

## **ROMAN CATHOLICISM IN LIGHT OF THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS**

### **XII. Catholicism's Worldly Papal Ministry Versus Christ's Heavenly Ministry**

**(Hebrews 8:1-13)**

#### **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. The author of Hebrews in Hebrews 8:1-13 contrasted Judaism's inferior earthly priestly ministries to Christ's heavenly priesthood, what applies to the contrast of Catholicism's worldly papal ministry versus Christ's heavenly high priestly ministry. We study the passage for our insight, application and edification:

#### **II. Catholicism's Worldly Papal Ministry Versus Christ's Heavenly Ministry, Hebrews 8:1-13.**

- A. The Roman Catholic Church borrowed from ancient Rome's emperor his role "as the high priest of the heathen religion," hence called the "Pontifex Maximus," and as "the high priest of the Old Testament was the mediator between God and men, so the pope also claims to be the mediator between God and men" (Loraine Boettner, Roman Catholicism, 1978, p. 125).
- B. However, the papacy is very worldly in its orientation: "The pope wears . . . a jewel-laden, extremely expensive crown . . . In solemn ceremonies the pope is carried on a portable chair on the shoulders of twelve men . . . The pope is adored with genuflections . . . and his garments are very elaborate and costly . . . (He) lives in luxury with many servants in a huge palace in Vatican City . . . (He is) just like a . . . king, with his own country, his own system of courts, vassals, coinage, postal service, and a Swiss military guard . . . (T)he pope sends ambassadors and ministers to foreign governments, and . . . (i)n each country to which a papal ambassador is sent Rome seeks to have her ambassador designated as the dean of the diplomatic corps, thus giving him rank above the other ambassadors" (Ibid., p. 129-130).
- C. In contrast, the High Priestly ministry of Jesus Christ has a vastly superior, heavenly orientation, Heb. 8:1-13:
  - 1. Christ our High Priest is set on the right hand of the throne of God the Father in the heavens, Hebrews 8:1.
  - 2. He is a minister of the sanctuary and the original, true tabernacle which the Lord pitched and not man, v. 2.
  - 3. Every high priest on earth according to the Mosaic Law is appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices, so it is necessary for Christ as our High Priest in heaven to offer such sacrifices, Hebrews 8:3. However, were Christ on earth, since He is of the tribe of Judah and not of the priestly tribe of Levi and of the line of Aaron, He would not be able to offer such sacrifices, Hebrews 8:4 with 7:14.
  - 4. However, the earthly Aaronic high priests served as a copy and shadow of the heavenly ministry of Christ, for when Moses was about to erect the Old Testament tabernacle, God told him to make everything according to the heavenly pattern that was shown to him on Mount Sinai, Hebrews 8:5 with Exodus 25:40.
  - 5. Thus, Christ has obtained a more excellent ministry than the earthly Aaronic line of high priests, for He is the Mediator of a better covenant that was based on better divine promises, Hebrews 8:6.
    - a. The first covenant was faulty, so it is being replaced with a better covenant, for God promised that in the better covenant that He would make with Israel and the house of Judah, it would differ from the old covenant He had made when He led Israel out of Egypt, for in that older covenant, they people failed to keep the Law for divine blessing, Hebrews 8:7-9.
    - b. Indeed, that new covenant given in Jeremiah 31:31-34 would involve God's putting His commandments not on external tables of stone as at Mount Sinai, but His putting His laws into the mind, writing them on the hearts of His people, that He would then be to them a God they His people in truth, Hebrews 8:10.
    - c. In that new covenant, they would no longer teach each other that they should know the Lord, for all of them would know the Lord, from the least to the greatest of them, Hebrews 8:11. God would be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and iniquities He would remember no more, Hebrews 8:12.
    - d. Thus, this new covenant necessarily does away with the former, inferior covenant, Hebrews 8:13.

**Lesson:** *The High Priestly ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ is a heavenly ministry that far surpasses the Aaronic high priestly ministries of the Mosaic Law, for Christ's ministry affects the heart through the new birth where the Aaronic ministry dealt only with the external copies of the heavenly ministry of Christ that was to come.*

**Application:** *May we look to Christ's heavenly High Priestly ministry and not to man's futile earthly priesthoods.*