

## Respect for Bible Terms – No. 3

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Much, if not most, of the religious division and confusion in our world is a result of man's failure to respect and use terms of Scripture as they are used in Scripture. Since the very words of Scripture proceeded from the Holy Spirit (2 Pet. 1:20–21; 1 Cor. 2:13), Bible terms deserve our utmost respect.

Consider some of the terms that are descriptive of members of the church. *Brethren*, *saints*, *children of God*, *Christians*, *members of the body*, etc., are all Scriptural terms used to describe those who have believed and obeyed the Gospel and have been added to the church. The terms that have generally been adopted by the religious world have their origins in Roman Catholicism. *Parishioners* is one of these terms. This term refers to those who live within a geographical area called a *parish*, which is committed to one priest or pastor. Protestants have adopted and adapted the term to refer to all the members of a local congregation of their people. Both the term and the concept of geographical boundaries of religious authority are foreign to the New Testament. The only geographical bounds the Lord placed on those who preach and teach the Gospel are "the world" and "every creature" (Mat. 28:19; Mark 16:15–16).

Another term derived from unscriptural distinctions originating in Roman Catholicism is *laity* (and *laymen*). The term is borrowed directly from the Greek word *laos*, which means "people." It is used by Catholics and Protestants alike to refer to all who are not priests or preachers. Although the term is found in the New Testament, it is never used to discriminate one class from another in the church. It is used to refer to **all** of God's people (Tit. 2:14; 1 Pet. 2:9), not merely to those who do not preach. The corresponding (and equally unscriptural) term to *laity* is *clergy*. It is borrowed from the Greek work *cleros* and is used to refer to those who are not the "laity," in other words, to priests and preachers. Peter uses the term, not in reference to preachers, but in reference to the people in a local church which are overseen by its elders (1 Pet. 5:3). Such terms and their erroneous concepts grew out of the false idea that distinctions should be made between preachers and those they preach to. This same unscriptural distinction can be seen in distinctive clothing (robes, hats collars, etc.), the doctrine of celibacy, the wearing of exalted titles (*Reverend*, *Father*, *Monsignor*), and such like. All such false distinctions violate the great principle of oneness in Christ Jesus for those who serve Him. (Gal. 3:28).

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