

ROMAN CATHOLICISM IN LIGHT OF THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

IV. Catholicism's Exaltation Of Priests Versus Hebrews' Exaltation Of Christ

(Hebrews 3:1-6)

I. Introduction

- A. A number of the members of our Church have come from Roman Catholic backgrounds, and they often seek support in Biblical truth to counter the strong, errant indoctrination they experienced in their past.
- B. The epistle to the Hebrews was written to counter the errant traditionalism of first century Judaism that was similar in theological thrust to much of Catholicism, so we study Hebrews for edification in this matter.
- C. We thus view Hebrews 3:1-6 on Catholicism's exaltation of priests versus Hebrews' exaltation of Christ:

II. Catholicism's Exaltation Of Priests Versus Hebrews' Exaltation Of Christ, Hebrews 3:1-6.

- A. Roman Catholicism places the Catholic priest on a level so high before the people of their local parishes that the people are led to fear their priests as if they were in the place of God and thus to live in bondage to them:
 - 1. "The (1545-1563) Council of Trent, whose decrees must be accepted by all Roman Catholics under pain of mortal sin or excommunication, says: 'The priest is the man of God, the minister of God . . . He that despiseth the priest despiseth God; he that hears him hears God. The priest remits sins as God, and that which he calls his body at the altar is adored as God by himself and by the congregation . . . It is clear that their function is such that none greater can be conceived. Wherefore they are justly called not only angels, but also God, holding as they do among us the power and authority of the immortal God.'" (Lorraine Boettner, Roman Catholicism, 1978, p. 51; Henry Bettenson, Docs. of the Christ. Church, 1966, p. 368)
 - 2. "(A) Roman Catholic book, carrying the imprimatur of the Archbishop of Ottawa, Canada, says: 'Without the priest the death and passion of our Lord would be of no avail to us. See the power of the priest! By one word from his lips he changes a piece of bread into a God! A greater fact than the creation of a world. 'If I were to meet a priest and an angel, I would salute the priest before saluting the angel. The priest holds the place of God.'" (Ibid., Boettner)
- B. However, Hebrews 3:1-6 highly exalts Jesus Christ over any mortal priest (as follows):
 - a. The Aaronic priesthood of Israel was established in Exodus 25-40 under God's use of Moses in Exodus 20-24 (Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible, Volume Four, p. 854). Aaron, Moses' brother, was the first high priest in Israel, and from his descendants came the Aaronic priesthood for the nation.
 - b. Nevertheless, Christ is exalted over even Moses who was used of God to establish Israel's priesthood:
 - i. The author of Hebrews called his readers who shared in a heavenly calling to consider Jesus, whom believers acknowledge as their Apostle and High Priest, Hebrews 3:1.
 - ii. Jesus Christ was faithful to God the Father Who appointed Him to the offices of Apostle as the One sent from the Father and High Priest to minister on behalf of the Church before the Father, just as Moses was also faithful in all God's earthly tabernacle in Old Testament Israel's day, Hebrews 3:2.
 - iii. However, Jesus was counted worthy of more glory than even Moses who was led of God to establish the Aaronic priesthood and earthly tabernacle, for Christ has much more glory as the builder of the spiritual house of believers in the Church era than the house itself, Hebrews 3:3-4.
 - iv. Moses was faithful in God's earthly tabernacle as a "servant" (*therapon*, T. D. N. T., v. III, p. 132) to testify to the things that were to be spoken later, but Christ is faithful over God's spiritual house as God's "Son" (*huios*, U. B. S. Grk. N. T., 1966, p. 751), the term *huios* meaning a son who has had his Bar Mitzvah so that he is equal with His Father as **God** (John 5:17-18), Hebrews 3:5-6a.
 - v. We believers in Christ are part of that spiritual house over which Christ **as God** is Head, Heb. 3:6b.

Lesson: *Though the Catholic Church asserts that its priests remit sins as God, that they hold the power and authority of God and change a piece of bread into a God in the Mass in holding the place of God, the epistle of Hebrews views Jesus Christ as greater than Moses who was used of God to establish the Old Testament Aaronic priesthood and earthly tabernacle, for Moses was God's servant where Jesus is the builder of God's spiritual house and Son of God in equality with the Father. Thus, Catholicism blasphemously elevates the priest to God where Hebrews rightly treats mortal men even as the great Moses as servants of God compared to Jesus Who is God!*

Application: *(1) May we not exalt mortal ministers in the Church to the role of God but view them like Moses as servants of the Lord called of Him to do God's will for God's glory. (2) May we revere and worship our Lord Jesus Christ as the Creator, Head and Sustainer of the Church as God Himself in full equality with God the Father.*