

THE SONS OF GOD

THE RULERS IN GOD'S KINGDOM

By Arlen L. Chitwood

“Sonship” implies *rulership* (cf. II Sam. 7:12-14; Matt. 3:17; 4:3-8; 17:5; II Peter 1:17). *Sons alone* occupy positions of rulership within God’s kingdom. That’s the way *it has always been*, that’s the way *it presently exists*, and that’s the way *it will always continue to exist*.

SATAN — THE PRESENT RULER

Satan, the incumbent ruler over the earth (the ruler which God placed over the earth in the beginning, the only ruler this earth has ever had), is *a son of God*; and angels ruling under him are also *sons of God*.

Angels are sons of God because of a *special creative act of God*. And an angelic rule of the nature which Satan holds is seemingly not peculiar to just this earth, one province in God’s kingdom. This is a form of rule which apparently exists on provinces throughout God’s kingdom, not only in our own galaxy but in other galaxies created and placed throughout the entire universe over which God exercises governmental power and control (Job. 1:6-12; 2:1-7).

Satan is “the anointed [‘messianic’] cherub,” placed by God “upon the holy moun-

tain of God,” though one day to be cast out of this “mountain” (Ezek. 28:14-16).

(The “cherubim” [singular, “cherub”] are first mentioned in Scripture in connection with *the earth’s government*, establishing a first-mention principle, and, resultingly, showing an unchangeable way in which angels designated by this name are seen throughout Scripture. They are first seen in Scripture guarding the entrance to the garden in Eden following man being driven from the garden because of sin. They were placed as guardians to prevent man from reentering the garden, in his fallen state, and eating of the tree of life — the tree which would have provided [and will yet future provide] the wisdom and knowledge for man to rule and reign over the earth.

And a “mountain” in Scripture signifies *a kingdom* [cf. Isa. 2:1-4; Dan. 2:34, 35, 44, 45; Matt. 17:1-5]. Satan, in his unfallen state, was given a kingdom [this earth]; and he was placed, by God, as the messianic angel [the ruling angel] over this “mountain,” this *kingdom* [v. 14].)

Satan though, the appointed ruling angel over one kingdom in the universe, rebelled against the One Who had placed him in this position. He sought *to exalt his throne* and become “like the most High,” *i.e.*, he sought *to place himself* in a position where he could rule *all the kingdoms of the universe* rather than just *the one kingdom over which he had been placed* (Isa. 14:13, 14). And, as a result, *judgment* was pronounced upon Satan (Isa. 14:15-17; Ezek. 28:15-19), and his kingdom was reduced to *a state of complete ruin* (Gen. 1:2a).

But Satan himself and the angels who accompanied him in his rebellion continued to reign, though over a ruined kingdom. A principle of Biblical government necessitates that an incumbent ruler, though he may have disqualified himself, continue to hold his po-

sition until his God-appointed successor is not only on the scene but ready to assume the reins of governmental power and authority (*e.g.*, I Sam. 15-II Sam. 1). God has reserved to Himself *the right and power* to remove one ruler and position another within His kingdom after this fashion (Dan. 4:17-32; 5:17-21) — *a right and power which Satan sought to usurp*.

MAN — CREATED TO RULE

Scripture opens with one brief statement concerning God, in the beginning, creating the heavens and the earth; and this is followed by one brief statement concerning the earth being reduced to a ruined state (Gen. 1:1, 2a). Then Scripture continues with a detailed account (though brief) of how God restored the ruined province within His kingdom over a six-day period at a later point in time (vv. 2b-25).

And immediately following the restoration of the ruined province, on the same day that God completed his restorative work, he created man, for a revealed purpose. The material creation was restored with a view to man’s creation, and man was created for the purpose of replacing the disqualified, incumbent ruler, Satan (vv. 26-28).

But, though the first man, Adam, was present — *a son of God*, because of God’s special creative act (a position which Adam had to hold in order to fulfill the purpose surrounding his creation [cf. Luke 3:38]) — God didn’t immediately remove Satan and place Adam in his position. Rather, God allowed the fall to occur, leaving the man disqualified (along with his descendants, who would be *sons of Adam*, begotten in Adam’s fallen image and likeness), allowing Satan to continue holding the sceptre. And this was for purposes involving God’s Son, *the second Man, the last Adam* (Gen. 3:1ff; I Cor. 15:45-47).

Then, 4,000 years later — at the time of Christ's baptism at the hands of John — God said of *the second Man, the last Adam*, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3:17). And this announcement had to do with the matter at hand — *Christ's position in relation to the earth's government*.

Immediately after the Father had declared Jesus to be His "beloved Son," the Spirit led Jesus "into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil" (Matt. 4:1ff). Where the first man, the first Adam, had failed, Jesus, as *the second Man, the last Adam*, had to show that He wouldn't, and really couldn't, fail. Jesus had to demonstrate, to the incumbent ruler, that He, as *God's Son*, was fully qualified to take the sceptre.

This was *the crux* of that which occurred in the temptation account, seen at the very outset of Christ's ministry; and this was why the temptation at the hands of the incumbent ruler centered around *two things*: 1) Satan questioning *Jesus' Sonship* ("If thou be the Son of God..."), and 2) Satan offering to Jesus *all the "power" and "glory" associated with "the kingdoms of the world,"* which God had "delivered" unto him, contingent on Jesus *falling down and worshipping him* (cf. Matt. 4:3-9; Luke 4:3-7).

THE COMING MANIFESTATION OF A NEW ORDER OF SONS

For the past 3,500 years God has had two firstborn Sons, *Israel* and *Christ* (Ex. 4:22, 23; Heb. 1:6). And the main thought behind this standing, in relation to both Sons, concerns *the rights of the firstborn*.

Israel became God's firstborn son when the nation was adopted during Moses' day, but Jesus has been God's firstborn Son from eternity.

The rights possessed by firstborn sons in the Old Testament were threefold — *regal*

rights, priestly rights, and the right to receive a double portion of the father's goods. The firstborn was to be *the ruler of the family* (regal rights), *the spiritual head of the family* (priestly rights), and receive *a double portion of the father's goods when the inheritance was divided.*

Israel is God's firstborn son because of a special creative act, followed by adoption. Jacob was a special creation of God, and God adopted the nation descending from Jacob through his twelve sons (Isa. 43:1; Rom. 9:4). And, possessing *a national firstborn status* of this nature, Israel was (and remains today) in line to exercise *national kingly and priestly rights* in relation to the Gentile nations of the earth. Israel was *to rule* the nations, and the nations were *to be blessed* through Israel; and, originally, Israel was to realize this status through occupying both *heavenly* and *earthly* positions in the kingdom — giving Israel a *double portion*.

Christ though is God's firstborn Son after an entirely different fashion. He has been God's firstborn Son from eternity. He is spoken of as "the firstborn of every creature [of all creation]" (Col. 1:15), "the firstborn from the dead" (Col. 1:18; cf. Rev. 1:5), and "the firstborn among many brethren" (Rom. 8:29). Christ is the Son above all sons, seated at the right hand of Power in the heavens.

And *this is the Son* Whom the Father begat, Who showed that He was fully qualified to take the earth's sceptre, and then paid redemption's price so that man could be placed back in the position for which he had been created; *this is the Son* Who offered Israel positions with Him, ruling from the heavens, following that time when His Father would give the kingdom to Him and remove the incumbent ruler; and *this is the Son* Who today, through the Spirit, is offering these same positions (rejected by Israel) to Christians.

And though God presently has these two

firstborn Sons, with a view to these two Sons one day exercising the rights of primogeniture, God will, before these Sons exercise the rights of the firstborn, bring into existence a third firstborn son. God's firstborn son Israel has forfeited the right to rule and reign from the heavens over the earth (though still retaining earthly regal rights), and God will one day bring forth another firstborn son to occupy these heavenly positions.

Christians, as the Israelites, form a special creation, though an entirely different type creation (II Cor. 5:17; Gal. 3:26-29). And, because of this special creation, Christians, as the Israelites, can one day be adopted as firstborn sons. Christians are presently "children" (a position in which they *cannot* rule), but they will one day be adopted as "firstborn sons" (a position in which they *can*, and *will*, rule) (Rom. 8:18-23). God will then have a third firstborn son (Heb. 12:23), with this son having been adopted for the same purpose that Israel was adopted — to realize the rights of primogeniture.

During the Messianic Era, God's firstborn son, *the Church*, will rule from the heavens over the nations of the earth; God's firstborn son, *Israel*, will rule on the earth, over the Gentile nations; and God's firstborn Son, *Jesus*, will have a dual reign, ruling both from the heavens on His Own throne and from the earth on David's throne.

The entire creation — "made subject to vanity [*i.e.*, rendered *unfit* (because of Adam's sin, resulting in the curse) to fulfill the reason for its restoration]" — *presently groans and travails in pain*, awaiting "the manifestation" of these Sons (Rom. 8:18-23). *And the day when this manifestation will occur is not far removed.*

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