting revenge only on Mordecai, and manipulated the king into decreeing that the entire Jewish community within Persia be exterminated. That genocide would have wiped out a good portion of the world's Jews.

After Mordecai informed Esther of this, she formulated a plan to try to get her husband the king to favor and help her. She made it clear to him that she needed help, but then refused to tell him what was troubling her, piquing his curiosity and making him feel, perhaps for the first time, like an actual husband who wants to care for and protect his wife. Yet Esther was almost too clever: while she delayed, Haman became so furious with Mordecai that he determined to murder him the next day. Yet his plot was forestalled when the king, who happened to be unable to sleep that night, read in his chronicles of a past favor Mordecai did him by revealing a plot against the king's life. He determined to reward

Mordecai, and ordered Haman, who had come to his court to ask for permission to execute Mordecai, to honor him instead. When Esther finally revealed to her husband that she too was a Jew to be executed by Haman's mandate, the king executed Haman, promoted Mordecai into Haman's now vacant role, and allowed him to write new laws sparing the Israelites.

All this was done, seemingly without any interference from God whatsoever. Mordecai and Esther appear to have been mildly religious at best, and when Esther faced risking the wrath of her husband, she asked those around her to fast for her, but not to pray. It is Esther's scheme that saves the day in the end, and no Godly lesson appears to be found in the book.

But wait! Why, when the king could have picked any woman in the land to be his queen, did he just happen to choose Esther the Jew? Why did the king just happen to have a sleepless night, just when it was so necessary for him to do so? Was God really so inactive as it superficially appears?

Dr. E. W. Bullinger finds four acrostics of the name "Yahweh" hidden in the Hebrew text of Esther, as well as one of the "I Am." (See his *Companion Bible* Appendix 60 on "The Name of Jehovah in the Book of Esther.")² These hidden names are key to understanding the lesson of Esther: God works on His peoples' behalf behind the scenes, even when He is not working openly. Even though those He uses might not be overly commendable, still God is working, and the twists and turns of history are guided by His invisible hand. The lesson of Esther is that God works for His people behind the scenes even when He is silent, stopping the schemes of wicked men and sparing His people in their hour of need.

Though His people now are those who believe in Jesus Christ from all nations, not just the nation of Israel, still the same important lesson applies. We live at a time when God is silent, when He hides Himself and does not work openly. We might imagine that history is happening randomly, with God doing nothing to stop events from unfolding. Yet the God Who so masterfully brought about His will in the book of Esther, even using less-than-commendable people to do it, can still do the same today. Many things that "just happen" to work out a good result might be far more than coincidence. God has not abandoned history to run its course without His influence. As in the days of Esther, we today have a God Who still works powerfully and graciously behind the scenes.

¹ For more information on the verse translation as love is Jehovah's fire see Joseph Bryant Rotherham, *The Emphasized Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1959) p. 647, note a., bottom right column

² E. W. Bullinger, *The Companion Bible*, Appendixes, Appendix 60, "The Name of Jehovah in the Book of Esther" (London, Great Britain: Samuel Bagster and Sons Limited, 1969, Original typesetting) pp. 85-86

Jehovah Zebaoth

Andrew Brown

The ending is a foregone conclusion. Jesus and His angels appear in the clouds with power and great glory to destroy their sinister foe in battle (Mat. 24:30-31). However, describing the scene as a battle may suggest more of a two-sided conflict than what follows. His enemies are struck with a plague so that *their flesh will rot while they stand on their feet, and their eyes will rot in their sockets*. The hostile army then starts to panic, destroying each other while trying to flee from the Lord's army (Zec. 14:12-13, NASB 1995 throughout). In contrast, *the one who is feeble among [the LORD's army] in that day will be like David, and the house of David will be like God* (Zec. 12:8). The "feeble" become like the mighty warrior David! When the lines are so clearly drawn, as they will be in this future time, how can anyone fight against the Lord Jesus and His army? He who spoke the universe into existence (John 1:3), also spoke a word to make a cohort of 600 soldiers fall to the ground (John 18:3-6). He surrendered for our redemption. Now that His sacrifice is complete, there will be no more surrendering. The Suffering Servant is also *Jehovah Zebaoth* (translated Lord of hosts). He died but lives forevermore and will decide to fight and settle the score. The name *Jehovah Zebaoth* occurs 285 times, dwarfing in number all the other Jehovah titles.

Psalms 23 describes Jehovah's various titles, but intriguingly excludes *Jehovah Zebaoth*. This climaxes in the following Psalm's question and response: *Who is the King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle...the Lord of Hosts, He is the King of glory* (Psa. 24:8, 10). Jehovah is the glorious King, the commander in charge of His armies. Understanding the magnitude of who this *Jehovah Zebaoth* is, led to Isaiah's unraveling: *For my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts* (Isa. 6:5). This is no ordinary king either. *'For I am a great King' says the Lord of Hosts, 'and My name is feared among the nations'* (Mal. 1:14). Jesus is the King of kings and the Lord of lords whom many foolishly wage war against. Nevertheless, those who hold to this position will stand no chance in this fight. His victory is already cemented in the future. *Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the Lord of Hosts: 'I am the First and I am the Last, and there is no God besides Me'* (Isa. 44:6). The forgiveness, love and grace He shows today lead many to miss how powerfully imposing this King really is. Yet within the Word we find a long list of staggering revelations of the Authority Who can and will demonstrate His mighty strength. Jesus is the perfect leader who will be revealed at the proper time (Col. 3:4). Jesus will

reign and fully protect His people. While we can be in relationship to Him as *Jehovah* God, we must examine the Word to know Him as *Jehovah Zebaoth*.

Although His kindness is unmatched, do not be fooled by the caricatures of Jesus as a wimpy pushover. *The LORD is a warrior* (Exo. 15:3). *The Lord of Hosts is mustering the army for battle* (Isa. 13:4). It is the LORD of Hosts who rises up and destroys His enemies from Babylon (Isa. 14:22). Connections between the Lord of Hosts and the battle are many. The outcome for the opposition is bleak at best. The LORD of Hosts has declared He *'will be relieved of My adversaries and avenge Myself on My foes'* (Isa. 1:24). A totally different picture of Jesus is painted in Isaiah 63 as *Jehovah* is returning from the slaughter of His enemies with blood-stained apparel.

The Lord of Host's word should be carefully heeded. He will be angry with those who decide to reject His word (Jer. 25:8) or His law (Isa. 5:24). *They made their hearts like flint so that they could not hear the law and the words which the Lord of Hosts had sent by His Spirit through the former prophets; therefore, great wrath came from the Lord of Hosts* (Zec. 7:12). The prophets spoke His words, but many would not listen. Yet there are many who are like Jeremiah who embrace and celebrate His word. *Your words became for me a joy and the delight of my heart; for I have been called by Your name, O Lord God of Hosts* (Jer. 15:16). Jesus told of a wise man who built His house on the rock, symbolizing the one who heard His words and acted on them (Mat. 7:24). Let us receive the King's words.

Jesus, the Lord of Hosts, is enthroned between the cherubim, but will again leave His throne: *'Behold, I am going to save my people'* (Zec. 8:7). Saving is what Jesus does. Israel was never to rely on the strength of an army with horses and chariots for their strength and confidence. Their reliance was supposed to be solely in God. David, when he stood before the warrior Goliath with mere stones, knew that *the battle is the Lord's* (1 Sam. 17:47). *The horse is prepared for the day of battle, but the victory belongs to the Lord* (Prv. 21:31). One may plan against Him, but victory in Jesus is guaranteed. He will lead justice to victory (Mat. 12:20). He will swallow up death in victory (1 Cor. 15:54). There is no battle He cannot win. We will do well to refrain from trusting ourselves and instead put our hope and trust in Him. *Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ* (1 Cor. 15:57). *Jehovah Zebaoth* invites us to celebrate and sing to Him, for His right hand has gained the victory (Psa. 98:1).

Study Grow Share

By Robert Juneau

Throughout our adult lives, my wife and I have always looked for a recipe, a "how-to" if you will, for the walk that we knew God wanted us to have. The people we engaged on this topic were eager to offer their well-meaning advice, which usually centered on getting busy with church programs. We followed this recipe for years with few results. After many years of scrapping and clawing for God's truth, we finally came into possession of the recipe we had been seeking. It is a simple recipe, only three ingredients. Study, grow, and share.

Many mistakenly conflate simple with easy. Simple juxtaposes complicated; easy juxtaposes hard. The walk God desires for us to live is most definitely **NOT** easy. If someone wants to bake a cake that requires mixing only three ingredients, the recipe for the cake is simple. If the three ingredients required a high level of dedication, diligence, and constant effort to obtain, making the cake would be hard work.

In much of Christian culture, what should be simple is made complicated, and what should be hard is made easy. The simple individual relationship with God has been replaced with highly organized hierarchies, overly convoluted theologies, obligatory rituals, and other complicated religious requirements. At the same time the difficult worthy walk, which takes studying to know and love the Lord, discipline, dedication, and endurance, has been replaced with church compliance. Being involved in church activities is actually much easier for most churchgoers than is the hard work of studying God's word. This work is usually accompanied with gratification and validation from church leadership. When church leaders are satisfied with us, it can distract one from self-examination and accountability before God. If one is not careful, the word of God can effectively be taken out of the equation.

STUDY

A familiar verse to those familiar to The Word of Truth Ministry is 2 Timothy 2:15, *Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.* (KJV).

We usually give a lot of attention to the word "dividing," and rightly so, but let's look at the word "study." The Greek word is *spoudazō* (pronounced spoo-dad'-zo) and it is found eleven times in the New Testament. It is rendered "study," "I was forward," "give diligence," "let us labor," "do thy diligence" twice, "be diligent" twice, and "endeavor" three times. How can we be diligent, be forward, endeavor, and labor toward God? In a different dispensation, this could be displayed in an outward, physical, and manifest way, but in the Dispensation of Grace, this attitude toward God is embodied in the word "study." This is the purpose of the word of God; that through it, we may know Him.

"Study" is the first and the most important ingredient in this proverbial cake we are baking because the other ingredients come only after we are in possession of at least some knowledge of God. We are not alone in this work. The Holy Spirit causes His words on the page to be a living word to us. God is in the business of bringing His word alive to men. In the Acts period, even men themselves could be declared the living word of God. *Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart.* (2 Cor. 3:3 KJV).

GROW

The more you know Scripture, the more you know God. The result of knowing God is growing and maturing. It's simple; if we want to grow in the Lord we need to know Him. We begin to love Him more because we learn how profoundly He loves us. As we know Him more, we become motivated to know Him even more still. This motivation drives us forward. As we are driven forward, we become even more motivated, and it's like a runaway chemical reaction. This is the wonderful evidence to the believer that God is at work in our lives. Isn't God awesome?

SHARE

The natural outworking of having studied and grown is to want to share this precious possession with others. New believers are often encouraged to share their faith with others before they are secure and grounded in their own faith. They can be vulnerable when faced with difficult questions. Lacking the knowledge and the growth in the Lord can make sharing one's faith troublesome. Some overcome this by avoiding any in-depth discussions, showing that they don't really have much to share. Conversely, when one is rooted and built up in the Lord, we can be walking **IN** Him. We will then have something to share. *As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so also be walking in Him, Being rooted and built up in Him, and making yourselves sure in your faith as you have been taught, super-abounding in that faith, and doing it with thanksgiving.* (Col. 2:6-7. Resultant Version).

We must never let the philosophy and traditions of men interfere with the simple recipe for our walk with the Lord. *Beware that no one shall make a spoil of you through philosophy and empty seduction, in accord with human tradition, in accord with the elements of the world, and not in accord with Christ.* (Col. 2:8. Resultant Version). The recipe for the walk with our Lord is simple; following out the recipe is hard. May we always strive to study, grow, and share.