

Jesus' Claim To Deity

The Messiah for whom the Jews were anxiously awaiting is the Jesus of Nazareth that they rejected and crucified. The book of Hebrews forever proves Jesus' claim to Deity. Jesus was greater than all of the prophets. As great as the prophets of God were, Jesus is superior. First, a prophet was not involved with the creation of all things. Not only did God speak to us in His Son, but it was through Christ that He also "made the worlds" (Heb. 1:2; cf. John 1:3). Second, no prophet is said to sustain all things. The Hebrews writer makes it clear that Christ upholds "all things by the word of his power" (1:3). Third, no prophet was divine as the Christ. Jesus was in the "very image of [God's] substance" (1:3).

Jesus was greater than the angels. Angels are God's special and amazing servants, and mere men are "a little lower than the angels" (Heb. 2:7). First, Christ does not worship angels, but "all the angels of God [are to] worship him [Christ]" (Heb. 1:6). Second, Christ has a divine throne that "is for ever and ever" (1:8). Third, a divine anointing from God has been placed upon Jesus (1:9). Fourth, divine works are attributed to the Savior (1:10). Fifth, no angel was ever invited to sit at the Father's right hand, but Jesus was (1:13).

Jesus is greater than the prophet Moses. Such a fact surely irritated the Jews, but the writer to the Hebrews proves his point. First, Moses was "faithful in all his house as a servant," but Jesus as a son, [was] over his house..." (Heb. 3:5-6, *emph. MLW*). You will note that Moses was in God's house but Christ was over God's house. This truth makes Christ far superior to Moses.

Jesus was greater than Aaron. Aaron was a tremendous servant of God and the first high priest of Israel. Aaron is from the tribe of Judah, but Christ is "a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek" (Heb. 5:6). The Hebrews writer declares, "And inasmuch as it is not without the taking of an oath (for they indeed have been made priests without an oath; but he with an oath by him that saith of him, The Lord sware and will not repent himself, Thou art a priest for ever); by so much also hath Jesus become the surety of a better covenant" (Heb. 7:20-22).

As great a high priest as Aaron may have been, Jesus is far greater. Let us observe some truths that will affirm what we have just stated to be true. First, Aaron was high priest, but the Christ is identified as a great high priest. The writer to the Hebrews states, "Having then a great high priest, who hath passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession" Heb. 4:14).

Second, no high priest from the priestly tribe of Levi was ever called the Son of God. Hebrews 4:14 specifically states that Jesus is "the Son of God." He is not "a" Son of God as if there are many, but "the" one and only Son of God. God's only begotten is serving as our high priest. What a comfort it should be to us to know that we can call upon Deity and not mere man!

Third, Christ is a more sympathetic high Priest than man could ever be. The Hebrews writer says, "For we have not a high Priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but one that hath been in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. 4:15). Christ knows all about the temptations we must resist and has promised that man can overcome the temptations that come his way. The apostle Paul said, "There hath no temptation taken you but such as man can bear: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation make also the way of escape, that ye may be able to endure it" (1 Cor. 10:13). Aaron could have never made such a promise, but Deity can and did!

Fourth, we have a high priest today who committed no sin. Aaron, as all other mere men, sinned. No one from the priestly tribe of Levi could have ever satisfied God's holy justice, but our high priest could and did. The Hebrews writer affirms, "For such a high priest became us, holy, guileless, undefiled, separated from sinners, and made higher than the heavens" (Heb. 7:26). What was impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to do, the blood of Christ accomplished (Heb. 10:4; Heb. 7:27; 9:12).

Sixth, Jesus is both king and priest. No earthly king or priest can so boast. Christ "is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords" (1 Tim. 6:15) and a priest after the order of Melchizedek (Heb. 7:4-10).

The book of the Hebrews affirms that the new covenant is far superior to the law of Moses, and that Jesus Christ is a greater high priest than those who served under the old law. It is amazing that the Jews could reject the evidence that Christ offered, and it is also amazing that so many today reject Christ and His Word. No one will be judged by the word of man, but all will be judged by the words of Christ (John 12:48). Thank God for the Deity of Christ!

Marvin L. Weir
Paris, TX

BELVEDERE BEACON

"Ye are the light of the world" (Matthew 5:14)

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"When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul; Discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee: To deliver thee from the way of the evil man, from the man that speaketh froward things... That thou mayest walk in the way of good men, and keep the paths of the righteous" (Proverbs 2:10-12, 20).

You are encouraged to read all of the chapter, as just a small portion of the chapter will be used for our "Thought for Today." That "small portion" reads, "walk in the way of good men." Let us see just a few good men.

Peter writes of One Good Man. He writes, "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: 22 Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: 23 Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: 24 Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed. 25 For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls" (1 Peter 2:21-25). Jesus is our Great Example, and to walk in His steps is our charge.

Paul wrote of a good man, a good man whose way we would do well to walk in. He wrote, "Yet I supposed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, and companion in labour, and fellowsoldier, but your messenger, and he that ministered to my wants. 26 For he longed after you all, and was full of heaviness, because that ye had heard that he had been sick. 27 For indeed he was sick nigh unto death: but God had mercy on him; and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow. 28 I sent him therefore the more carefully, that, when ye see him again, ye may rejoice, and that I may be the less sorrowful. 29 Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness; and hold such in reputation: 30 Because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward me" (Philippians 2:25-30). Here is a good man, a good man giving his life in the work of the Lord.

Paul wrote of two good people. And, to walk in their way would be a great honor. He wrote, "Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus: 4 Who have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles" (Romans 16:3-4). These were willing to lose their life for the Cause of Christ. Christ made mention of one that did lose his life for the Cause of Christ. John recorded the words of Jesus, "And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges; 13 I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth" (Rev 2:12-13).

Beloved, there are many "good men" in whose way we should walk. Let us walk in their ways as they walk as Christ walked. Let us also be to our generation and the next, "a few good men." And, yes, may the number of "good men" (men as in mankind) increase mightily!

Beloved, listen to all of God's word, God will do thee good!

Thought For Today, December 9, 2006,
Jimmie Z. Gribble, Portsmouth, VA

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

SUNDAY:

Bible Classes for all ages 10.00 am.
Morning Worship 11.00 am.
Evening Worship 6.00 p.m.

WEDNESDAY:

Bible Classes for all ages 7.00 p.m.

EVANGELIST: Ken Chumbley - Tel. No. (803) -279-8663

www.belvederechurchofchrist.org E-mail church@belvederechurchofchrist.org

“THE BOTH/AND CHURCH”

The above was part of a response from the preacher of a church in the Fort Worth, Texas, area following the announcement that this congregation was going to begin having services on Saturday night beginning the second weekend of February 2007 that would use instrumental music in the assembly as well as observing the Lord's Supper. He stated, in a lesson to the congregation, December 3, concerning this announcement. "I greatly appreciate a cappella praise. There is no intention of this leadership to force anyone to worship any other way if that is their choice....But I firmly believe that if Richland Hills is to be most faithful to God's word and Christ's mission, we must become a both/and church with regards to instrumental and a capella praise." He also stated with respect to the decision, "This has been part of about a three-year journey that the leadership has been on." Rick Atchley also told the congregation that the decision should help ease crowding at the two Sunday morning services and it will allow the congregation to "reach more people who need Christ." He also stated that the decision of the congregation might "inspire many other Churches of Christ to be courageous in their kingdom efforts" while, at the same time that he was "not trying to promote instrumental praise anywhere else."

Such is not surprising to those who have known of the growing apostasy of this congregation and preacher for the last twenty plus years. Some would wonder why such took so long. Atchley has been a leading proponent of union with the Christian Church (specifically what is known as the Independent Christian Church) that had apostatized from the truth over a hundred years ago and was recognized by the United States government in the census of 1906. This being the centenary of that recognition has been a time when liberal and apostate preachers and congregations have sought to bring about a union between the groups. The Christian Church separated themselves by the introduction of instrumental music into the worship and the use of the missionary society. They are not planning to give up such innovations but some who claim to still be faithful churches of Christ are willing to now fellowship such, without Biblical authority. Atchley told the Richland Hills church that "there has never been a moments discussion of changing the name of this church or our affiliation with Churches of Christ." They don't have to! Many of the Independent Christian Churches, particularly in the northern states as in countries overseas call themselves "Churches of Christ" sometimes with the bracketed designation "Instrumental.." Anyone who has traveled and sought to find a congregation with which to worship has encountered them.

Such action, as that taken by Atchley and Richland Hills, as well others, clearly shows that they believe that those who opposed the innovations into the worship and work of the church that split multiple congregations a hundred or so years ago were in error in their opposition to such practices. and that they were thus responsible for the division that occurred. They will not, usually, articulate it in this manner. However, such is clearly what they believe by their actions and their fellowship with those who use these innovations. It would be interesting to see if Rick Atchley or any other who espouses this philosophy would be willing to defend their position in a public debate of these matters.

Atchley seeks to defend his position on the matter of instrumental music in the worship based on a supposed parallel with the Jerusalem meeting of Acts 15 concerning the matter of circumcision as being a requirement of the gospel. His argument is that while circumcision was a longtime tradition of the Jews, the mission of the Gospel required allowing Gentiles freedom in that regard referring to Acts 15:19. However, the two situations are **NOT** parallel, despite Atchley's protestations! The matter of circumcision is clearly taught as not being part of the Gospel. Indeed, those who sought to impose such were clearly condemned by inspiration. The letter to the Galatian churches clearly teaches this to be true. The same writer, under inspiration, along with other inspired writers clearly teach that praises to God were to be with singing with no inference that such could be accompanied by instrumental music. Indeed, the thirteen passages that deal with the matter of praises to God clearly state that it is to be singing.

NEWS AND NOTES

Let us continue to keep in our prayers Helen Culpepper, Dot McLemore, Pam Gossett and her mother, Kathy Treadway's mother, Lanny Niver's father.

Glenn Aaron had out patient surgery on Wednesday and is recuperating well.

Jennifer Wilson was sick and unable to be out Sunday . She and Steven were sick Wednesday.

Dot McLemore has had a sinus infection.

Jack and Jean Peebles were out of town this past Sunday as was Lanny Niver.

Our next pot-luck will be on Sunday December 31, 2006 following the morning service.

Including this Sunday there are three more Sundays left in 2006. We have been able to maintain an average contribution just over the budget. Indeed, we have been able to show average contribution a little over the budget for the whole year. The brethren are to be commended for their giving to the work of the Lord throughout the year. If we can average our weekly budget for the next three Sundays we will be able to finish the year having met the "bare bones" budget that was set. Please consider your giving over the holiday period and, in our giving to others, we do not neglect our obligation to the Lord.

CONTINUED FROM KEN'S KORNER, "THE BOTH/AND CHURCH."

In addition to the introduction of instrumental music into the worship of the church, as we have noted, they plan to begin have an assembly on Saturday evening in which they place to have the Lord's Supper served. From whence do they gain the idea that it is in harmony with the will of God to meet to observe the Lord's Supper on any other day that the first day of the week? The Scriptures teach that the brethren met together on the first day of the week to partake of the Lord's Supper (Acts 20:7). There is **no** teaching of Scripture that grants approval for the partaking of the Lord's Supper on any other day or gives an example of the early church meeting on any other day of the week to partake of the feast.

The bottom line in all of this is that Rick Atchley and the Richland Hills church have **NO BIBLICAL AUTHORITY** for their announced plan to have worship on Saturday night with the Lord's Supper and the singing to be accompanied by instrumental music. The "about three-year journey" that the leadership of this congregation has been on has been a journey in the "wilderness of sin" and not into the authority that comes from "Mount Zion." They need to repent. If they refused to do, then they need to give up all pretense of being a "Church of Christ" for they have rejected the teachings of the head of the Church and supplanted them with the teachings of men.

Just over thirty nine years ago, I rejected and renounced the unscriptural teachings and practices of the Independent Christian Church. In the years that have passed since then I have seen many who have sought a "union:" with the Independent Christian Church. In each of these instances, there has been a **REJECTION** of the authority of the Bible for what is taught and practice and as a result apostasy ensued.

Brethren, we must **NOT** allow ourselves to be deceived by those who in the guise of "unity" would seek to get us to compromise the authority of the Word of God and, in so doing, reject the supreme authority of the King of kings. As faithful brethren stated over 100 years ago, with respect to those who rejected the authority of the scripture, quoting the Word, "*Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone*" (Hosea 4:17).

Ken Chumbley