

## The Oologah Informer

### July 13<sup>th</sup>, 2014

#### According to the Bible, Is It Proper to Use Religious Titles Such as “Father,” “Reverend,” and “Pastor”?

Jeremy Northrop

#### Address

13800 S. 4080 Rd on Hwy 169  
South of Oologah  
P.O. Box 527  
Oologah, OK 74053  
918-443-2025

www.oologahcofc.org  
oologahcofc@oologahcofc.org  
facebook.com/oologahchurchofchrist

#### Service Times

##### **Sunday**

Bible Class: 9:30 A.M.  
Worship: 10:30 A.M. & 5 P.M.

##### **Wednesday**

Bible Study: 7 P.M.

#### Preacher:

Russ Earl

#### AM Sermon:

Closing the door on Satan:  
Defending the Family (2 Tim 1:5)

#### PM Sermon:

Jesus weeps for the City  
(Luke 19:41-44)

#### Sunday AM Bible Class:

The book of Joshua – D. Jackson

#### Wednesday Bible Class:

Summer Series – Landon Rowell

#### In SEARCH of the Lord's Way

Tulsa KWHB TV 47  
Sunday mornings at 7:30am

#### Radio Program (coming soon)

“The Minister’s View” on  
KTTRadio.org on Tuesday’s  
at 9am

Some things sound very pious, spiritual, and holy but are in fact hypocritical, boastful, and self-centered. Paul addressed such matters in Colossians. Chapter two, verse 18 says “Let no man rob you of your prize by a voluntary humility and worshipping of the angels, dwelling in the things which he hath seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind.” Note what Paul calls a “voluntary humility,” in other words, FALSE humility. Such is a part of what he calls in verse 22 as “the precepts and doctrines of men.” What do the doctrines of men and their false humility really amount to? Verse 23 is the answer: “Which things have indeed a show of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and severity to the body; but are not of any value against the indulgence of the flesh.” Self-imposed doctrines and so-called humility is just a show, a put-on religion.

Some of this self-appointed, false piety is addressed by Jesus in Matthew 23. Here, coupled with the hypocrisy of such things is the self-centered boastfulness of “titles” and the desire to be recognized by those whom these “titled” people believe are in a “lower station.” There are four descriptions found in verses 1-7 that amount to what Jesus says in verse 12 as merely exalting self. Such attitudes are contrary to the plain Bible teaching on humility. First, note the hypocrisy of verse three: “All things therefore whatsoever they bid you, do and observe; but do not ye after their works; for they say, and do not.” So many “religious” people are saying one thing, yet portraying quite another. Jesus calls this hypocrisy seven times in this chapter. The word hypocrite means play-actor. What a shame and a sham that so many people are just play-actors when it comes to their religion.

Verse five shows these people to be boastful. Doing their “religious” acts merely to be seen by others. Then in verse six, we see them as rather self-centered: they want to be seen and set in the midst of whatever is going on. Finally, they want recognition (verse seven) and to be greeted.

Between these four descriptions (hypocrisy, boastful, self-centered, and desiring recognition) and the charge of exalting themselves in verse 12, there is instruction on how to avoid these four ungodly characteristics. This instruction, verses 8-10, decries how “titles” contribute to hypocrisy and exaltation. First Jesus says be not called Rabbi. The rabbi was a teacher, but not merely an instructor. Rabbis were the doctors of the law. Many of the scribes and Pharisees were rabbis. Jesus said that the use of such a term (rabbi, or in our culture and vernacular, “Doctor”) merely to place oneself above another, or for special recognition, was boastful exaltation and to be avoided.

Second, verse nine says call no man “father” on earth. This is not referring to our dads, but to a religious title. Only one deserves this spiritual title: God in Heaven. When men wear this title, they violate this passage and are placing themselves in God’s exalted position. This is why Jesus said such men would be humbled (verse 12).

Finally, there is verse 10 wherein Jesus makes clear that He is the Master, and none other should call himself that. To do so is to exalt oneself above his or her rightful place and again be guilty of the prohibitions Jesus is pronouncing here.

Closely linked with these thoughts is the consideration one should make with reference to the “religious name” one wears personally. Do denominational names indicate anything? Certainly. Denominational names will strongly indicate what one believes or has been taught. If one refers to himself as a Baptist, Methodist, or Catholic, they are indicating an agreement with that particular denomination’s doctrine and practices. A Methodist would not call himself a Catholic, nor would a Baptist call himself a Lutheran. What does the Bible teach about such things? Paul shows this to be divisive when he told the Christians at Corinth “Now I beseech you, brethren, through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you...now this I mean, that each one of you saith I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ” (1:10,12). He expressly states there ought not to be this type of division and distinction among God’s people. So, what does God want His people to be called? Luke tells us “the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch” (Acts 11.26). In fact, Peter tells us “if a man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God in this name” (1 Peter 4.16 ).

In conclusion, Jesus, Peter and Paul are all teaching us that religious titles are out of place either because they exalt one above his place, because they place one in the exalted role of deity, which no human can attain, or they promote division which God forbids. Men ought not to call themselves “reverend” or “rabbi” or “master” or “doctor” (in a religious sense) in order to call attention to themselves or their role or their education. Friends, let us just consider ourselves as the Lord has done: equal, one in Christ as Christians. Thanks for reading. May God bless you in your study of His word.