

"REVEREND"

Gary McDade

The word “reverend” appears in the KJV and ASV in Psalm 111:9 where it is applied to God. The Psalm says, “He sent redemption unto his people: he hath commanded his covenant for ever: holy and reverend is his name.” The only time the word “reverend” is found in the Bible is in Psalm 111:9. According to Brown-Driver-Brigg’s Hebrew Lexicon “reverend” translates the Hebrew word *yare’* and may be defined “to fear, to revere, to be afraid.” The one whose name is “reverend” is identified in the text as the same one who sent redemption to his people and commanded his covenant forever, and that one is God.

A very common abuse of this word among religious people is to apply it as a title to mere men (and even women in some cases). Ten reasons are given showing the practice to be wrong.

One, it is wrong to “think of men above that which is written” (I Cor. 4:6). The apostle said it would constitute being “puffed up one against another.”

Two, it is wrong for Christians to “exercise dominion” over other Christians. Jesus said, “Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant” (Matt. 20:25-27). The word here is *katakuriuo* meaning to “try to show one’s authority over” (Barclay M. Newman, p. 94). Students of the organization of the New Testament church will also recognize the practice prohibited in relation to the role of elders who have authority over a local congregation as shepherds but who are not “lords over” God’s heritage (I Pet. 5:3; Heb. 13:7, 17). “Lord’s over” translates *katakuriuo*. Christians do not “exercise dominion” or “lord it over” other Christians.

Three, it is wrong for men to assign and wear religious titles even when the motivation for doing so is esteem and respect because Jesus said, “But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren. And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven.

Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ. But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant” (Matt. 23:8-10).

Four, it is wrong for man to call himself God and that is precisely what those taking God’s name, “reverend,” are guilty of doing. II Thessalonians 2:4 reads, “Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.”

Five, it is wrong to refuse to “speak as the oracles of God” (I Pet. 4:11). Those calling themselves by a name applied only to God are guilty of doing just that.

Six, it is wrong for men to set anything into the church not authorized by the head of the church, Jesus Christ. Paul taught that God set some in the church: Apostles, prophets, and teachers but no “reverend’s” (I Cor. 12:28; cf. also Eph. 4:11).

Seven, it is wrong for men to elevate their doctrines in general and the assigning and wearing of religious titles in particular to the level of God’s commandments. Jesus taught, “But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men” (Matt. 15:9).

Eight, it is wrong to refuse to abide in the doctrine of Christ by using the title “reverend.” The disciple whom Jesus loved wrote, “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” (II John 9).

Nine, it is wrong to forsake the apostles’ doctrine by wearing the title “reverend.” Christians are to “continue steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine” (Acts 2:42). The apostles’ doctrine nowhere authorizes the use of the title “reverend.”

Ten, it is wrong to add wearing the title “reverend” to the scriptures because the Bible warns, “For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book” (Rev. 22:18).

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