

# The Bulletin

## Meeks St. Church of Christ

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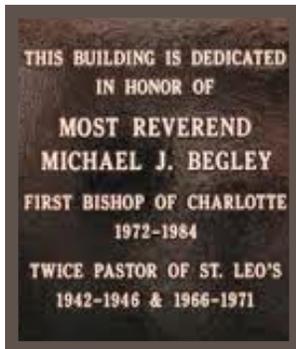
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March 24, 2019

### “The Use & Abuse of Religious Titles”

By Brian Meade

One of the most striking differences between the religion of our Lord Jesus Christ and the religions of men— is the use and abuse of religious titles. It seems as though anyone who does anything noteworthy wears a title. When someone starts their own denomination, they become the “founding pastor.” When you have several preachers in one church, the head preacher becomes the “senior pastor” and the others are called the “associate pastors.” The word pastor is a misnomer in this context, as the term pastor is not used correctly— a very big abuse in itself!



If someone is chosen to lead songs, and is good with music, he may very well be given the title “Music Director” or “Choir Director” (in denominations who have choirs). When a person is hired to go and visit people in nursing homes and hospitals, he becomes the “Chaplain” — instead of just being a Christian fulfilling his responsibility.

Then there are preachers who are called “Reverend”— like the one in the plaque to the left. There are different forms of this term such as: (1) “Reverend Mister” (2) “Right reverend” (3) “His or Her Reverence” (4) “The Most Reverend.” (Source: Wikipedia)

These titles are generally accepted in the denominational world, and no one seems to question whether they are right and proper to use such titles. But should we not stop & examine practices to see if they are valid? (1 Thessalonians 5:21)

First of all, let’s look at what the Bible gives us from the inspiration of God, as Paul told Timothy, “*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, <sup>17</sup> that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.*” (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

The New Testament is our guide and our rule for what is proper, right, and acceptable work, worship, and belief in what God wants as His will. If it is to be our work, God has revealed it to us in the scriptures so that we may be “*complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.*”

In the New Testament, we have certain works or roles to be exercised in the church that God reveals to us:

(1) **Apostles & Prophets**— Ephesians 4:11; Eph. 2:20; I Cor. 13:8-10.

The work of the apostles and prophets were invaluable in the laying the foundation (Ephesians 2:20) for what we follow today. Their work was limited to the time in which inspiration and miracles were given to man— to reveal and confirm the word of God (Mark 16:17-18; Ephesians 3:5). Today, there are no living apostles or prophets in the

church, as their work concluded with the death of the last apostle to lay hands on others to impart gifts (Acts 8:14-18).

(2) **Preachers, Ministers, Evangelists**—Romans 10:14; 1 Timothy 4:6; 2 Timothy 4:1-5. The work of preaching the word is a continuing work, very much needed in the world who needs to know God's word. All three terms refer to the same work and are used interchangeably (notice in 2 Timothy 4:2 and 5). Preaching of today is not by direct inspiration, but of speaking "the oracles of God" (1 Peter 4:11).

(3) **Teachers**—Acts 13:1; Ephesians 4:11. Bible class teachers perform a work in edification and strengthening the disciples. Again, teachers today are not directly inspired and must have a proper knowledge to be effective. Paul tells Timothy, "*And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.*" (1 Timothy 2:2)

(4) **Elders, Bishops, Pastors, Presbyters**—Acts 20:17; 20:28; Eph. 4:11; 1 Peter 5:1-3. A careful study of these terms reveals the work of overseers in the church of our Lord. They are always used in the scriptures in the plural sense, as "*From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called for the elders of the church.*" (Acts 20:17). Paul gives qualifications for the work in 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9.

(5) **Deacons**—Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:8-13. Deacons are the servants of the church, who help facilitate the work of God by doing what needs to be done. Just like the work of bishops or elders, there are qualifications for their work as well (1 Timothy 3:8-13).

So what's wrong with making up additional titles and offices for men and women to wear? Does the Bible specifically condemn extra-Biblical names not found in the New Testament? What do we say about such?

### **I. There Is No Authority For Them.**

Whether people realize it or not, God wants us to have a positive Bible basis for everything we do. Notice what Paul says, "*And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.*" (Colossians 3:17 NKJB) It means having the authority, right or permission to do what we do in service to God. Christ has all authority in the legislation of laws, commandments, and ordinances for the New Testament (Matthew 28:18; Hebrews 1:1-2; James 4:12).

When men add to, take away, or substitute their own traditions in place for what God has already revealed—they become just Nadab and Abihu in offering "*profane fire before the Lord, which He had not commanded them.*" (Leviticus 10:1) The silence of God is prohibitive, just as adding circumcision was an addition to God's way (Acts 15:24; Galatians 1:6-9).

When men add to what is already established in God's word—they are not improving on God's way, but instead are perverting it! We need to heed well to the proverb writer who said, "*Do not add to His words, Lest He rebuke you, and you be found a liar.*" (Proverbs 30:6)

When men add choir directors, soloists, praise teams, music ministers, youth ministers, moderators, circuit overseers, arch-bishops, cardinals, and popes to the roster of titles and offices—they are devising these out of their own heart like Jeroboam (1 Kings 12:32-33).

### **II. They Add To The Work & Organization of the Church.**

The main reason why some feel the need to add names and titles to the church's work is because they want the church to do more than is authorized in the first place. Why do men want a youth minister to entertain and teach the youth? Why do men feel the need for choirs, soloists, and praise teams? It is not because God wants or expects us to have these, but rather they are desired by those who don't care the origin (From heaven or men? Matthew 21:25) of such practices. To them, the ends justify the means.

Why do we need arch-bishops over the bishops and popes to rule the whole church on earth? Are these not without Bible authority in any regard? The term "pastor" has been given a whole new meaning as well. It now means the preacher who is a one-man-overseer of the church. Not God's way!

### **III. They Exalt a Man Above His Rightful Place.**

Jesus said to His followers in Matthew 23:8-12, "*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. But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.*"

The whole purpose Jesus gave these warning NOT to desire to be called by such self-honoring titles is so men would not exalt themselves. But that is the greatest indictment against such titles as: "worshipful master" or "arch-bishop" or "pope" or "reverend." The Bible teaches us, "*He hath sent redemption unto his people; He hath commanded his covenant for ever: Holy and reverend is his name.*" (Psalm 111:9) No man should desire to be honored above his fellow Christians. As a matter of fact, Paul would say that we are to "*Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.*" (Phil. 2:3)

In conclusion, let us call Bible things by Bible names and follow God's way that will not be uprooted (Matt. 15:13).

**GOSPEL** Allen Shepherd  
**MEETING** Sunday April 21st  
Monday-Friday 22nd-26th  
7:00 PM Nightly

**News and Notes:** Sick and recovering: Tim Harris Sr, Tim Harris Jr, Chad Harris, Martha Norvell (Mississippi Care), June Lawson (Lisa Busby's Mom), Clois Wright, Debbie Keplinger, Gaddy Hall, Janis Johnson, Daniel Holloway, Tammy Kilgore (Jerry's niece), Betty Hurst, Pam Zeanah, Katie Ward Cobern (cancer), Peggy Harville (cancer) Linda Harris— Ruthie Robertson's sister, is out of the hospital but still needs our prayers. Shirley Bradley (Robbie Doles friend) is out of the hospital and is feeling better. Judy Byrnes' mother passed away (friend of Robbie Doles). Willis Logan (preacher at Steen, Ms.) had hip replacement surgery and is recovering.

**Those Who Serve:**

**Sunday Morning 9:00 A.M. Service:**

**Opening Prayer:** Nathan Meade  
**Preaching:** Brian Meade  
**Sermon #1:** "God's Providence"

**Auditorium Bible Class: 9:35am:**

Paul Johnson  
The Book of Acts (Jason Longstreth)  
*Page 20, Question #1*

**Sunday Morning 10:30 A.M. Service:**

**Announcements:** Paul Johnson  
**Opening Prayer & Scripture Reading:** Dan Cottrell  
*Psalm 112:1-4*  
**Song Leader:** Adam Harris  
**Lord's Supper:** Jerry Kennemur  
**Assisting:** Adam Harris & Nathan Meade  
**Singing Service:** *Men of the Congregation lead Singing*  
**Invitation:** Jerry Kennemur  
**Closing Prayer:** Lee Busby

**Wednesday Evening: 7:00 P.M.**

**March 27th:**

**Auditorium Bible Class:** Paul Busby  
Ezra, Nehemiah, & Esther (Mike Willis)  
*Page 8, Question #1*  
**Invitation:** Russell Briggs  
**Song Leader:** Brian Meade  
**Closing Prayer:** Nathan Meade