

GOD'S FIRSTBORN SON "CHRIST"

SIGNIFICANCE OF CHRIST BEING GOD'S FIRSTBORN SON

By Arlen L. Chitwood

"And again when he bringeth in [*lit.*, 'And when He shall again bring in'] the firstbegotten into the world ['the inhabited world'], he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him" (Heb. 1:6).

There has never been a time when Christ was not God's Son. He has been God's Son from eternity, always co-existing and being co-equal with the Father.

But, though there has never been a time when the Son did not exist and occupy the position of God's Son, being co-equal with the Father, there has been a time when the Son did not occupy the position of *Firstborn* in the human realm. God, at a point in time, took His Son and, *through birth, using a female descendant of Adam*, placed Him in the position of *Firstborn* (God's "only begotten Son")—a necessary position for His Son to realize the rights of primogeniture as the second Man, the last Adam.

Thus, when dealing with Christ's incarnation and birth, far more is involved than Christ becoming a Man in order to redeem fallen man. Salvation which fallen man possesses today is only the beginning of the matter. Salvation is for a *revealed purpose*, which has to do with *man ultimately being placed back in the position for which he was created*. In this respect, the reason for the incarnation covers the whole panorama of the matter — *FROM the Spirit breathing life into the one having no life TO the adoption of sons*.

Note what Jesus told Pilate in John 18:37 in response to the question:

"Art thou a king then? [*lit.*, 'So you are a King!' (a statement, or a statement in the form of a question, worded in the Greek text in a manner expecting a 'Yes' response)]."

And Jesus responded in complete keeping with that which Pilate had stated. Rather than as in the KJV — "Thou sayest that I am a king..." — the translation should be more along the lines of:

"Yes! You say truly that I am a King!" (*ref. Weymouth*).

Jesus then went on to say:

"To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world..."

Born King

Christ was born *King* (Matt. 2:2); but He came into the world for purposes surrounding *the complete panorama of redemption*, which, in its outworking, is *regal*. The incarnation was for purposes foreshadowed by God's work throughout the six days in Genesis chapter one, and the incarnation has its fulfillment in that foreshadowed by God's rest on the seventh day in Genesis chapter two.

Then there will be a further fulfillment beyond that in the eternal ages beyond the seventh day of rest, which Scripture deals with only sparingly. Man in that day beyond the Messianic Era will exercise *regal power of a universal nature*, for this power will emanate from "the throne of God and of the Lamb" (Rev. 22:1, 3), a throne from which *universal rule* will issue forth.

At the time Jesus appeared before Pilate, shortly after the interchange with Pilate relative to His Kingship, the Jews accused Christ of *making Himself* "the Son of God" (John 19:7b; *cf.* II Sam. 7:12-14). This resulted in Pilate becoming even "more afraid" (v. 8), for *he apparently knew*, in complete keeping with his previous conversation with Jesus, *the implications involved if Christ were truly God's Son*.

As previously shown, "sonship" implies *rulership*; and this is clearly seen in the Jewish religious leaders' next accusation, which immediately followed their statement relative to Christ's claim to be *God's Son*:

"...whosoever *maketh himself a king* [*i.e.*, a statement in complete keeping with their previous accusation — Christ had 'made himself the Son of God' (v. 7)] speaketh against Caesar" (v. 12b).

The picture is similar to that seen in Ex. 4:22, 23. God had instructed Moses to tell Pharaoh, "Israel is my son, even my firstborn." And Pharaoh was expected to understand from Moses' statement that God recognized this lowly nation of slaves (the Israelites) in subjection to the most powerful Gentile nation of that day (the Egyptians) as *His firstborn son, the nation in possession of the rights of primogeniture, the nation which God recognized as possessing the right to hold the sceptre*.

In John chapters eighteen and nineteen, *God's firstborn Son, Christ*, stood before Pilate and was falsely accused by *God's firstborn son, Israel*; and Pilate himself became *increasingly afraid* surrounding the entire matter. The fear which Pilate exhibited, as seen in the text, could only have been a mild description of how Pilate would possibly have responded had he known the full scope and implications of that which was transpiring on that day, for he was using his power *to subjugate one son and to ultimately condemn the other Son*. And both of the Sons being mistreated that day were *the Ones possessing the right to hold the sceptre*, not Pilate.

The Heir of All Things

The Book of Hebrews opens through introducing Christ as the One Whom God has placed *at the center of all things* in the outworking of His plans and purposes. God spoke "in time past unto the fathers by the prophets," but, "in these last days," God has spoken "unto us by his Son." In both instances, God is the One doing the speaking. In the former instance, God spoke in the person of the prophets; in the latter instance, God has spoken in the person of His Son (vv. 1, 2a).

The record then continues with references to the Son, not to the prophets. The Son is the One Whom the Father "hath appointed heir of all things"; and the Son is the One through Whom the Father "made the worlds [*lit.*, 'made the ages']" (v. 2b). The Father designed the ages around the person and work of the One Whom He "hath ap-

pointed heir of all things,” with the outworking of that seen in the Son’s heirship occurring within the framework of these designed ages.

Reference is then made to Christ’s person, His finished work at Calvary, His ascension to the Father’s right hand, and His position relative to the angels following His ascension (which was different than His position before His ascension [cf. Heb. 2:7, 9]). Then the thought immediately moves back to the subject previously introduced — Christ as the “appointed heir of all things” (vv. 3, 4). And this second statement surrounding Christ’s heirship is used to introduce seven *Messianic quotations* from the Old Testament (vv. 5-13).

The way in which the book opens introduces the subject matter in the book — something seen in the structure of all the books in Scripture, along with Scripture as a whole in the opening verses of Genesis (1:1-2:3). The subject matter in Hebrews, shown through the manner in which the book is introduced, is about that coming day when God’s appointed “heir of all things” holds the sceptre and rules the earth with “a rod of iron” (cf. Ps. 2:9; Rev. 2:26, 27).

Through the arrangement of these seven Messianic quotations (a number showing *the completion of that which is in view*), “heirship” is immediately connected not only with *Sonship* but with a *firstborn status* as well. It is *God’s Firstborn Son*, the appointed “heir of all things,” Whom the Father will one day “again bring into” the inhabited world (vv. 5, 6).

Psalm Two

These seven Messianic quotations are introduced in verse five and begin with a quotation from Ps. 2:7:

“Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee.”

This verse is quoted three times in the New Testament — once in Acts (13:33) and twice in Hebrews (1:5; 5:5). And in all three passages, as in Ps. 2:7, the verse is used in *Messianic settings*.

The reference in each of the four appearances of the verse is to the Father bringing the Son forth at the time He reigns, not at the time of His incarnation and birth. The Son’s incarnation and birth was an absolute necessity if the Son was to be *God’s*

Firstborn, allowing the Son to hold the sceptre as the Father’s appointed “heir of all things.” But a *bringing forth at the time Christ reigns* is, contextually, seen in Ps. 2:7, along with the three places this passage is quoted in the New Testament.

Note how all of this is set forth in the second Psalm. Though a present application to Ps. 2:1-3 is made in Acts 4:25ff, the reference in these verses is more specifically to events at the end of Man’s Day, progressing into the Messianic Era.

The Gentile nations are seen at this time “raging” and imagining “a vain thing.” They are seen allied “together, against the Lord, and against his anointed” (vv. 1, 2). And in their alliance, they are seen saying:

“Let us break their chains...and throw off their fetters [the restraining and authoritative power of the Father and Son in v. 2]” (v. 3, NIV).

This is a picture of Gentile world power in a day not far removed from the present day. The Gentile nations at that time will be as “the sea” in Jonah, *raging*; they will imagine that which will not be possible — *to continue holding the sceptre under the present world ruler, Satan* (cf. Dan. 10:13-20; Rev. 13:2); and, under Satan’s leadership, they will *counsel together concerning how they can stay God’s hand and prevent the fulfillment of that foretold by the prophets centuries before this time*.

But all will be *in vain*. The One seated in the heavens will laugh (a contemptible laughter in the Hebrew text), He will *scoff* at the puny efforts of the Gentile powers, and He will then *speak* to them in His anger and wrath (vv. 4, 5).

This will be followed by that seen in the continuing text of Psalm chapter two:

“Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill [or, ‘holy mountain’ (Heb., *har*)] of Zion.

I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee.

Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen [‘Gentiles’] for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.

Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel” (vv. 6-9).

The Gentile nations under Satan, in the end time, will be unable to do any more than Satan found that he could do when he sought to exalt his throne at a time in the distant past (Isa. 14:12-17; cf. Ezek. 28:14-19). Satan’s prior efforts proved utterly futile, resulting in God’s wrath; and exactly the same thing will result from the actions of the Gentile nations at the end of Man’s Day.

Satan, seeking to exalt his throne, found himself disqualified to continue holding his appointed position, and his kingdom was reduced to a ruin (Gen. 1:2a).

And, at a time yet future, with the Times of the Gentiles brought to an end, the Gentile nations will find themselves no longer qualified to hold their appointed positions. At that time, their power and kingdom will be reduced to a ruin (Dan. 2:34, 35, 44, 45; Joel 3:9-21; Rev. 19:11-21; cf. Isa. 2:1-5).

Now, note the context on either side of Ps. 2:7. Immediately before (v. 6), God is seen placing *His King* upon His “holy hill [‘holy mountain’] of Zion”; and immediately after (vv. 8, 9), God is seen referring to *the King’s inheritance and possession*. And the thought of the Father begetting the Son between these two Messianic statements is a reference to God bringing His Son forth in that future day to reign over “the kingdom of the world,” which will have become “the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ” (Rev. 11:15, NASB), with the government centered in Jerusalem (Joel 2:32; 3:21; Zech. 14:9-21).

God one day placing His Son on His “holy hill [‘holy mountain’] of Zion” is just as sure as if it had already occurred. It will happen simply because God has spoken. In His way and time He will bring matters to pass exactly as He has revealed in His Word.

This is that which Scripture reveals concerning *God’s Firstborn Son, Jesus*, the One Who, in a coming day, will bring to pass that which continually eludes man today — *effecting peace in a troubled world, particularly in a troubled Middle East, a peace which can only follow that seen in Ps. 2:1-6*.

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