

“OH MY GOD!”

By: Clay Barnes

Hardly a day goes by that we do not hear someone exclaim it. You hear it at work or school, at the bank or the supermarket, and sometimes even on the church parking lot. Television, no doubt, is the chief offender, with nearly every game show, soap opera, situation comedy, prime time drama, and movie using this phrase repeatedly.

It has become a faddish and clever saying. It is used to register alarm, surprise, delight, dismay, sarcasm, and almost every kind of response. Probably some cannot imagine why. Why does, or should, this phrase grate so upon the ears of Christian people?

We would do well to consider the faith and devotion manifested by men and women from long ago; several of these are singled out and presented as examples for Christians today (Heb. 11). They insisted on using reverence and humility while addressing Deity. Abraham approached God with these words, “Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes” (Gen. 18:27). Jacob marked each place that the Lord spoke to him with a stone or altar, recognizing that even the plot of ground was sacred because the Lord had revealed Himself there (Gen. 28:17). Can you imagine the patriarchs referring to God in the offhanded manner that is so prevalent in our world today? Jehovah God is to be revered (Heb. 12:28); woe if we respect not God (Isa. 45:9).

Although we are not under the Law of Moses today (John

1:17), we worship and serve the same God revealed to Hebrew fathers. We should have the posture of godly fear and awe that was shown by Peter before Jesus (Luke 5:8) and the apostle John on Patmos (Rev. 1:17).

The Jews sought to protect and preserve the sacredness of God's name. In the centuries before the birth of Jesus, they decided to stop pronouncing it altogether so that its usage would not become common or ordinary. Should we show less respect and regard for our Heavenly Father?

This phrase goes beyond such euphemisms as “goodness” or “gracious” or “gee” or “golly” (which are all expressions referring to God, check the dictionary), and thereby should not be used either. The real reason is that it is not a euphemism at all! They do not attempt to disguise the reference to God. If “Oh, my God!” is not a vain usage of God's name, then what is it?

Our speech reflects our character and attitudes (Mt. 12:23-25). Let us refuse to be guilty of showing an empty and low regard for the God of Heaven. The apostle Paul wrote, “Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearer” (Eph. 4:29).