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Is Religious Unity Possible? How Satan Did The Impossible

By Harold Turner

Can you imagine what would happen if a group met to engage in some sports event and each player followed a different set of rules? It's obvious that very little could be accomplished. The players would soon be arguing and fighting among themselves, and only confusion would result. Only by following one set of rules could these players work together in harmony and accomplish their desired goal.

I wonder sometimes if the lost world doesn't view religion and the different churches somewhat like a sports event where each plays by his own set of rules. Frank S. Mead, in his book, "Handbook of Denominations", lists a study of over 250 different religious bodies. This book was first printed in 1951, and since that time there have been numerous other denominations started. Some have estimated between three and four hundred different churches in our nation alone. Each of these groups has its own distinctive set of by-laws, rules, and doctrines which differ from all the others. We get a picture of some three hundred teams all in competition with each other, and each playing by a different set of rules. It is little wonder that we face such a difficult task of trying to win the world to Christ.

Jesus recognized this terrible problem, and its effect upon the lost world, when he prayed in John 17:21, "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." Religious divisions are a hinderance to the world's believing in Christ. When the apostle Paul endeavored to correct the divisions in Corinth, he asked, "Is Christ divided?" This same question needs asking today. Is Christ the head over all these conflicting churches? Is He divided into some three hundred pieces?

Throughout the New Testament there is an appeal made for the unity of all believers in one body. This one body is the church (Eph. 1:22-23, Col. 1:18). In Eph. 4:4 Paul stated, "There is one body..." In I Cor. 12:12, he wrote, "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ." In verses 20 and 27 he said, "But now are there many members, yet but one body. Now ye are the body

of Christ, and members in particular." Christ is the head of this body (Eph. 1:22-23), and each Christian is a member of the body of Christ. Christ is not the head of two bodies, bodies which are directly opposed to each other, and neither does His body have two heads.

Every descriptive expression used to picture the church emphasizes its unity. When Jesus pictured the church as a flock of sheep, and himself as the shepherd, he said in John 10:16 "And there shall be one fold, and one shepherd." When he pictured the church as his bride, he again stressed unity by showing that to be married to two people at one time is a sinful relationship (Rom. 7:1-4). He is a King, and the church is his kingdom. He is the Vine, the members of the church are the branches (John 15:1-8). He is the head, the church is his body (Eph. 1:22-23). All these show that Christ has only one church. But is this possible today, and if so, how?

The unity of his people depends simply on each following the same set of rules. In Phil. 3:16 we are admonished, "Let us walk by the same rule." In I Cor. 1:10 Paul pleaded with the divided brethren in Corinth, "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." Only when we walk by the same rule, and speak the same thing, can there be unity among us. We can only speak the same thing when we do as the apostle Peter commanded in I Pet. 4:11, "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God." Opinions have no place in the doctrinal teachings of the Bible. We must have a clear "Thus saith the Lord" for each practice in the church.

The unity of all believers could be so simple. It simply demands that we all follow the same rules, the rules that Christ gave in the gospel. Jesus said, "If any man will come after me, let him DENY himself..." Until we are willing to set aside our ideas and opinions and follow only the doctrine of Christ there can never be unity among us. There can never be unity on a compromising basis between the differing doctrines of men. Everything and anything that is not found in the doctrine of Christ must be

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By Leslie Leonard

It doesn't seem possible that a person doing one thing could be convinced that he is doing something else. Can you imagine a person standing still being convinced that he is walking? The verb standing does not convey the same meaning as walking. A verb can only indicate one kind of action. If two people should think of different actions when they hear a verb used, then one of them either doesn't understand the meaning of the word, or he has been duped into believing the word means something different than it really means. But that sounds impossible, doesn't it?

There is a verb in the Bible that has caused different people to think of different actions when hearing it used, though this should be impossible since a verb means only one action. The verb 'baptize' is used in various ways by different people. One person thinks of sprinkling water on another, another thinks of pouring water on a person, a third person may think of something the Holy Spirit does to a person, while a fourth person may envision a person being totally immersed in water. Now, obviously this one verb cannot mean all four separate and distinct actions. Someone must be calling some acts baptism that are not really baptism.

Of course we may call any action by anything we wish since words are only sounds, or symbols used to cause other people to think of some particular thing or action. The question, though, is not what a group of people may think when they hear a word used, but what does God intend to convey through Jesus, the Apostles, or the inspired writers when baptism is used in the Bible. What verb is being used by those speaking or writing by inspiration, and what action are they trying to convey? To put it another way, since the New Testament was originally written in the Greek language, what Greek word is used from which baptism is translated, and what did it mean?

All reliable scholars and religious authorities agree that the word used only meant one action. A Greek-English dictionary (called a lexicon) defines the word baptize as: To dip, plunge, immerse.

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Is Religious Unity Possible (Cont.)

abandoned before unity can ever be. There can be only one standard of authority in unity. It is on the basis of this that we plead with the religious world to unite in Christ. We ask no person to give up or abandon any doctrine or practice taught in the doctrine of Christ. Unity cannot be had "My way" or "Your way", it must be Christ's way only.

"For whom the Lord loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth." Prov. 3:12

**The Meaning
Of Salvation**

By Ordell Heavin

The plan of salvation for lost souls is the central theme of the Bible. Redemption from sin is the golden thread that is woven into its sacred pages, from the opening verses of Genesis to the close of the book of Revelation. Other issues that are mentioned in God's word are relative to this plan for the rescue of perishing souls. In like manner, Christ the Saviour, is the central theme and personality of the Scriptures. The Old Testament points forward to his coming and work. In the New Testament, Jesus of Nazareth is presented as the fulfillment of the promise of God to send the Messiah to redeem his people from their sins. This great plan of salvation is briefly summarized in John 3:16-17, which we so often refer to as the golden text of the Bible.

The Bible was written to tell man in unmistakable language that he is lost. Every effort to save man has been, and will be futile until there is a realization of the need of salvation. Sin separated the first family from God, and all that followed, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. Death and trouble came as the consequence for sin. The fault lies altogether with man (Isa. 59:1-2), and these miserable conditions will continue as long as sin remains.

The Bible was written to assure men that God desires the salvation of every soul. In 2 Peter 3:9 the Bible states that "God is longsuffering, not willing that any should perish, but that all come to repentance." The very existence of the revealed will of God should be conclusive evidence of this. God has given us "His will" to guide us, the church, with the promise, "The gates of hell shall not prevail against it." He has given His only begotten Son as a sacrifice for sins, and through him, God has promised eternal life to all who are faithful to him.

The Bible is written to explain all that God has done in order to make salvation possible. His merciful acts are expressed throughout the history of man, but at Calvary's cross on which Jesus suffered and died, his mercy is magnified above all other acts. The Old Testament records God's work through over four thousand years to bring man a Saviour and a message to guide him in salvation and living the Christian life. The New Testament contains everything essential to instruct us in righteous living.

The Bible is written to inform man of what he must do to be saved. Jesus made known the terms through which God will forgive us our sins. Learning and obeying

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**What Does 'Born
Again' Mean?**

By Clovis Ragsdale

In recent weeks the National News Media has written several articles concerning a statement of one of the presidential candidates, who has mentioned on a number of occasions that he is a "Born again Christian". Political writers have questioned whether it is good politics to make such a statement.

Much is said about being "Born again," but what is meant by this expression? It seems there are many people who do not know the meaning of being born again. In John 3:1 a man by the name of Nicodemus, who was in a high position in the Jewish nation, came to Jesus by night. When Jesus told him that one must be born again he was greatly perplexed. He asked Jesus if it were possible for one to reenter his mother's womb and be born again. Jesus replied, saying, "Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again."

Living under the Law of Moses, Nicodemus understood that all who were the children of Abraham, were born by fleshly birth into the family of God under the Old Testament. What he did not know was that Jesus came to establish a new covenant in which all men would have to be born by a spiritual birth.

In our age for one to be born again he must come in contact with the teachings of the New Testament (Jn. 6:44-45, I Cor. 1:21), which produces faith in the heart (Rom. 10:17), and which also produces a desire for one to change his life to do the will of God. This attitude is called repentance. As Paul instructed the audience in the city of Athens, "And in the times of this ignorance, God winked at, but now commandeth all men every where to repent." (Acts 17:30.) In Rom. 10:10, and I John 4:15 we learn of another step in the new birth: one must confess before others that he believes that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

The final step in being born again is the act of baptism. This is the step that completes the new birth. After baptism one is known as a child of God. In Acts 2:47 it is stated that the Lord added to the church daily such as were being saved. In the previous verses we learn that the ones being saved were the ones who had repented and were baptized. Three thousand were baptized and added to the church on the day of Pentecost alone. After one is baptized, like a new born

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Is It Enough To Just Be Honest And Sincere?

By Glynn V. Purdy

When Jesus came to earth, and died to purchase the church with his own blood (Acts 20:28), and when he returned to heaven and sent the Holy Spirit to guide the Apostles into all truth (John 14:26, 16:13), it was NOT just to make people honest and sincere. He gave man "Truth" to make him "Free" (John 8:32). This truth is of NO merit to man until it is OBEYED (Heb. 5:9). Today with about 270 different religious organizations in the United States alone, each teaching and practicing something different from all others, the cry is heard on every side, "It doesn't matter what you believe or do, just so you are honest and sincere." The reason for this is obvious, the creeds and commandments of men can not stand the spotlight of investigation. The spotlight being in this case God's word, the Bible (Matt. 15:8-9).

The religious world, which mostly depends upon the creeds of men for their origin, doctrine, and practice, must, in order to keep the converts in hand, first rule out any desire to search God's word with an open heart. The best way that has been found, and it is quite successful, is to tell them that being honest and sincere is all that is needed to be saved. But if a person would think just a little he could determine that if this were true then it was not needful that Christ die. Men could be honest and sincere without the blood of Christ. In fact there were thousands of honest and sincere men BEFORE the death of Christ, yet had he NOT died, they too would be lost (Heb. 9:15).

To prove that most of the religious world has no respect for Christ, or his word, we present this example. In a certain city, the present president of the "Ministerial Alliance" is a Jew, who does not even believe Christ has come to earth, much less that he rose from the dead and is our only hope of salvation. How can a "Gospel preacher" be yoked with such an arrangement? Yet most of the preachers who belong to the "Alliance" claim to be "Gospel preachers." What kind of gospel can one preach while compromising with one who does not even believe in the gospel or the Christ of the Bible?

Can you not just see Peter (in Acts 2) telling these Jews, who had crucified Jesus, that they had nothing to worry about, just so they were honest when they killed Him, and that it did not matter whether they believed in Christ or not, they were still as safe as could be, and further, that they would form an "Alliance" and a Jew could be head of it, and that he, Peter, would be one of the

Gospel preachers in the Alliance? No, Peter did not and could not compromise with nonbelievers, whether they were Jews or Gentiles. Any one who does NOT believe in Christ is CONDEMNED (John 3:18). Then it does matter what we believe, does it not? One who does not believe in Christ is an unbeliever and is condemned according to Christ. "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? (2 Cor. 6:14). Then it does take more than just being honest and sincere.

Well, should we not fellowship unbelievers and bid them God speed? "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds." (2 John 9-11). Nothing can be plainer! If we fellowship or bid God speed to ANY ONE who does NOT teach the doctrine of Christ, we become as guilty as he. This is the doctrine of Christ, not my teaching, or doctrine. Then instead of Peter forming an ALLIANCE with the false doctrines of the Jews, and teaching that it did not matter what they believed or did, he taught them to believe in Christ and obey Him. This they did; they believed, repented of their sins, and were baptized for the remission of their sins, and the Lord added them to his church (Acts 2:22-47).

No, Christ did not send his apostles, or Gospel preachers today, to form an alliance with unbelievers, but to CONVERT them to the God of heaven, through Christ, by the gospel. To be honest and sincere is NOT enough, ALL must OBEY Christ (Heb. 5:9). No man can go to God but by Christ (John 14:6). Are you trying to go to God and not obey Christ? THIS YOU CANNOT DO!

"The fear of the Lord prolongeth days: but the years of the wicked shall be shortened." Prov. 10:27

"When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul; Discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee." Prov. 2:10-11

Honor His Word

By James Knight

There is no greater way that we can honor God and His Son than to honor His word. The word of God contains all things that we need to live a life that is pleasing to God. It contains all things necessary to prepare us to live eternally with God in heaven. How can we honor His word?

We honor God's word by accepting it as INSPIRED of God, rather than the word of man. Paul declared that the Scriptures are inspired of God in 2 Tim. 3:16-17. Therefore, when we deny the inspiration of the Scriptures we dishonor God by making Him a liar.

We honor God's word when we obey what it says. The word of God is living and active. It is powerful, and sharper than a two edged sword. The word of God when rightly honored will convict man of sin, and lead him to obedience (Heb. 4:12, 5:8-9).

God's word is honored when we attend every service of the church. The Bible teaches us not to forsake the assembling of the saints (Heb. 10:25). When I fail to assemble I violate this command, and need to make it right in the sight of God. When we have the right attitude toward God and His word, attending the services becomes a cherished blessing rather than an obligation. When we see, in the services, opportunities to be inspired to do greater things in the service of God, we will look forward to the time of assembly.

You honor God's word when you tell others the wonderful story of Jesus and His love for sinful man. Through obedience you have been set free from sin, and as a Christian you enjoy a new life in Christ. The greatest thing that you can do for your fellow man is to introduce him to your loving Saviour.

As parents, we honor God's word by teaching our children to honor His word and have the proper respect for Him. God has placed a tremendous responsibility upon all parents, that of bringing their children up in the Lord (Eph. 6:4). What our children grow up to be will reflect our own attitude toward God, His word, His church, and heaven itself.

Now, let me ask you some questions: have you been honoring God's word in your life? Have you been faithful in the things mentioned above? Have you let God's word be a light to your feet, and a lamp to your path? If not, why not begin now to honor His word?

Faith, Works And Love

By Lavern Stewart

Men teach that faith only is all that is required for salvation. Although the Bible certainly teaches the importance of faith, it does not teach faith alone. The only time the Scriptures speak of faith alone, it is condemned as being dead. "Faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone." James 2:17.

When others teach, in addition to faith, the importance of obedience, and the necessity of good works, they are accused of teaching that one earns salvation by his good works. But that is not so. No, we do not earn salvation, for a lifetime of good works could not earn one day in heaven. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God: not of

works lest any man should boast." Eph. 2:8-9.

So obedience of God's commands and the doing of good works is not prompted by the earning motive, but by the love for God and his abundant grace extended to us. Jesus said, "If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments." (John 14:15, 23). James said, "I will show my faith by my works." (James 2:18). Real faith is expressed in obedience. When we hear men claim that certain of God's commands are nonessential, we immediately know that they do not have faith. Our obedience proves two things; the reality of our faith, and the reality of our love.

The true relationship of faith, works, and love is given in the phrase, "Faith working through love." (Gal. 5:6).

How Satan Did the Impossible (Cont.)

The word baptize is not really translated, but transliterated. The Greek word 'baptizo' is carried over into the English without being translated. When the writers of the New Testament used this word, they were thinking of only one action, and that one action was to immerse completely. The Scriptures define the word immerse in Romans 6:4-5; Acts 8:38; and John 3:23 by describing the act.

What has happened seems impossible. The simple verb immerse (baptizo in the Greek) has been made to mean sprinkle, pour, and immerse. One who has been sprinkled has been convinced that he has been immersed (baptized). One who has had water poured upon him has been convinced that he has been immersed (baptized). Yet neither has really been baptized according to the Scriptures. They have been duped into believing that a word means something it doesn't mean.

But why? Why would so much pain be taken to slip one verb into the place of another? Isn't it possible that Satan has had a hand in it? He knows that Jesus said, "Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." And he knows that Jesus said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16). He knows the apostles preached "Repent and be baptized... for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38). And that "Baptism doth also now save us..." (1 Pet. 3:21). To keep people from doing what God requires, Satan gets them to do something else. People are kept from being baptized so they will remain lost.

In this simple way, Satan does what should be impossible, but as a result, untold numbers will be lost.

The Meaning of Salvation (Cont.)

these terms of salvation is a matter of eternal life and death for every responsible person. Unless we respond in faithful obedience to these conditions, we are lost and without hope in the world. We suggest that each read for himself the great commission of Jesus recorded in Matt. 28:18-20, Mark 16:15-16, and Luke 24:46-47, and then begin with the book of Acts to learn God's plan.

The meaning of salvation is often misunderstood. There are two types of salvation. (1) One is the deliverance from sin. This is the remedy part, and (2) there is the preservation from danger and harm. This is the preventive part.

This may be clarified by a simple illustration. Suppose a child is playing in the street and is hit by a passing car. You rush the child to the nearest hospital in time to save the child's life. This is the remedial type of salvation. Suppose you see the car in time and grab the child from its path. This is the preventive type of salvation.

All have sinned and need deliverance. All must face dangers and temptations from which they can and must be saved. There are four phases of salvation offered in the New Testament. Two are preventive, and two are remedial. (1) Salvation from sin committed before we became a Christian. (2) Salvation from sin committed after we became a Christian. None of us can live perfectly (1 John 1:7-10). (3) Salvation from sins we would have committed if the gospel hadn't become an influence in our lives. (4) And eternal salvation. This is the supreme goal of every Christian.

There are several things that we hope you will remember from this lesson. (1) If you are out of Christ you are lost (Acts 4:12). (2) God wants to save you (1 Tim. 2:4). (3) God gave us a perfect plan, which is clearly set forth in the gospel of

What Does Born Again Mean (Cont.)

child, he begins to live a new life, to grow into spiritual adulthood, and to achieve the goals of life. He begins a life of service to Christ in His church, doing the works of the Spirit, as mentioned in Galatians 5:22-23.

It is only through misunderstanding of the teachings of the Bible that people in our enlightened age still remain confused about the meaning of the new birth. Jesus described this type of people in Matt. 13:13-15, saying, "Therefore spake I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them."

Christ told Nicodemus that he MUST be born again to enter the kingdom of God. No one can be in the kingdom today who has not been born again. Those who have not, have no chance to gain heaven. Jesus is the author of this statement, and he stressed that EXCEPT a man be born again he CANNOT enter the kingdom. What about you? Have you been born again? If not, let me urge you to think seriously about this matter while you have the opportunity.

Christ. (4) There are some things you must do in order to be saved (Heb. 5:9, Rom. 6:17-18). We would urge you to make haste in your obedience to Christ while you still have the opportunity.

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