

BULLETIN

THE WORD OF TRUTH MINISTRY

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Updates from Rusty Hancock

2020 Fall Conference Canceled

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Unfortunately, the Word of Truth Ministry conference scheduled for September 2020 in Bloomington, Minnesota, has been canceled. This should not come as a surprise to any of you, but it is still disheartening to not be able to get together around God's Word and enjoy the wonderful fellowship at our annual conferences.

The Covid-19 outbreak has affected the lives of everyone on Earth. The Word of Truth Ministry is no exception. When discussing with our Board of Directors if there was any alternative plan to salvage the conference, the best response I received was "Bring on the kingdom!" (AMEN to that!)

We will just delay the conference for a while. Once a new date is scheduled, the conference will be held at the Crowne Aire Hotel in Bloomington in 2021. I look forward to seeing you all in attendance.

I have found it interesting to watch how religious and faith organizations have responded to the pandemic though. Everything from God is punishing the world, to God will get us through it all. I've seen clergy members Baptizing people by using toy water guns to squirt the recipients. People in utter outrage because they can not

worship God unless they actually enter a Church building. Certain rites and rituals cannot be performed without coming in contact with the church member.

This goes to only reinforce what actually matters, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3: 16). You need to have a relationship with God. No structure, building, rite, ceremony, or ritual will bring you any closer to God. Study, understanding, rightly dividing, and having faith (without seeing) is our relationship with the Lord.

In this, The Dispensation of Grace, God has taken no action to harm or curse the world. Death (and disease) was brought into this world long ago in the Garden of Eden. I put my faith in God, with prayer, that he will show mercy on all of us. That absent God's Kingdom, he will protect us, look over us, guide us, and give us wisdom. To help us remain viable and sane in a world where it appears the vast majority have no relationship or faith in God and seem to only panic and bring stress on the rest of us.

Personally, because of the pandemic, I have found more time to study God's word and worship him. And, although sequestered in our homes, Bible lessons continue through the internet. I believe my grandpa would have gone "nuts" for the technology age and embraced it whole heartily. On Tuesday evenings I marvel in the glory of greeting friends through an internet video conference call to study the Bible. For two hours I am with believers from California, Oregon, Florida, Minnesota, Wisconsin, New York . . . We study, talk, get updates on our personal lives, and generally enjoy our fellowship.

Yes, the conference has been canceled. But the work of The Word of Truth Ministry has not slowed down at all. The radio programs are still on the air, and our printed Ministry will still be mailed quarterly. On our website, www.seedandbread.org, there are hundreds of audio recorded messages and written studies. **I am still a believer! You are still a believer!**

A Beautiful House

By Robert Juneau

Imagine driving through a new neighborhood development and looking at all of the new houses that have been built, each more beautiful than the next. As you turn the corner, you see a lot where a foundation has been built, but further construction seems to have stopped. No walls, no roof, no windows, and no floors beyond the cement slab. You're thinking they must have run out of money or something, but then you see a man sitting in his recliner with a bag of chips watching television. You can hardly believe it, but it seems that this man is living in his foundation. Curiosity gets the better of you, and you yell out, "Hey, why are you living in your foundation?" He shouts back, "Why not, I have everything I need, and it was free!"

Foundations are never constructed to be lived in, and God never intended us to live in the foundation we have in Christ; God desires to build upon that foundation. *"Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. (Matt. 7:24-25, NKJV used throughout).* The Rock in Scripture is Christ, and the rock in this story is the foundation. What is depicted as having been built upon that foundation is the hearing of the Lord's sayings and doing them. How can we hear His words and do them today in the Dispensation of Grace?

Abandoning the foundation of a house in favor of all that rests upon it would be disastrous. Abandoning the fundamentals of Christ in exchange for an advanced understanding of God would be equally disastrous. *But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ (2 Cor. 11:3).* When building upon the Rock of our salvation we should never forsake the simplicity (Gk. *haplotēs* – genuineness or sincerity) that is found in Christ, our foundation.

It is a wonderful thing to be in possession of this foundation. But, like the man in the illustration, do we stay content to live in that foundation or do we allow God to build a beautiful house upon it? The house God wants to build in our lives is the Biblically based knowledge of God that we can possess from reading, studying, and meditating on His word. When we submit to the truths taught in God's word, when we internalize and take it to heart, it produces the wisdom of God, and this is what produces our walk. As He builds, we begin to make better choices and we become more selfless,

treating others with love. Our desires begin to align with God's desires as the fruit of the Spirit flows more freely through us. *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control (Gal. 5:22-23).*

God has the building permit and the floorplans ready to start building a beautiful house. But there is a problem; the building materials that we bring to the construction site are no good. The lumber is rotted and weak, the nails are bent and corroded, the windows are broken, the insulation is wet, and the shingles are torn. Construction on our beautiful house cannot be done with the materials we possess; it must be done with the building materials found in knowing God through His word. *...and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God (Col. 1:9-10).*

This passage emphasizes the importance of being filled with the knowledge, wisdom, and understanding of God. If we are not growing in these, we are not behaving in a worthy manner. If we want to be fully pleasing to Him, be fruitful in every good work, we must be increasing in the knowledge of God! This is the beautiful house God wants to build upon the foundation we have in Christ.

Thus says the LORD: "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, Let not the mighty man glory in his might, Nor let the rich man glory in his riches; But let him who glories glory in this, That he understands and knows Me, That I am the LORD, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight," says the LORD (Jer. 9:23-24). God would have us boast (glory) in no other thing than that we understand and know Him! Here is a very small sample of the verses that emphasize God's desire that we grow in the knowledge of Him. (Psalm 119:64-75, Romans 11:33, 1 Corinthians 1:5, Ephesians 1:17, 3:19, Philippians 1:9, Colossians 3:10, 1 Timothy 2:4).

Let us not be like the man living in his foundation with no walls, no windows, and no roof. Let us not be content to live only in the foundation we have in Christ. Instead, let us be diligent to study, meditate upon, and submit to the word of God in our lives. This will cause us to grow in the knowledge of Him. When someone "drives by" our life, will they see us living in a foundation with little to no building upon it, or will they be inclined to say, "What a beautiful house!"

A Vision of the Parousia

By Nathan C. Johnson

One of the most spectacular revelations the Lord made to any of His disciples was the glorious transfiguration of the Lord Jesus Christ as His disciples James, John, and Peter saw it on the very high mountain. In Matthew 17:2-3, we read of this marvelous revelation: *"and He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light. And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him."* (New King James throughout) This amazing revelation should make us all pause and consider the greatness of our Lord Jesus Christ in all His glory.

Yet having done this, when we take a closer look at the passage, we see it raises questions for those of us who believe the Bible's truth that the dead are dead. That is, that both Moses and Elijah are seen alive and well and talking with the Lord here, in spite of the fact that this is at least nearly two thousand years before the first of the great resurrections that will bring all who have died in Adam back to life in Christ. This passage is used by those who insist on instant glory after death to deny the Bible truth that life after death comes only by resurrection. They would seem to have a point if Elijah and Moses are alive without ever experiencing resurrection. Yet is that the case?

First, we must test our assumption that both Moses and Elijah have already died. Elijah was caught up to heaven in a whirlwind, as II Kings 2:11 makes plain: *"Then it happened, as they continued on and talked, that suddenly a chariot of fire appeared with horses of fire, and separated the two of them; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven."* So, no resurrection was necessary for Elijah to appear on the mount. He was as alive and well at the time of the transfiguration as any of the disciples. Yet what about Moses? The same cannot be said of him. His death is recorded very clearly in Scripture in Deuteronomy 34:5: *"So Moses the servant of the LORD died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the LORD."* Moses did die, and so he could not have appeared alive and well in the days of Christ's earthly ministry. Do those who believe in going to heaven at death have a point here?

We must look a little deeper. First of all, notice what the Lord says about what His disciples saw on the mount of transfiguration in Matthew 17:9: *"Now as they came down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them, saying, 'Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man is risen from the dead.'"'* The Lord Jesus calls what the three disciples saw "a vision." A vision does not have to be made up of actual objects or be physically present. Therefore, Moses need not have been alive and well for the disciples to have seen him in a vision.

Yet if we continue our study, we can learn more than this. Take note that Matthew, the writer of this gospel, was not an eyewitness of the transfiguration, since this was only seen by the three disciples: Peter, James, and John. Mark was not there, nor was Luke. The only eyewitness to write a gospel is John and he does not mention this spectacular scene. Yet we do have an eyewitness comment on this event, not in the gospels but in the second epistle of Peter. Peter, who was one of the three who saw this vision personally, says this in II Peter 1:16-18: *"For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.' And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain."*

If we compare the details, Peter is clearly speaking of the transfiguration here. In verse 16, he says they made known the "power and coming" of the Lord, but the word "coming" there is the Greek word *parousia*. Peter reveals that this vision was not a vision of anything taking place right then but was actually a vision of something that will take place in the future at the time of the Lord Jesus Christ's *parousia*! Perhaps at some point during the thousand years of His personal presence, He will stand on the top of that very mountain with Moses and Elijah and talk with them about His death in Jerusalem, then long in the past. Peter, James, and John were shown a vision of that future event and heard a part of that future conversation.

We can also learn a few important facts about that future *parousia* from this vision. First, the Lord will not have emptied Himself when He comes the second time as He did the first. He will be present in His heavenly glory as the disciples saw it on the mount. Secondly, though He has this glory, yet at the same time He will visit and talk with His people. Perhaps this will be because He will have transformed their lowly bodies to be conformed to His glorious body, as Philippians 3:21 says. But imagine a day when the Lord of all takes time out to get together and talk with some of His loyal people. Moses died well over five hundred years before Elijah lived, yet they will be together in the presence of the Lord. Imagine what it would have been like to see this as the three disciples did! We can look forward to that day when the glorious Lord will stand on earth once again. What will He then say to those who are privileged to talk with Him? We can only wait and see.

God's Free Gift

By Andrew Brown

God is throwing a dinner party. *"Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the Kingdom of God"* (Luke 14:15 NASB throughout). Can you imagine? The joy of obtaining the *"Resurrection of the Righteous"* (Luke 14:14) goes beyond food. Numerous people were invited. As amazing as attending will be, many *"make excuses"* (Luke 14:18) about why they cannot join. One has a land investment, another work, another just married (Luke 14:18-20), and they think these obligations are more important than being with God. The true value and fulfillment this party would provide was lost to them as they valued their activities more. When it comes down to it, even God's people who will be attending do not fully comprehend the greatness held in store.

"For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed" (Rom. 8:18). Nothing compares to what God has in store for those who believe in Him. *"Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, and which have not entered the heart of man, all that God has prepared for those who love Him"* (1 Cor. 2:9). Our minds can only glimpse the blessing Jesus holds out. If we could live this life with strength, friendship, wealth, fame, security—whatever our ideal list includes—but in the end Jesus was a stranger, we would have failed. There is no greater investment or success than entering into the gift of life with Christ. *"Let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me"* (Jer. 9:24). *"He who believes in Him will not be disappointed"* (Rom. 9:33). We live in a world of disappointments, but God will not let us down. He is going to spare no expense.

Let's not minimize the future blessings held out to those who believe. One unfruitful consequence of a low view of eternity has been the magnification (of the terrors and errors) of hell. An inconceivably grotesque alternative has been manufactured to scare people to Jesus. Eternal conscious torment is a foreign substitute for God's appointed punishment: destruction. Eternal torment is built on a plethora of illogical foundations and is so heinous it compels some to believe everyone will be saved. God's consequence has been changed and perverted in many ways. Consider: *"The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord"* (Rom. 6:23). Eternal life is a **gift**. Since all have sinned and fallen short of God's glory (Rom. 3:23), all will receive DEATH, **not eternal torment**. When the gift is rejected, one will not receive eternal life. Nobody will be given an eternal life of torment for not receiving the gift. Also, as a punishment, imaginary hell does not justly fit the

crime. Scripture abounds with illustrations of how short and fleeting this life truly is. Does unending torture sound like God's consequence for the average 70-year lifespan? He pronounced an *"eye for an eye"* (Ex. 21:24) and *"He may beat him forty times but no more"* (Deut. 25:3), but never endless torment. Remember, *"His anger is but for a moment, His favor is for a lifetime"* (Psa. 30:5). So for the rebellious and ignorant, the aged and child, rich and poor alike, after millions of years of inconceivable torment, the pain has only just begun? This cruel and heartless act is unfathomable. This is not the punishment for turning away from the gift.

God's gift is there for all to receive, but only a minority will. *"The way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it. The gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it"* (Matt. 7:13, 14). The majority face destruction. Jesus said, *"Unless you believe that I am He, you will die in your sins"* (John 8:24). Everyone will stand before the Lord's court for judgment. Those who have not accepted the gift will be destroyed in the Lake of Fire, the second death. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, but not from continual screams of torment. The weeping is of great sorrow and gnashing of teeth is their great regret when they are excluded from eternal life. This does mean wrath for the wicked, but it quickly ends in the Lake of Fire. There is a terrifying expectation *"of the fury of fire which will consume the adversaries"* (Heb. 10:27), but the fire destroys and consumes. God will judge justly; let us not exaggerate or downplay the consequence for not joining with Him.

Adam's sin brought death, but Christ brought life. We do not deserve life; we earned death. *"Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures"* (1 Cor. 15:3). If we accept His gift, His death covers our death and His resurrection is ours. Believers will fully experience the gift of life when the *"mortal will have put on immortality"* (1 Cor. 15:54) at the resurrection. Jesus, the Redeemer, has paid our penalty and conquered what we could not. Death could not contain Him. This is the truth of the gospel. Jesus did not pay for eternal torment.

We hear many excuses from people who step aside from joining the King's dinner party. They want something more temporary and thus do not have time for God. They may be "good" people, doing "good" things, abstaining from certain bad acts, but they have not seen fit to get to know the Savior and have not reserved a spot at the King's dinner. The objective of eternal life is intimacy with God. *"This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ"* (John 17:3). Missing out will be "torment." Lord, give us eyes to see the magnificent gift and leave the consequence as God has decreed.