

HEBREWS: REPLACING MAN'S RITUALISM WITH CHRIST
"Part I: Supplanting Worshipping Men By Worshipping Christ Alone"
(Hebrews 1:1-3)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

People have a tendency at times to revere other people, and sometimes this occurs in **religious** circles to such a high degree that it leaves onlookers feeling a bit **unnerved!**

(1) When Pope John Paul II visited Saint Louis earlier this year, over 100,000 of his supporters filled a stadium and exalted him greatly! One of our Church members later spoke to me about his concern that from what he saw on television, the crowds in St. Louis almost seemed to be worshipping the pope!

(2) This tendency shows up in the followers of Muhammed. Years ago the National Geographic magazine ran a photograph taken inside a courtyard in Mecca. There, a mass of pilgrims was seen circling a shrouded structure about the size of a large shed in which rested a famous stone touched by Muhammed. One might almost conclude that men were revering Muhammed akin to the level one should have for the worship of God.

(3) Evangelical Christians sometimes do the same thing! A believer in Christ once shared with me how some other Christians we knew who are real fans of Dr. John Mac Arthur's sermon tapes paid a visit to Dr. MacArthur's church in California. They sat down at the front of the Church and listened in awe at his live presentation of the Word! However, they came back to Connecticut a bit disillusioned because, after the service, they discovered some of the members of that Church acted a bit **carnal!** They found it hard to believe that not everyone in the notable Dr. John MacArthur's church was not mature!

Does God want us to honor godly men and women of God with reverential awe, or not?! WHY?!

(We turn to the sermon "Need" section . . .)

Need: "I've not only seen news reports of throngs exalting the earthly shrines of Muhammed or hailing the pope as God's 'vicar' on earth, but even know of Evangelicals who have gathered around a minister in deep awe! Is this all right with God, or not? WHY?!"

- I. **The writer of Hebrews states that in Old Testament times, God used various ways throughout history to speak through godly prophets to the great Hebrew forefathers, Hebrews 1:1.**
- II. **However, in the relatively recent era, he noted that God had spoken to God's people through His own Son, Hebrews 1:2a.**
- III. **In contrast to these prophets and forefathers, the writer of Hebrews launched into an exaltation of Christ, picturing Him as being vastly *SUPERIOR* in position and work to these honored men, Hebrews 1:2b-3 [Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, p. 1730]:**
 - A. First, God's Son, Jesus Christ, was appointed heir of *all* things in **superiority** to the honored **forefathers** of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob who were heirs *only* of the land of *Palestine*, Hebrews 1:2b!
 1. God promised to the patriarch, Abraham a land that was **different** than the land of his *nativity*, Gen. 12:1-2, 6-7.
 2. God later revealed this was the Fertile Crescent lands stretching between the Euphrates and the Red Sea, Gen. 15:18; Ex. 23:31.
 3. In time, Abraham's descendants, the patriarchs Isaac and Jacob, **inherited** this land of Palestine, Genesis 21:12 and 28:10-14.
 4. However, Jesus would inherit much more than **Palestine**; He was the Son of God, and would inherit **all** God's *creation*, Heb. 1:2b!
 - B. Second, God's Son, Jesus Christ was the **Person** through whom God the Father even **CREATED** all that Christ would **inherit**, meaning He was infinitely superior to the fathers and prophets as **GOD**, Heb. 1:2c!
 1. The **God** the forefathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob **worshipped** was the **Creator** of heaven and earth, Genesis 1:1 with 14:18-20.
 2. Well, God the Father created the universe **through** the **AGENCY** of God the Son, Jesus Christ, cf. Hebrews 1:2c with John 1:3!
 3. We also know from Genesis 1:2b and Job 33:4 that God the Holy Spirit was involved in creating this universe as well!
 4. Thus, the God these forefathers **worshipped** was the Triune God, God the **Father**, God the **Son** and God the **Holy Spirit!**

5. Thus, Jesus was the God the admired forefathers and prophets **worshipped** who also **created** all He would inherit from the Father in **infinite superiority** over these godly patriarchs and prophets!
- C. Third, as **God**, Jesus Christ's **ministries** are **infinitely superior** to those of these prophets and patriarchs, Hebrews 1:3:
1. Christ shares in the **glory** of the Father as **full deity** in infinite superiority over the honored Hebrew prophets and patriarchs:
 - a. Jesus shares in the **glory** of the Father Himself, Hebrews 1:3a.
 - b. Jesus shares in the **essence** of **deity ITSELF** (where the KJV "express image" and NIV "exact representation" come from *charaktayr tays hupostaseos*, meaning "express essence", B. F. Westcott, The Epistle to the Hebrews, p. 12-13), Hebrews 1:3b.
 2. Christ **is performing** the **deeds** only one of **full deity** could do: He **now** upholds the ongoing existence of all that is created by the force of His spoken word that said in Genesis 1, "Let there be . . .", Hebrews 1:3c with Genesis 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24 and 26.
 3. Christ **has finished** the **work** only one with **full deity** could do:
 - a. Jesus provided purification for sin through His blood, Heb. 1:3d.
 - b. Now, no other man like the prophets or forefathers could do this because all such men through Adam inherit Adam's sin nature and thus cannot qualify as our redeemer, Romans 5:12.
 - c. Yet, Jesus is God come in the flesh, so He was **without sin** and thus was capable of purging man's sins by His death on the cross for man's sin, Luke 1:34-35 with 2 Corinthians 5:19.
 4. Thus, Jesus **sat DOWN** on the right hand of the Father, a position of **divine authority**, for the Father intends for Christ to rule until all are subject to Him, Hebrews 1:3e with Mtt. 19:28; and Ps. 110:1.

Application: (1) *Though we are to respect God's human overseers like the patriarchs and godly Old Testament prophets, we must CONTRAST them to the INFINITE SUPERIORITY of Jesus Christ OVER THEM to worship CHRIST, NOT such men: after all, unlike mere mortals, Jesus is to be believed for salvation and worshipped and obeyed as GOD ALMIGHTY!* (2) *Thus, we must believe on Christ for salvation from sin (Jn. 3:16).* (3) *Then, though RESPECTING godly ministers, we ALWAYS worship and glorify JESUS CHRIST alone, NOT doing so of mere ministers who themselves need Christ's salvation for their OWN souls!*

Lesson: *Though the GODLY Old Testament patriarchs and prophets were properly RESPECTED as men, they INFINITELY PALE in person and work to Christ, and are not to be worshipped as is Jesus.*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the sermon lesson . . .)

I heard a sermon on prayer once in which the pastor gave an illustration of the need to be simple in relating to God.

He knew a fellow student back in Bible College days who decided to sneak into a great and godly professor's bedroom closet to observe his prayer life. This student thought he might learn something about godliness in his prayer life and take it with him to become likewise great and admired as was this man of God!

Well, once the student had gone through great trouble to get himself all situated in the bedroom closet, and had waited for hours until the honored professor eventually made it to bed, he saw the man of God get down on his knees beside his bed and pray. The student bent his ear toward the closet door and heard the man pray as follows:

"Lord, it's been a wonderful day. Thank you, in Jesus Name, Amen!" Then he got into bed, turned out the light, and went to sleep! **That's all!** The student had to stay hidden all night long and wait until this man was gone to drag himself back to the dorm very tired and a bit frustrated!

Honored Christians are "great" only because GOD GRACIOUSLY gives them such honor before others as His reward for their serving the Lord. John 12:26 says, " . . . if any man serve me, him will my Father honour."

CHRIST is to be glorified and worshipped, NOT His lowly human SERVANTS!