

Respect for Bible Terms – No. 1

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The Bible claims inspiration for itself in both the Old and New Testaments. One does not read far in the New Testament without being struck by the reverence of its writers (and those whom they quote) for the Old Testament as the very Word of God. Countless times in the Old Testament such expressions as “The Lord said unto ...” or “The Word of the Lord” appear. The New Testament writers consistently claim that their message is not of themselves or of other men but of God.

If one accepts the claim that the Scriptures are inspired in the sense that they claim to be inspired, then it must follow that the words, the very terms used, in the Scriptures are inspired. Indeed, Paul plainly affirms the inspiration of the very words he wrote: “We speak not in words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Spirit teacheth” (2 Cor. 2:13). It is fair to conclude from this premise that the Holy Spirit chose the very words the Biblical authors used (while using their individual literary styles) to convey the ideas He wanted communicated. It is also fair to conclude that the vocabulary of Scripture must therefore be handled with the deepest respect. A safe and valid principle of Biblical interpretation is to “call Bible things by Bible names.”

A host of erroneous doctrines and practices can be traced to a failure to properly respect and apply Bible terms. This is not to imply that we are bound to use only words of the Bible in discussing religious or Scriptural subjects. If that were so, every sermon or Bible lesson would have to be confined solely to reading or quoting Scripture. Further, it is not enough merely to use terms that are found in Scripture, for it is not uncommon to hear Scriptural terms used to convey unscriptural ideas. The earnest student of the Bible will be concerned with not only using Scriptural terms but using them with their Scriptural meaning. In the next few brief articles, our study will concern some of the terms of Scripture that are commonly abused. These will include terms describing preachers, terms concerning the church, the members of the church, and the day of worship.

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