IT IS SETTLED!

By Howell Lasseter

Jesus' Kingdom: Religious Titles

Last week's article keyed on the word "**one**." Read Ephesians 4:4-6 to reinforce the importance of this little word. This week, consider **the gospel**. All who stand before eternity-bound creatures, preaching on topics which carry eternal importance, have the God-given command to preach only that "**gospel**" which God approves. Hear the apostle Paul: *"Woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!"* (1 Corinthians 9:16b). In this scripture passage, Paul is not only stressing the necessity of preaching **the gospel** to every person, but the necessity that that which is preached be "**the**" gospel. Read Romans 1:16,17: *"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith."*

Bible students understand that the God-approved "faith" can contain only that which God has authorized. There is no place for changes, additions, subtractions, authored by man. Let's look at an example: Most denominational preachers and leaders wear titles, such as "Father," "Reverend," etc. Yet "reverend," used one time in the entire Bible, is applied to God: *"...holy and reverend is his name"* (Psalm 111:9b). In discussing the desires, behavior and excesses of religious leaders, Jesus specifically forbids the use of the title "Father" for such leaders: *"And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven"* (Matthew 23; especially verse 9). Understanding the desire of religious leaders to be exalted, Jesus further warns in the same chapter: *"And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted"* (v.12). Peter, one of the 12, sets the example: *"Cornelius waited for them, and had called together his kinsmen and near friends. And as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet, and worshipped him. But Peter took him up, saying, Stand up: I myself also am a man"* (Acts 10:24b-26). John, also one of the 12 and privileged to see the awesome scenes recorded in Revelation, writes: *"And I John saw these things, and heard them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which shewed me these things. Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not: for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God"* (Revelation 22:8,9). Paul further warns, *"But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other **gospel** unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other **gospel** unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed"* (Galatians 1:8,9).

It may seem to you readers that the wearing of titles is a minor departure from **the gospel**. Remember Jesus' warning about the doctrines of men: *"This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of*

men" (Matthew 15:8,9). Hear Him again: *"Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men,…making the word of God of none effect through your tradition"* (Mark 7:6,7,8a,13a). If one wants to be acceptable to God, he must be diligent to not depart from **the gospel** in all areas of life and teaching. Readers, study the Word, and do not blindly follow religious leaders who trample upon the clear commandments of **the gospel**!