

Religious Titles: What Does the Bible Say?

The wearing of religious titles is very common today. Often, ministers, preachers, and religious teachers wear titles in such a way as to set them apart as a special group of holy people. Does the Bible uphold this practice? What does the Bible say about wearing religious titles?

First, Jesus addressed the question of wearing religious titles in Matt. 23:7-10. Jesus condemned the wearing of such religious titles as *master*, *rabbi*, and *father*. Jesus spoke clearly on the use of religious titles when he said in Matt 23:9, "And call no man your father on the earth: for one is your Father, *even* he who is in heaven."

Second, the word *reverend* is never used in the Bible as a religious title. The word *reverend* is used in Psalms 111:9 in reference to God's name: "He hath sent redemption unto his people; He hath commanded his covenant forever: Holy and reverend is his name." The word *reverend* is never used in the Bible to designate any human beings. The New Testament does not refer to Paul as Reverend Paul, nor does it refer to Peter as Reverend Peter. Look at the beginning of Paul's letters where he refers to himself, and you will never find where he refers to himself as Reverend Paul (Rom. 1:1; 1 Cor. 1:1; 2 Cor. 1:1). Paul referred to himself as a preacher, a teacher, and an apostle (2 Tim. 1:11). Paul commanded Timothy, "But be sober in all things, suffer hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry (2 Tim. 4:5)." The highest religious titles, which are so common today, are unknown to the New Testament.

Third, the Bible teaches that every member of Christ's church or kingdom is a priest. Peter wrote "But ye are a elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for (God's) own possession (1 Pet. 2:9)." John added, "And he made us *to be* a kingdom, *to be* priests unto his God and Father (Rev 1:6)." The idea that only preachers or those who publicly proclaim the word are priests is erroneous. Members of the Lord's church are not divided into a *clergy* and laity relationship (Gal. 3:28). Jesus said to his disciples, ". . . and all you are brethren (Matt. 23:8)." Peter referred to Paul as *brother Paul* and not *Father Paul*, *Reverend Paul*, or *Clergyman Paul*. Followers of Christ are not to use worldly titles, but they are to "speak as the oracles of God (1 Peter 4:11)."

The Bible teaching is clear on use of religious titles. Paul wrote, "You be of the same mind, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind . . . each counting other better than himself (Phil 2:2-3)."