

HEBREWS: REPLACING MAN'S RITUALISM WITH CHRIST
"Part II: Worshipping Christ Instead Of Angels and 'Canonized Saints'"
(Hebrews 1:4-2:18)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

(1) The issue of venerating "canonized saints" and "the Virgin Mary" turns up not only in our personal discussions with friends, but even in the newspaper:

(a) The November 16, 1998 issue of the Foothills Trader urged that people with burdens do the following: "A Prayer To God - Say 9 Hail Mary for 9 days, ask for 3 wishes, first for business, second and third for the impossible. Publish this article on the 9th day. Your wishes will come true even though you may not believe it. Thank you God. (Signed) C. W."

(b) Another prayer in the same newspaper issue was much more specific in venerating "The Virgin Mary" figure. I quote it: "Prayer To The Blessed Virgin - O Most beautiful Flower of Mount Carmel, fruitful vine, splendor of Heaven, Blessed Mother of the Son of God. Immaculate Virgin, assist me in my necessity. Oh star of the Sea, help me and show me here you are my Mother. Oh Holy Mary, Mother of God, Queen of Heaven and Earth, I humbly beseech you from the bottom of my heart to succor me in my necessity (make request) . . . Oh Mary . . . pray for us who have recourse to thee (3 times). Holy Mary, I place this prayer in your hands (3 times). Say this prayer for 3 consecutive days and then you must publish and it will be granted to you. Grateful Thanks, (Signed) M. M. M."

(2) We have learned in past sermons that Mary was conceived in sin and needed God's salvation, and was thus the mother only of Jesus' humanity, cf. Romans 3:23. We also know from 1 Timothy 2:5 that Jesus is the sole Mediator between God and man so that we pray *only* to **HIM**, not to Mary or to "canonized saints". However, the Catholic Encyclopedia authorized to be without doctrinal and moral error by a *Nihil obstat* on April 17, 1986 and an *Imprimatur* on April 23, 1986, says on page 174: "Dulia is the special **worship**, generally called **veneration**, given to the angels *and* **SAINTS** because as friends of God they share in His excellence."

Well, though not *praying* to them, *are* we to *worship* the angels and "canonized saints" or not? What about the special and heightened "veneration" of Mary that this same encyclopedia terms "Hyperdulia" (p. 278)? What does Scripture say on that?

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

Need: "I know the Bible teaches only ONE Mediator exists between God and man -- Christ (1 Tim. 2:5), so I pray only to God. But I was taught to give 'Dulia' worship to angels and 'saints' and 'Hyperdulia' worship to Mary! What does Scripture say on this?!"

I. The God Incarnate Lord Jesus is exalted in heaven AS the God-man far *above* ALL OTHER created PERSONS:

- A. Jesus was exalted much higher than the angels in His ascension to heaven and enthronement in His divine, heavenly glory, Hebrews 1:4.
- B. We know this from Old Testament citations as follows, Heb. 1:5-14:
 - 1. Psalm 2:7 and 2 Sam. 7:14 respectively show Jesus being called God's **adult** (post-bar mitzvah) **Son**, something in Jewish culture indicates **equality** with the Father in **infinite superiority over created angels**, Hebrews 1:5 in light of John 5:18.
 - 2. God also commanded angels to **worship Jesus**, Hebrews 1:6 in citing Deuteronomy 32:43.
 - 3. God spoke of the angels as Jesus' **servants** in Psalm 104:4 as cited in Hebrews 1:7.
 - 4. God even told Jesus in Ps. 45:6-7 according to Heb. 1:8-9 that His throne in heaven is exalted above all other **created beings**, whether they be angels, "canonized saints" or Mary or any other entities.
 - 5. God revealed in Ps. 102:25-27 according to Heb. 1:10-12 that Jesus is the unchanging Creator unlike the angels or any other beings of heaven!
 - 6. As revealed in Ps. 110:1 according to Heb. 1:13, it was to Jesus and not any other to Whom God the Father said to sit in power on His right hand until all His enemies were subject to Him.

II. Accordingly, IN CHRIST, the believer ON EARTH is thereby DESTINED to be exalted ABOVE the angels so that the ANGELS NOW actually SERVE the NEEDS of PRE-GLORIFIED believers!

- A. Hebrews 1:14 reveals that God's heavenly angels actually *serve* the needs of us **yet-to-be-glorified** earthly human believers in Christ!
- B. The reason **why** this state exists **now** is explained in the Hebrews author's explanation of the believer's **position in Christ** as follows:
 - 1. **In Christ**, God has destined us earthly believers in Christ to have **dominion** over the **future world**, Heb. 2:5 implied.
 - 2. This is because **in Christ**, the believer shares in His **exaltation**:
 - a. Man was originally created to be a little lower form of **natural** creation than are the angels, Hebrews 2:6-7 in citing Ps. 8:4-6.
 - b. In that creation, man even **lost** what **lower-than-the-angels** authority he once had over the earth through **sin**, He. 2:8a,b.

- c. However, **Jesus** as God incarnate, came **below** the *angels* in suffering on the cross **for man's sin** only to be **exalted** in His resurrection and ascension far above the angels, Heb. 2:9.
- d. When people believe on Christ, they are destined *through Christ* to be exalted and glorified **in Him** in heaven, Heb. 2:10-13.
- e. In this **salvation**, lowly men gain liberation even from the clutches of the powerful angel, the evil **Satan**, Hebrews 2:14-15.
- f. While mortal believers await their glorification, the exalted Christ Who has identified with man in His sufferings, is able to intercede to the Father in His exalted position to enable them to gain victory over current weaknesses of sin en route to that glorified state with Him, Hebrews 2:16-18.
- g. That is **why** God's angels **SERVE** the needs of us pre-glorified believers -- we are **destined** to be **ABOVE these angels!** (1:13)

III. **Accordingly, we must give HEED to the great salvation we have in CHRIST and not live as though it is NOT that great, Heb. 2:1-4:**

- A. We Christians are urged **not** to treat our salvation in Christ lightly, 2:1
- B. This is because if the giving of the Law by angels was certified with God's punishment and blessing based on how people responded to it, we will not escape God's reaction to how we treat the salvation announced under the greater-than-angels **Jesus**, Heb. 2:2-3.
- C. Besides, God certified this salvation with miracles in the Early Church, making it **apparent** that we take Jesus' teachings *seriously*, Heb. 2:4!

Application: (1) *As there is only ONE Mediator in Jesus, to be saved, we must believe CHRIST ALONE, not in any other, 1 Tim. 2:5. (2) Since Jesus is GOD Who ALONE saves us by His redemption, and is exalted as such far above ALL OTHER beings so that angels SERVE our needs NOW, and as WE will share in HIS glory, we must NOT worship any angel or human but JESUS!*

Lesson: *Christ as GOD came ALONE to be BELOW angels to SAVE and EXALT us ABOVE them, only to reign as God ABOVE the angels so that ANGELS NOW actually SERVE the needs of pre-glorified believers in ANTICIPATION of their GLORIFICATION above angels. All of this is CERTIFIED by the miraculous signs delivered in the Early Church. Thus, we must NOT worship angels or 'saints', but our SAVIOR if we would wish to escape God's discipline and enjoy His rich blessing!*

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

The best illustrations on **IF** we should worship angels and glorified believers come from the Bible itself. Consider the following:

(1) After his having seen the massive predictive revelation from Jesus Christ, John was told in Revelation 22: 6 that "the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to shew unto his servants the things which must shortly be done."

Then, thinking he was talking to Jesus, John reportedly "fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which shewed me these things." (verse 8) Perhaps John thought it was Jesus Himself Who spoke with him and this would have explained his attempted worship.

In any event, the messenger interrupted John, instructing him that what John was attempting to do was **IMPROPER!** Though this heavenly messenger appeared in the glory of God, this person explained that he was only a **GLORIFIED human PROPHET** who had **served the Lord** as **John** was then doing (verse 9a, b). John was **NOT** to **worship this glorified prophet!** *Neither did the messenger tell John to re-direct his worship to some other angel, but to worship GOD, Revelation 22:9c!*

(2) *When Satan tried to get Jesus to bow down and worship Him, in that context, Jesus said, ". . . it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." (Mt. 4:10) Jesus there quoted from Deuteronomy 6:13 where Moses was warning Israel against worshipping any other false god. Since Satan is an angel, albeit a fallen one, through use of Deuteronomy 6:13, Jesus was showing by way of His application of that text to his temptation conditions that the worship of angels was idolatrous and thus forbidden worship!*

In summary, Scripture teaches (1) we are not to worship any glorified BELIEVERS, (a) whether they be believers in general, or, (b) more specifically, whether it be Mary, the mother of Jesus' humanity. (2) Neither should we worship angels! (3) All of our worship is to be directed ONLY to GOD!