

Answering The Religious Errors Of Our Family, Friends, and Neighbors 1

“There’s Nothing Wrong With Calling The Preacher

Pastor, Reverend, Bishop, Father, Etc.!”

Lesson 31

INTRO:

- A. As human beings, we have a tendency to exalt ourselves above other people.
 - 1. People wish to appear greater and wiser than others.
 - 2. They desire open expression of respect, honor, and praise.
 - 3. This tendency to exalt self can be plainly seen in the titles that are worn.
- B. One expression of this prideful attitude of exalting self is found in religion by the use of religious titles.
 - 1. The boastful Pharisees of Jesus' day enjoyed greetings of respect in public places.
 - a. **Matthew 23:5-7**
 - 2. This desire to be honored before others is not confined to the first century, however.
 - a. Today men and women continue to wear a wide variety of religious titles.
 - b. The clergy-laity distinction, which finds its greatest use in Roman Catholicism but has also been adopted by most Protestant churches, encourages the use of religious titles.

I. DO THE SCRIPTURES TEACH “THERE’S NOTHING WRONG WITH CALLING THE PREACHER, PASTOR, REVEREND, BISHOP, FATHER, ETC.”?

- A. The Christian is instructed “*not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think*” (**Romans 12:3**).
 - 1. Paul warns, “*Do not be wise in your own estimation*” (**Romans 12:16b**).
 - a. He further stated: **Philippians 2:3**
- 2. Exalting self must have no place in our lives as Christians.
 - B. Christ made it abundantly clear that His followers were to have an attitude of humility rather than a proud, arrogant, and exalted one.
 - 1. He explained the contrast between the way of the world and the way of His followers: **Matthew 20:25-28**
 - a. It's not a matter of placing our “credentials” on the wall, advertising where we have been to school or bragging about our religious degrees.
 - 1) All this is merely a vain display of what we value and boast about.
 - 2. In the passage we mentioned a moment ago in Matthew 23:5-7, we can see that in the mind of our Lord this prideful attitude was strongly condemned.
 - a. He proceeded to explain: **Matthew 23:8-10**
 - b. In giving this instruction, Jesus did not merely prohibit such titles. He immediately gave the reason: **Matthew 23:11-12**
 - 1) The way of the cross is the way of humility.

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- 2) Such titles are forbidden since they exalt and glorify self and move one away from humility.
3. **James 4:10**
 - a. Of all people who should understand this principle, preachers should certainly be the ones and refrain from the use of attaching religious titles to their name.
 - b. Much less allow and encourage others to give them these titles.

II. SOME RELIGIOUS TITLES THAT ARE USED TO ADDRESS PREACHERS:

A. “PASTOR / BISHOP”

1. The word “*pastor*” means “a shepherd, one who tends herds or flocks” (**W. E. Vine**).
 - a. It is a Bible word and is found once in **Ephesians 4:11**.
2. The word “*bishop*” means “an overseer” (**W.E. Vine**).
 - a. It is a Bible word and found in **1Timothy 3:1,2; Titus 1:7; 1 Peter 2:25**.
3. We see the work / function of “*pastors*” in **Acts 20:28**:
 - a. Notice that another term for “*pastor*” is “*overseer*”.
 - b. “*Pastors*” are the same as “*overseers*” in a congregation.
4. Also, this same function/office is called “*elders*” in **verse 17** when Paul called for the elders of the church at Ephesus.
5. In **1 Peter 5:1**, Peter addresses the “*elders*” and in **verse 2**.
 - a. Thus, the “*elders*” (v. 1) are the “*shepherd*” (v. 2) and are also the “*overseer*” (v. 2).
 - 1) These are not three different positions, but one position having three different descriptions of their work.
 - 2) Paul wanted Titus to “*appoint elders in every city*” (**Titus 1:5**), then he calls these elders the “*bishops*” (NKJV), “*overseers*” (NASV) in **verse 7**.
6. Although thousands of people may use the term “*Pastor*” in reference to the preacher, this doesn’t say that the preacher fulfill this Biblical position.
 - a. For example, the elder/bishop was to be:
 - 1) married with believing children, (**Titus 1:6; 1 Timothy 3:2**).
 - 2) a man (a male), (**1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:6-9**).
 - b. This shows that many preachers today do not meet the scriptural qualifications to be a pastor since they are not married and if married they do not have believing children and they are a women (rather than a man and shouldn’t be preachers to begin with much less pastors)!

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7. Can we not see how people today have confused this position?
8. Another observation is that men (elders, bishops, overseers, shepherds) were never given the title “Pastor” or “Bishop”.
 - a. These terms were merely descriptions of the work the overseer or elder was to do,
 - b. It was never intended to be a title!
 - C. In other words, nowhere in the New Testament do we read of “Pastor James” or “Bishop Peter.”
 - 1) The terms were meant to refer to the shepherding work that the elder or overseer was to do.
 - 2) Apparently in New Testament times, people were simply called “James” and “Peter”—without a title.

B. “REVEREND”

1. Many preachers wear the title ‘Reverend’ in religious circles today.
2. The word reverend means “worthy of reverence,” and reverence means “profound adoring or awed respect.”
 - a. Thus, when a man/woman wears the title “Reverend,” they are telling you that they demand profound adoring and deserves to be revered.
3. And anymore the title, Reverend, isn’t good enough for some.
 - a. They title themselves “Right Reverend,” Most Reverend” or “Very Reverend.”
 - b. This is a flagrant example of self-promotion and exaltation.
4. Only God truly deserves profound adoration and awe.
 - a. **Psalms 111:9**
 - b. Only a person, blinded by desire for or love of power, would dare apply to themself a term used to describe God!

C. “FATHER”

1. Once again, remembering the context of **Matthew 23: 1-12** notice in particular **verse 9**:
2. Jesus is not speaking of an earthly relationship between a man and his child. **Luke 15:21; Ephesians 6:2,4**
3. Instead, Jesus is referring to the use of Father as a religious title.
4. There is one Father which is in heaven!
5. We have one biological father who gave us physical life but only one heavenly Father Who gives us eternal life!

CONCLUSION:

- A. **Job 32:21-22**
- B. It is my hope that after this study we, too, will not accept any man’s person and neither give flattering titles.
- C. May we all have the attitude of humility and act in accordance with it.