

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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Religious Titles

In Matthew 23, Jesus issued a stern indictment of the Pharisees for their hypocrisy, stating that they would “receive greater condemnation” (Mark 12:40). They did what they did “to be noticed by men,” loving places of honor, “respectful greetings” and “being called Rabbi by men.” (Matt. 23:5-7).

Evidently, the mentioning of the term “Rabbi” prompted a discussion by the Lord on religious titles. In the very next verses, Matthew records these words of our Lord: “But do not be called Rabbi; for One is your Teacher, and you are all brothers. Do not call *anyone* on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven. Do not be called leaders; for One is your Leader, *that is*, Christ.” (Matt. 23:8-10).

What is the Lord teaching when He says not to call people “Rabbi,” “Teacher,” “father,” or “leader?” Was He condemning the use of those terms in every case? Not in every case.

The Scriptures refer to those who carry out the work of “teachers” (Eph. 4:11) and “leaders” (Heb. 13:17, 24). In many places the Scriptures refer to one’s male parent as “father” (Gen. 2:24; Eph. 6:2, etc.). Paul referred to himself as the spiritual “father” of the Corinthian Christians when he said, “...for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel.” (1 Cor. 4:15b). He had taught them the gospel and founded the church there (Acts 18:1-18), and so they owed their attention to Paul’s letter. Paul was not advocating that the Christians there should call him “Father Paul” as a religious title.

Paul never contradicted Christ, and he does not contradict the Lord’s opposition to self-exaltation by accepting religious titles as stated in Matthew 23. Paul sought not to promote and elevate himself, or even a “select few,” above any other Christian. Paul’s Lord highlighted the truth, “you are all brothers.” The great servant of the Lord, “an apostle of Gentiles” (Rom. 11:13), was just “brother Paul” (2 Pet. 3:15). A female Christian who was “a helper of many” and “a servant of the church” was “sister Phoebe” (Rom. 16:1-2). This family vocabulary is adequate for any Christian.

Let us heed the admonition, “to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith.” (Rom. 12:3). We can resist self-exaltation by refusing to wear titles that elevate.

Jesus ruled out any “clergy-laity” distinction among His followers when He said, “One is your Teacher, and you are all brothers ... One is your Father, He who is in heaven ... One is your Leader, *that is*, Christ.” (Matt. 23:8-10). Apostles, elders, preachers, all are “brothers,” with one Master. There is no priestly hierarchy among His people; all of His people are “a holy priesthood” and “a royal priesthood” (1 Pet. 2:5, 9), with Christ Jesus as our “High Priest” (Heb. 3:1).

If we wish to honor other Christians, let us “bestow more abundant honor” on “the members of the body which seem to be weaker,” on “those *members* of the body which we deem less honorable,” on “our less presentable members, ... so that there may be no division in the body, but *that* the members may have the same care for one another.” (1 Cor. 12:22-25).

- GFS

Honesty, Error, and Truth

There are many good people in the world who are honestly mistaken, but when a man who is honestly mistaken hears the truth, one of two things must happen: he will cease to be mistaken or, he will cease to be honest. If he does not obey it, he will no longer be honest. If he does obey it, he will no longer be mistaken. Honesty and error must separate when truth comes along. No man can be honestly mistaken if he has heard the truth.

- Eugene Britnell

The Lord Is Patient

In 2 Peter 3:9,10 the Scriptures state that “The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up.”

God has not yet handed down judgment. Life continues to take its course despite various acts of sin, wickedness and rebellion. The militant atheist can

shake his fist at heaven and curse God without fear of any immediate consequence of divine wrath. The only consequence of wickedness in this world at this time is the suffering it causes; disease, trouble, mental and emotional anxiety and trauma, broken homes, social disorder and low self-esteem, to name a few. Thus it shall continue until “the day of the Lord” (See also Acts 17:31).

Now is the time of grace - our grace period given to us by God. He is now reconciling all who desire it through His gospel (2 Corinthians 7:17-21). Further, God’s grace instructs us to deny ungodliness and to live soberly and righteously in this present age (Titus 2:11,12). Some of us answer His call. Many do not and each day we live is one day closer to that final day when this age of grace will pass and eternity will begin. It is something to think about. It is something to prepare for.

- Jon W. Quinn

- > Nothing ruins the truth like stretching it.
 - > He who is good at making excuses, is seldom good for anything else.
 - > God promises a safe landing, not a calm passage.
 - > Give God what's right, not what's left!
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SUNDAY’S LESSONS: Sunday morning: *“I Want to be Sure!”* (text: John 6:63-69); Sunday evening: Jesus Christ: A Closer Look – *The Gift of Everything!* (Mark 12:41-44).