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THE

Bible

STUDENT

THE ENTRANCE OF **THY WORD** GIVETH LIGHT

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Editor: A. McDONALD REDWOOD

SEVEN OLD TESTAMENT FEASTS

A TYPOLOGICAL STUDY OF LEVITICUS 23

By THE EDITOR

III. The Subject Considered Synthetically

(concluded)

B. The *second* purpose of this classification is brought out as we consider the special feature connected with these three leading Feasts, *viz.*, that at each of them *the males in Israel had to appear before Jehovah*, and they were not to appear empty-handed. The teaching here is perhaps more in the nature of suggestion and hint, and yet, we believe, it is full of spiritual matter worthy of careful thought and meditation. It would seem strange that the Holy Spirit would allow the threefold repetition of these special features without any intention of giving us something to learn therefrom.

What, then, may we learn from these features?

In the first place, it would seem there is an intended *prophetic reference to Christ Himself*, and particularly in reference to that place of glory He now occupies, and will occupy more manifestly in the coming day, as *The Firstborn*. This particular title is applied to Christ five times in the New Testament and once in the Old; it will prove most helpful if the references are turned up and carefully read before proceeding. (Col. 1:15; 1:18; Rom. 8:29; Heb. 1:6; Rev. 1:5; Psalm 89:27. The contexts should also be noted). The title has a special significance, being intended to exhibit Christ's relation to His creation in general, and to redeemed man in particular; also His position of dignity and superiority in regard to them.

Not that it in any manner classes Him with His creatures or creation, or ranks Him as one with them even in precedence, as if He shared something of their 'creaturehood'. He is in a category altogether alone and unique. He cannot be classified. He *is* God eternally existent, and unoriginated.

But, in view of the Incarnation and what followed it, there is made possible a very definite and real relationship, with His redeemed and regenerated creatures, who, in Scripture language are 'made partakers of His holiness', and 'partakers of the divine nature'. (Heb. 12:10; 2 Pet. 1:4.)

Even before the Incarnation, terms are used when referring to Israel and her promised Messiah which anticipate the possibility of such relationship becoming true.

It is this particular aspect of the title we are now considering. We shall see that, whilst most clearly preserving the distinction between the Creator, as such, and His creatures, the term does contain the threefold idea of Relationship, Representation and Pre-eminence. And the point before us in particular is, that this appearing of Israel before Jehovah thrice yearly is a *prophetic prefiguration of Christ in His character of 'Firstborn among many brethren'*, and of His Pre-eminence in the Universe He created.

Note carefully the following sequence of thought:

(1) Every male child in Israel was peculiarly Jehovah's possession, and particularly every *firstborn* male child. In fact it is hardly too much to say, reading Exodus 13:2, 11-16 and ch. 34:19, 20 reverently, that the two terms 'male' and 'firstborn' are used very nearly interchangeably. Whether this is actually so or not, does not really affect our line of thought—as a matter of fact in Ex. 4:22 the *whole* nation is referred to as 'Israel my son, even my Firstborn'. The point to note is that the appearance of the males (or possibly only the firstborn males) before Jehovah at these three Feasts was of a *representative* character—they appeared on *behalf* of the whole of Israel.

It was not that the one sex were of any greater consideration in God's sight than the other. Nor could it possibly have been any idea of *degrees* of worship between the sexes; or that one sex was possessed of greater sanctity than the other. It seems indubitably certain that, whatever other likely suggestion remains, the idea of *representation* is the most reasonable and accurate—*i.e.*, the males (more than probably, the firstborn) appeared as *representative* of the *whole* chosen Nation.

(2) The next point to note is how far Israel may in certain aspects *prefigure* the Christ, Who was to arise out of it. First, turn to Hosea 11:1 and note that Israel is there called '*My son*'—'When Israel was a child I loved him, and called My son out of Egypt'. Now that same passage is referred to by Matthew as being fulfilled *in Christ* when He was taken by His parents into Egypt, returning thence after the death of Herod—'that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord, through the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt did I call My son'. (Matt. 2:14, 15.) That

immediately establishes what we may call a *prophetic link* between Israel the Nation, and Christ the Messiah.

Again, recall the passage above quoted, 'Thus saith Jehovah, Israel is My son, *even My firstborn*'. (Ex. 4:22.) We have already found this title applied to Christ; and now it is applied to the people of Israel. As previously, it denotes a peculiar position of dignity and honour; and in this instance given to the Nation of Israel, in distinction from *all other* nations. Here again then, is a definite prophetic link established between Christ and the Nation.

One more illustration of this close relation between Christ and the Nation may be noted before passing on. In Gen. 12:7 (also 17:7, 8) we get God's covenant promise to Abraham to give him a land, which should become the perpetual possession of his *seed*. Who is the 'seed'? In Ps. 105:8-12 (as well as in other passages), it is applied to the *nation* of Israel. But Paul, in Gal. 3:16, definitely appropriates it to *Christ*.

These 'links' are not due to chance, but are *designed*. That these titles or epithets are first of all applicable to the nation of Israel is only part of the whole truth: their complete fulfilment lies in the person of Christ. Therefore we may correctly say that, what Israel was to God and before God in an *earthly* sense, as separated from, and yet channels of blessing to, the other nations, prefigures (in a far higher and more glorious and *spiritual* sense) what Christ is to and before God among the hosts of the Redeemed. He fills out the dim picture seen in the nation, colouring it with the full radiance of His Divine glory, carrying it on to the highest heights of perfection and beauty. So if Israel occupied a position unique in privilege and power before God, He the Son of God, Who arose out of the nation, according to the flesh, occupies a position only dissimilar in its *transcendent* glory, dignity and authority.

(3) That principle being established, we may safely proceed a step further and find (as already stated) in this particular episode of Israel appearing before Jehovah thrice yearly, a prefigurement of Christ's present and future—

- | | | | |
|---|------------|---|----------------------|
| 1. Relationship to the redeemed | ... | } | as the
FIRSTBORN. |
| 2. Representation of the redeemed | ... | | |
| 3. Pre-eminence among the redeemed and
in the whole universe | | | |

That is, Christ the Firstborn, as He is *related* to (1) individual believers; (2) the Church of God; (3) the whole (renewed) Creation—in view of what has been shown on pp. 20–22).

In order to make this a little clearer let us briefly look again at the three divisions made by this classification. (The Chart at the end of the chapter will also help the study.)

In Division I the emphasis is on **Christ and the believer individually**. Now there is one passage among others which fittingly describes the thought we are now following out: 'It became Him (Christ) . . . in bringing *many sons* unto glory, to make the *Captain of their salvation* perfect through sufferings. For both He that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all of one: for which cause *He is not ashamed to call them brethren*' (Heb. 2: 10, 11). That passage indicates Christ's *relationship* to believers as a result of His redemptive work. He is 'Leader;' they are 'brethren'—'all of one'.

Couple this now with another passage: 'Whom (God) did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that, (note the words) *He might be the Firstborn among many brethren*' (Rom. 8:29). In these two passages we have,—

<i>first,</i>	} {	Relationship ('many sons,' 'brethren');
<i>second,</i>		Representation ('Captain' or Leader);
<i>third,</i>		Pre-eminence ('Firstborn')—Christ pre-eminent in time, place, order and dignity.

Here we see Christ appearing before God now in relation to His 'brethren,' as representative of those brethren, and taking the pre-eminence among them as 'Firstborn among many'—just as in the past the firstborn of Israel appeared before Jehovah at the Feast of Unleavened Bread, as bearing a relationship with the whole nation, and as representative of the 'many brethren' of that nation. No doubt the final and complete fulfilment of this awaits the coming day, when the 'many sons,' each bearing truly the image of the Pre-eminent Son, will be gathered around Him 'unto glory,' when He will be able to say, 'Behold, I and the children which God hath given Me.'

In Division II, Feast of Weeks, the emphasis is on **Christ and the Church as a whole**. Turning to Hebrews 12:23 we read of '*the assembly of the firstborn ones* registered in the heavens'—which seems distinctly to refer to the *Church*, as being composed of those called out from among the '*dead in trespasses and sins,*'

(Eph. 2:1) that they should be 'a kind of *firstfruits* of His creatures' (cf. Jas. 1:18)—a position into which, 'having willed it, *HE* begat us by the Word of Truth.'

Now when this is read in conjunction with a verse in Colossians (ch. 1:18) we see immediately the three-fold relationship of Christ the Firstborn to those who share the same title of dignity with Him: 'He (Christ) is the Head of the Body, the Church: Who is the beginning, *the firstborn from among the dead*; that in all things He might have the pre-eminence.' Ellicott translates the latter portion as 'the Firstborn . . . that in all things He might become the FIRST.'

So we have Christ appearing before God now as related to the *company* of 'firstborn ones,' corporately, as representative Head of that Body, and as taking the FIRST place in the Body—just as in the past the firstborn of Israel were called to appear before God at the Feast of Weeks. Here again the full manifestation of this glorious truth lies in the future, but its blessings can be enjoyed even *today* by every member of that mystic Body.

In Division III, Feast of Tabernacles, the emphasis is on **Christ in His exaltation** to universal dominion in Millennial Glory. Under this aspect we need to bring together two passages in the New Testament in order to get the exact thought we desire to convey. The first reads thus: '(Christ) is the image of the invisible God, the *Firstborn of all creation*' (Col. 1:15 R.V.). The second reads: 'And when He again *bringeth in the Firstborn* into the world He saith, And let all the angels of God worship Him' (Heb. 1:6 R.V.).

It is impossible of course to go thoroughly into the exegesis of these two wonderful passages. It must suffice to take out of each the one point necessary for our immediate purpose, and see how far it sheds light upon the thought we are considering.

To begin with, we must be prepared to release the emphasis from the ideas of relationship and representation we have so far been able to include, and place it all the more upon that of *pre-eminence*. We need also to re-emphasize the *prophetic* character of the Christological classification. That is, we need to remind ourselves that Israel's yearly appearing before Jehovah at the Feast of Tabernacles is (as we believe) of prophetic import. The Feast itself pointed *forward* to Millennial glories, when Messiah Himself shall rule over the earth in righteousness and peace. Even beyond that epoch does it probably go, but we are not now concerned with more.

Now the two New Testament passages above seem to confirm just that thought; viz., that the place of Universal Rulership belongs to Christ both on the principle of primogeniture, *and* by right of conquest. The first passage indicates (among other truths) the unique position the Son of God occupies in reference to Creation. He is the Pre-existent First Cause. He created all things, by Him all things consist and subsist. He 'upholds all things by the Word of His power.' He is altogether Pre-eminent in majesty, power and glory, above and distinct from all intelligences of whatever category.

But the thought implied in the phrase 'Firstborn of all creation' needs to be further considered in the setting given it in Heb. 2:8-10, where we find this Son of God as having been made 'a little lower than the angels because of the suffering of death,' that 'by the grace of God He should taste death for every man.' Sin had come in to usurp the throne, and to defeat sin He submitted to the curse and death of the Cross. Now, however, He is 'crowned with glory and honour,' although for the time being it still remains true that 'we see not yet all things put under Him.' But the day is speedily coming when it shall be made manifest that, 'God also hath highly exalted Him, and hath given Him the Name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father' (Phil. 2:9-11).

It is to that day that Heb. 1:6 refers.* Not only as 'Firstborn of all creation' (that is, by right of primogeniture) but as the Victor over sin and death and hell, He is to be accorded the place of universal dominion, and openly 'inducted' (see footnote*) to His rightful inheritance (cf. Ps. 2:8). Probably it is to this same event that Ps. 89:27 alludes: 'I also will make Him *My Firstborn the highest* of the kings of the earth.' He will then be 'revealed from heaven with the angels of His power in flaming

*The R. V. rendering and sense is upheld by Alford and other eminent authorities. Alford also renders the phrase 'bringeth in' by 'introduced' and 'inducted' and gives it the sense 'putting in possession of,' as of an inheritance, citing several O.T. passages to show that its usage is closely connected with the future restoration of Israel to their promised land. So that the sentence may well mean: 'When He hath inducted the Firstborn into the world (of His inheritance)' etc.

fire, rendering vengeance to them that know not God . . . when He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be marvelled at in all them that believed' (2 Thess. 1:8-10).

In view of the recognized typical and prophetic teaching of the Feast of Tabernacles *itself* (as we shall further see when we come to it), may we not justifiably find some prophetic anticipation of all the above in the yearly appearance of Israel before Jehovah at the end of Harvest? The required link between the yearly appearance and the Glorious Appearing being found in the word 'First-born' as applied to Christ, and in all that it implies. And if we can truly allow such a prophetic connection in this division, most certainly we cannot deny it to the previous two divisions where the teaching is decidedly clearer.

Thus we get, even if nothing more than as a mere hint, the wonderful relationships and glorious pre-eminence of Christ as ordained by the Father. And all in direct consequence of Christ's redemptive work relative to the individual believer, the Church, and even the whole creation.

We would go further and suggest that Ex. 34:23, 24 might indirectly (its *primary* application is of course to Israel) be read predictively in this same connection, prefiguring:

Christ's ultimate victory over all His enemies—'I will cast out the nations before thee;'

His universal dominion—'and enlarge thy borders;'

His undisputed possession—'neither shall any desire thy land when thou shalt go up to appear before Jehovah thy God thrice in the year.'

For these reasons we have called this classification the Christological one, and though what we have set out may be more in the nature of possibility, we believe it is not without reasonable foundation.

(See next page for Chart)

CHART SHOWING THE THREE WAYS OF DIVIDING THE FEASTS
 With a summary of the main points emphasised in each separate Division

S	PASSOVER	UNLEAVENED BREAD	FIRSTFRUITS	WEEKS	TRUMPETS	ATONEMENT	TABERNACLES
	III. CHRISTOLOGICAL DIVISION						
	<i>CHRIST AND THE BELIEVER</i> Relationship Representation Pre-eminence			<i>CHRIST and the BODY</i> Headship	<i>CHRIST AND CREATION</i> Ultimate Victory Universal Dominion Undisputed possession		
<i>Rest broken by Sin</i>	II. DOCTRINAL DIVISION						
	<i>Relate to SIN and the Individual</i> 1st Step, Christ Redeeming 2nd Step, Redeemed Man walking in Newness of Life		<i>Relate to Harvest and the Body</i> 3rd Step, Christ Empowering 4th Step, Empowered Body fellowshiping in Service		Successive remaining steps to the full realization of God's Eternal Purposes		
I. DISPENSATIONAL DIVISION							
<i>FULFILLED</i> Privileges and Responsibilities of the Present based upon the Past Facts Relate principally to Members of the Body PREPARATIVE				<i>UNFULFILLED</i> Privileges and Responsibilities of the Future based upon the Present Facts Relate to the Body, the Nation, the Earth CONSUMMATIVE			

NOTE.—The S at the top left corner-Sabbath. Then follow names of the feasts.

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