

The Basis for Religious Unity

If we all speak the same thing, then we will dwell together in unity. But where are we going to get all this "same thing" to speak? There is your problem.

We can not find any unity among the creed books of today's religious organizations, for there is not a creed book among all those written by men that is acceptable as a basis for unity. We know that one denomination will not accept the manuals or disciplines of other denominations as authority for their religious practices.

There is one book, however, that records God's Word, which is recognized by all as rightly constituted authority. All religious groups will agree that it is right and can not be wrong. That book is the Bible.

Let us teach what the Bible says, no more and no less, and we will all speak the same thing, according to that exhortation in 1 Cor. 1:10: "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment."

If religious people would but speak where the Bible speaks and remain silent where it is silent, there would be no divisions among them. There would be unity.

- by W. A. Moody

Reinstated?

We are hearing some rather strange expressions these days. A man was telling us recently that he had gone forward the Sunday before to be "reinstated." A woman said she was thinking of "going back into the church." Are such expressions a problem in terminology? Or are we faced with a problem in concept? Are people thinking of the church as an organization similar to the P.T.A., in and out of which they can go at will, returning simply to be "reinstated"?

Unfaithfulness is not just a matter of dropping out of the church for a while. It is a matter of trampling "the Son of God underfoot"; of insulting "the Spirit of grace"; of giving "occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme"; of turning one's back on the Lord and His promises; of living in sin and flirting with eternal damnation. Imagine a person's being in such a position, and then coming forward to be "reinstated"!!! What that person needs to do is repent, fall on his knees before God, confess to Him and to his brethren, "I have sinned," and cry to God for mercy.

We are not questioning God's mercy. He is prepared to forgive His wayward child; to run to him, fall on his neck, and kiss him; to place the best robe on his back, a ring on his finger, shoes on his feet; to kill the fatted calf and be merry. But this abundant forgiveness is for that wayward child who returns with a full recognition of his sin and unworthiness, who confesses his sins, who asks, not to be "reinstated" as a son, but to be received back only as a hired servant. Forgiveness is for the penitent.

May the Lord help us to see sin in its true ugliness, to "abhor what is evil" and "cling to what is good," to remember the price paid by our Lord for our forgiveness, to be faithful, and to humbly acknowledge our sins when we do fall. And when we are forgiven, let us not speak glibly of "going back into the church," but let us speak of the grace of God that could save "a wretch like me."

"Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted" (Matthew 5:4).

- by Bill Hall

The Church Is Sufficient

As a result of having the whole council of God preached by Paul, the church of Ephesus was in the unity of the faith. (see Eph. 4:1-6) This gave them all that they needed to do anything that the Lord wanted done. They were completely independent spiritually from everything else on earth. They looked to no school, paper, or center or influence. They were not a part of any super organization that exercised control over them. God needs no unit larger than the local congregation to do his work. The local church is sufficient; it is all-sufficient!

- by James P. Miller

Immaturity

King Ahab had a palace in Jezreel. Next to it was a vineyard owned by Naboth. Ahab wanted that vineyard and offered to buy it, either with cash or in exchange for another vineyard. But Naboth did not want to sell. "So Ahab came into his house sullen and vexed . . . and he lay down on his bed and turned away his face and ate no food" (1 Kings 21:4).

Poor Ahab! He did not get what he wanted so he pouted like a spoiled child. We read this account and think how silly for a grown man, a king, to act this way. But before we are too quick to condemn Ahab's childishness, let us take a look at our own.

Have you ever known of brethren who got upset because someone else was called on to do something they wanted to do? Or who placed membership at another church (took their toys and went elsewhere) because some little something did not suit? Or who stayed home because the preacher or elders did not come to visit often enough, or perhaps because of some misunderstanding with another Christian?

Paul said when he became a man he put away childish things (1 Corinthians 13:11). Let us do the same.

- by Frank Himmel

What Are The "New Heavens & New Earth"

"Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." (2 Peter 3:13)

The Jehovah's Witnesses use this verse to support their theory that this present earth will never be destroyed. They claim that the Lord intends to 'refurbish' the planet, placing it back into the pristine condition it was in when Adam and Eve first lived in the Garden of Eden. According to them, the majority of the righteous will occupy this restored earth. Are they right?

Look carefully at the context. Verse 7 says "the heavens and the earth which are now . . . are kept in store, reserved unto fire." Verse 10 promises that "the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up." Verse 11 says "all these things shall be dissolved." Verse 12 repeats that "the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat."

With all this being true, the idea that the present world and physical universe will exist forever cannot be true. In fact, verse 13 (the one the Jehovah's Witnesses like to use) actually says that we are looking for "new heavens and a new earth", not the same heavens and the same earth that are to be somehow restored or refurbished!

So, what are the 'new heavens and new earth'? Think of it this way: we currently live in 'the heavens and earth' – it is our environment; our dwelling place. Peter proclaims that this environment or dwelling place is going to be destroyed, and we are looking for a new environment; a new place to live and dwell. For the righteous, that dwelling place will be with the Lord (Matthew 25:46).

- by Greg Gwin