

THE SEVEN PRINCIPLES OF GOD'S GOVERNMENT

Those who are acquainted with the Hebrew-Christian Bible know that the *Gospel of the Kingdom of God* is its overriding theme. It should be no surprise, then, to learn that "God's government" -- that is, how God works with and through created beings to accomplish His will -- is addressed again and again in the Holy Scriptures.

The late Herbert W. Armstrong (founder of the Worldwide Church of God) believed that a proper understanding of "God's government" was the most important doctrine he restored to God's Church. He also believed that fifty to ninety percent of the brethren in Worldwide did not properly understand the implications of the doctrine. His assessment was proven essentially correct when his successors, through subtle and open abuses of their authority, turned Worldwide's doctrinal heritage upside down and scattered or disillusioned most of the brethren.

Today, no subject produces more confusion (or more rancor) among the "scattered brethren" than the subject of "God's government" (especially as it applies to His Church)! This has led to confusion on countless other subjects, from strictly technical issues such as the sacred calendar (which I address on this Web site) to the very nature of God and His plan of salvation. Since "the fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom" (Psalm 111:10), and since that "fear" (as we will see) is part and parcel of how "God's government" works, this should not be surprising.

In addressing "the fear of the Lord", which also involves the keeping of His commandments (same verse, New King James Version), I was led to a simultaneous solution (to use the language of mathematics) of several issues that plagued the Worldwide Church during its subversion and breakup: the age and origins of the Ten Commandments, their foundational role in "God's Government" as well as His covenants with Israel and the Church, and their relationship to the other principles (including mercy or grace) by which God governs His creation. In finding this solution, I was also led back to a part of biblical "prehistory" which held Mr. Armstrong's intense interest during the last several decades of his life.

Where did I find that simultaneous solution? In the symbolism of the object at the very center of ancient Israel's worship of God through the sacrificial system: the *Ark of the Covenant*, which represented God's heavenly throne. Let us begin

by examining that symbolism, which summarizes not only God's "government" (which is the same as God's "way of life"), but God's plan of salvation for man and the relationship of the angels to that plan...

We read the following instructions given by the LORD (literally *Yehawweh*, "He Who Was, Is And Will Be") to Israel in Exodus 25:1-9:

Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: "Speak to the children of Israel, that they bring Me an offering. From everyone who gives it willingly with his heart you shall take My offering. And this is the offering which you shall take from them: gold, silver, and bronze; blue, purple, and scarlet thread, fine linen, and goats' hair; ram skins dyed red, badger skins, and acacia wood; oil for the light, and spices for the anointing oil and for the sweet incense; onyx stones, and stones to be set in the ephod and in the breastplate. And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them. According to all that I show you, that is, the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furnishings, just so you shall make it" (New King James Version throughout, unless otherwise noted).

At the heart of this sanctuary -- the Tabernacle -- was to be the Ark of the Covenant, where God would meet with Moses and Aaron. The LORD instructed Moses thus about the Ark in verses 10-22:

"And they shall make an ark of acacia wood; two and a half cubits shall be its length, a cubit and a half its width, and a cubit and a half its height. And you shall overlay it with pure gold, inside and out you shall overlay it, and shall make on it a molding of gold all around. You shall cast four rings of gold for it, and put them in its four corners; two rings shall be on one side, and two rings on the other side. And you shall make poles of acacia wood, and overlay them with gold. You shall put the poles into the rings on the sides of the ark, that the ark may be carried by them. The poles shall be in the rings of the ark; they shall not be taken from it. And you shall put into the ark the Testimony which I will give you.

"You shall make a mercy seat of pure gold; two and a half cubits shall be its length and a cubit and a half its width. And you shall make two cherubim of gold; of hammered work you shall make them at the two ends of the mercy seat. Make one cherub at one end, and the other cherub at the other end; you shall make the cherubim at the two ends of it of one piece with the mercy seat. And the cherubim shall stretch out their wings above, covering the mercy seat with their wings, and they shall face one another; the faces of the cherubim shall be toward the mercy seat. You shall put the mercy seat on top of the ark, and in the ark you shall put the Testimony that I will give you. And there I

will meet with you, and I will speak with you from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which are on the ark of the Testimony, about everything which I will give you in commandment to the children of Israel."

Thus the Ark originally had the "*Testimony*" (Hebrew *`edut*: here, the *stone tablets* bearing the *Ten Commandments*) encased in a *box or chest* ("ark": Hebrew *aron*) covered by a *lid* ("mercy seat": Hebrew *koperet*, used only for the lid of the *aron*). Two *cherubim* were made of one piece with the *koperet*. God was to speak "from between" these two cherubim.

Later, we learn that the LORD said to Moses: "**Tell Aaron your brother not to come at just any time into the Holy Place inside the veil, before the mercy seat which is on the ark, lest he die; for I will appear in the cloud above the mercy seat**" (Leviticus 16:2). Rather, he was only to enter on the *Day of Atonement*, and that with the blood of animals sacrificed on behalf of himself and the people. We learn from the Book of Hebrews and elsewhere that the ceremony in Leviticus 16 foreshadowed (among other things) the work of the Messiah as our heavenly High Priest, interceding for us before the throne of God. This is why the Septuagint, Philo and the New Testament alike call the *koperet* by the Greek term *hilasterion*, which signifies its role in the *propitiation* of our sins (cf. the *Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich Greek-English Lexicon*, p. 375b).

Thus we have the *elements* of the Ark's symbolism: the tablets bearing the Ten Commandments, as well as mercy offered for the transgression of those Commandments. We also have the presence of God, in relationship to that of the angels, as part of that symbolism. What could it all mean?

Our first clue to what the symbolism of the Ark represents is given in Mark 12:28-34:

Then one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, perceiving that He had answered them well, asked Him, "Which is the first commandment of all?"

Jesus answered him, "The first of all the commandments is: 'Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one. And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' This is the first commandment. And the second, like it, is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."

So the scribe said to Him, "Well said, Teacher. You have spoken the truth, for

there is one God, and there is no other but He. And to love Him with all the heart, with all the understanding, with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself, is more than all the whole burnt offerings and sacrifices."

Now when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, He said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God."

So then, there are *priorities* in the Law! *Love of God and neighbor comes first*, as Jesus reminded the scribes and Pharisees repeatedly. The Ten Commandments and what depend on them depend in turn on these two Great Commandments. As it is written elsewhere, "*On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets*" (Matthew 22:40).

But the scribes and Pharisees continually got their priorities reversed. To them, the *ceremonial* part of the Law of Moses -- that which centered on the Tabernacle and, later, the Temple -- took first place in their thinking. This is why Jesus had to remind them as well, "**I desire mercy and not sacrifice**" (Matthew 9:13 and 12:7; cf. Hosea 6:6).

Thus Jesus taught from Scripture that the *love* of God and man as well as *mercy* took priority over sacrifices (and, by implication, the other physical ceremonies and actions the Pharisees kept so strictly). Is there another place we can cite where such a comparison is made?

Indeed there is! "**Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone**" (Matthew 23:23).

Let's take a closer look at these "weightier matters". Jesus is quoting Micah 6:8:

**He has shown you, O man, what is good;
And what does the LORD require of you
But to do justly,
To love mercy,
And to walk humbly with your God?**

These things define "what is good". They may be called *basic moral principles* of God's way of life. "To do justly" is certainly to live by the love of God and man, in that order: by the Ten Commandments and what depends on them. "To love mercy" is certainly to forgive others as God has forgiven oneself. "To walk humbly with God" must therefore be just another way of saying "to walk by faith

in God".

Psalm 130:3-4 adds to our understanding of these passages thus:

**If You, LORD, should *mark iniquities,*
O Lord, who could stand?
But there is *forgiveness* with You,
That You may be *feared.***

God "marks iniquities" according to His code of *justice*. His forgiveness rests on His *mercy*, which is made possible by the propitiation made at His throne by His heavenly High Priest. By analogy, then, *fearing* God is the same as *having faith* in God, which is the same as *walking humbly* with God.

The parallels between these passages and the symbolism of the Ark of the Covenant should now be obvious. *Justice* is symbolized by the *Ten Commandments* written on the tablets of stone. As it is written: "**Righteousness and justice are the foundation of His throne**" (Psalm 97:2); and again, "**My tongue shall speak of Your word, for all Your *commandments* are *righteousness***" (Psalm 119:172). *Mercy* is symbolized by the *koperet* or "*mercy seat*". As the "*mercy seat*" covers the box containing the tablets of stone, so "*mercy triumphs over judgment*" or justice (James 2:13). *Faith* must therefore be symbolized in some way by the *covering cherubim* and their relationship to God, each other and the rest of the Ark.

How might this be so? 1 Peter 1:10-12 tells us this relating to our salvation in Messiah:

Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven -- *things which angels desire to look into.*

If there is a central mystery to the Gospel -- something that makes everything else in the plan of salvation possible -- it is how "*mercy triumphs over judgment (justice)*" in Messiah. *That mystery is precisely what the covering of the "Testimony" by the "mercy seat" represents!* The covering cherubim on the Ark, as it were, *look down* at that mystery but are unable to *see into* it.

But there is more. Paul tells converted Christians -- those humans who are presently under "God's government" and who are "filled with the Spirit" (Ephesians 5:18) -- to be "submitting to one another in the fear of God" (verse 21). Remember how that "the *fear* of God" is the same as *faith* in God? (Such "fear" is not unreasoning terror, but proper awe and respect of God and what He represents.) Notice then the posture of the covering cherubim: their heads are bowed toward the mercy seat (and therefore toward each other), as well as bowed under God's glory.

This last point deserves clarification. The *New King James Version* says this in Psalm 99:1:

**The LORD reigns;
Let the peoples tremble!
He *dwells between* the cherubim;
Let the earth be moved!**

Whereas the *Revised Standard Version* renders the verse thus:

**The LORD reigns;
Let the peoples tremble!
He *sits enthroned upon* the cherubim;
Let the earth be moved!**

Other versions make similar distinctions, here and in passages such as 1 Samuel 4:5 and 2 Samuel 6:2. The relevant Hebrew phrase is *yoshev kerubim* (or *ha-kerubim*, depending on the verse). Now "*yoshev*" may mean "he dwells" or "he sits (upon)", depending on the context. Thanks to Exodus 25:22, many translators take the meaning to be "**He dwells (between the) cherubim**", since the LORD spoke literally "**from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which are on the ark of the Testimony**". Yet they overlook the fact that *yoshev (ha-)kerubim* does not specify that the LORD dwells or even sits enthroned "between" the cherubim. Were this actually meant, it most likely would have been spelled out as *yoshev ben ha-kerubim*, just as Exodus 25:22 specifies that the LORD spoke *miben* ("from between") the two cherubim.

The *New Brown-Driver-Briggs Genesis Hebrew-Aramaic Lexicon* renders the phrase *yoshev (ha-)kerubim* as "*throned upon the cherubim*", and points out that the two cherubim on the Ark of the Covenant are unquestionably referred to. The *BDBG* says further that Exodus 25:18-22 "gives an account of...two cherubim of solid gold upon the slab of gold of the *koperet* facing each other with wings outstretched above, so as to constitute a basis or throne on which the glory of Yahweh appeared, and from whence He spake" (p. 500b).

This is quite contrary to what one finds in so many artists' renditions of the Ark (as based on the idea of merely "dwelling between the cherubim"): the cherubim standing like winged colossae over the glory of the LORD, looking down at Him and forming a canopy with their wings over Him. This would seem to exalt the cherubim far over their own Creator. But take *yoshev (ha-)kerubim* as "sits enthroned upon the cherubim", and much becomes clear. The LORD indeed sits and speaks *between* the cherubim, but He also sits *upon* the cherubim. (How the Ark itself may have looked is illustrated in the border background on the left.)

Thus the covering cherubim show their *faith in and fear of* God through their *posture*. They "walk humbly with their God" and "submit to each other in the fear of God", looking to God's promises for humankind (as made possible by the triumph of God's mercy over God's justice) while yet not being able to fully understand them. Their wings cover, not God Himself, but the mercy seat. (Actually, the Hebrew indicates that the "covering cherubim" are really the "overshadowing cherubim", for their wings *overshadow* the mercy seat.)

So far, we have the *three moral principles (justice, mercy and faith)* of God's way of life applied in the very symbolism of the Ark, which represents God's throne. They are therefore principles of "God's government" as well -- principles by which He rules both angels and men. Are there any other principles illustrated by the Ark?

Let us look at the covering cherubim once more. Their wings form a platform upon which the LORD sits enthroned (strange as that may sound). To make this possible, the cherubim must stretch out their wings until their tips touch. Their general posture (heads bowed under God and toward each other) shows their submission to God as their Superior and to each other as peers.

It should not be hard to see that three *organizational (or even political)* principles are illustrated here. In effect, there is a *hierarchy* illustrated by the Ark's symbolism. The cherubim *cooperate* by stretching out their wings toward each other, thus *supporting* God in so doing. (Their very posture, in effect, is *prayerful*.) God, for His part, shows that He *directs (rules over)* the cherubim by sitting enthroned upon them.

Cooperation, support, and direction are the essentials of "teamwork". The Ark of the Covenant symbolizes these principles in their most basic form. The LORD and the covering cherubim (apparently Michael and Gabriel, two out of the three angels mentioned by name in Scripture) form a three-member "team" at the head of the Universe, with the LORD firmly "in charge" of the team. In human

organizations (Israel and the Church) founded by the LORD, *these same organizing principles* have always been used whenever God's blessing has been upon such organizations. They have been applied in different ways at different times, depending on the needs of God's Work of salvation in the world. The basic *principles*, however, have *never changed* -- and *never will!*

Nowhere is there room in these principles, in theory or in recorded or prophetic practice, for the *election through voting* of officials serving under God. Rather, throughout the Bible God always *appoints* His servants, as based on their qualifications ("fruits"). Moreover, *direction* in God's government is *always* from the top (God) down -- *never* from the bottom up. However, *input* of advice from below and *discussion* among peers -- even as to who may be qualified for particular offices (see Exodus 18:13-26; Deuteronomy 1:9-18; and Acts 6:1-6) -- are certainly part of the support and cooperation that God expects of His servants. (See 1 Kings 22:19-23 for an example from the heavenly realm.)

Finally, God's direction may be from Himself to each individual, or to a group as a whole (directly or through His appointed representatives). Cooperation between God's servants may also be on an individual or collective level under God, and that regardless of "rank" or spiritual gift in the hierarchy (cf. 1 Corinthians 3:5-9). Likewise, support of God by human beings may be given individually or collectively through *prayer and praise*. We learn that the LORD is "enthroned on the praises of Israel" (Psalm 22:3, Revised Standard Version). We also see the angels giving their own continual praises to God, as well as the prayers of the saints (Revelation 4-5) -- just as the sacrificial system itself typified (cf. Hebrews 8:5, citing Exodus 25:40).

For several decades, the Worldwide Church of God often acted as if *direction* were the only principle of "God's government" (at most, as based on God's code of *justice*). Yet ironically, *all* of the above principles plus one more (which I will discuss shortly) have been taught as principles of "God's government", one way or another, over the years in the Church. What I discuss here is really nothing new. It is simply a different way of looking at the subject than we have used heretofore.

So far, we have examined six principles of "God's government": three *moral* principles (*justice, mercy, faith*) and three *organizational* principles (*cooperation, support, direction*). Is there a *seventh* principle, completing the symbolism?

Yes! Love is the *motivational* principle of "God's government". It lies behind all the other six. God's law of *justice* defines how one is to love God and man. *Mercy* is also based on the love of God and man, for no human is without sin. *Faith* rests

on the love of God, to be sure -- but also on the love of man, for it takes such love to be able to build *trust* between humans (as based on *covenant relationships*, in effect). *Cooperation, support, direction* -- all these conducted in a loving manner (as "submitting to one another in the fear of God") -- make effective "*teamwork*" possible.

God, of course, is *love* (1 John 4:8), and without His love, none of the other principles would be possible. We would not have His law of justice, nor His mercy, nor His promises to rely on. Indeed, we could not support His work, nor cooperate with each other in so doing, nor submit to His rule -- for none of us would be here! So His very glory on top of the "pyramid" of His government shows just how pre-eminent *love* is as a principle. This is something that would not be made clear were His glory manifested *below* the wings of the covering cherubim.

Now we know that "whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness" (1 John 3:4). Obviously, then, whoever breaks God's code of *justice* sins. But also, rejecting God's *mercy* or refusing to forgive others is sin (Matthew 6:14-15, etc.). Whatever is not of *faith* is sin (Romans 14:23). Not following God's principles of *support, cooperation, direction* and (especially) *love* is also sin (as many examples in the Bible prove by the consequences of such actions)! All these things are part of "God's law" in the broadest sense. Therefore, the transgression of any of these principles, in letter or in spirit, is "lawlessness" (sin).

How different the Universe would be were it ruled by one who is *unloving* -- and therefore *lawless* as regards to all seven of these principles of "God's government"! This brings us to the deep and ancient connection between the principles of "God's government", the symbolism of the Ark of the Covenant, and the history and future of angels and man.

Only three angels are mentioned by name in Hebrew-Christian Scripture: Michael, Gabriel and "Lucifer, son of the morning" (Isaiah 14:12) -- in Hebrew, *Helel ben-Shachar*, "Shining One, Son of Dawn". (*Lucifer* in the Latin Vulgate version, like *Helel* in the Hebrew Masoretic Text and *ho Heosphoros* in the Greek Septuagint version, is simply an epithet for the "morning star" -- what we know today as the planet Venus.) Of these, Michael is called "one of the chief princes" (Daniel 10:13) and "the archangel" or chief angel (Jude 9). Gabriel, for his part, stands in the presence of God, implying he has a very high office (Luke 1:19). He is also entrusted with messages of very great import (Luke 1:19, 26-27; Daniel 8:16; 9:21-22).

Likewise, there are only three "covering cherubim" mentioned in Scripture: the

two on the Ark of the Covenant, and "the King of Tyre" mentioned in Ezekiel 28:11-17 (leaving aside the human antitype mentioned in verses 18 and 19). It is logical to infer that the two "covering cherubim" on the Ark represent Michael and Gabriel, and that the "covering cherub" mentioned in Ezekiel 28 is the same as "Lucifer" in Isaiah 14.

Here is most of Ezekiel 28:12-17, describing this last "covering cherub":

**"You were the seal of perfection,
Full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.
You were in Eden, the garden of God;
Every precious stone was your covering:
The sardius, topaz, and diamond,
Beryl, onyx, and jasper,
Sapphire, turquoise, and emerald with gold.
The workmanship of your timbrels and pipes
Was prepared for you on the day you were created.**

***"You were the anointed cherub who covers;
I established you;
You were on the holy mountain of God;
You walked back and forth in the midst of fiery stones.
You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created,
Till iniquity was found in you.***

**"By the abundance of your trading
You became filled with violence within,
And you sinned;
Therefore I cast you as a profane thing
Out of the mountain of God;
And I destroyed you, *O covering cherub,*
From the midst of the fiery stones.**

**"Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty;
You corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor;
I cast you to the ground,
I laid you before kings,
That they might gaze at you."**

The fate of this being is very similar to that described for the "King of Babylon" in Isaiah 14:12-15:

**"How you are fallen from heaven,
O Lucifer, son of the morning!**

**How you are cut down to the ground,
You who weakened the nations!
For you have said in your heart:
"I will ascend into heaven,
I will exalt my throne above the stars of God;
I will also sit on the mount of the congregation
On the farthest sides of the north;
I will ascend above the heights of the clouds,
I will be like the Most High.'
Yet you shall be brought down to Sheol,
To the lowest depths of the Pit."**

In both passages, beings which can only be supernatural are described in conjunction with beings which can only be natural (and human). Obviously, some kind of *typology* is involved. How can this be, and where does the type end and the antitype begin? A clue lies in Daniel 8:9-11:

And out of one of them came a little horn which grew exceedingly great toward the south, toward the east, and toward the Glorious Land. *And it grew up to the host of heaven; and it cast down some of the host and some of the stars to the ground, and trampled them.* He even exalted himself as high as the Prince of the host; and by him the daily sacrifices were taken away, and the place of His sanctuary was cast down.

Gabriel interprets this vision in verses 23-25:

**"And in the latter time of their kingdom,
When the transgressors have reached their fullness,
A king shall arise,
Having fierce features,
Who understands sinister schemes.
His power shall be mighty, but not by his own power;
He shall destroy fearfully,
And shall prosper and thrive;
He shall destroy the mighty, and also the holy people.**

**"Through his cunning
He shall cause deceit to prosper under his rule;
And he shall exalt himself in his heart.
He shall destroy many in their prosperity.
He shall even rise against the Prince of princes;
But he shall be broken without human means."**

Yet some of the description Gabriel interprets cannot *literally* apply to a human

being! The same is true of the descriptions of "the King of Babylon" in Isaiah 14 and "the King of Tyre" in Ezekiel 28. On the other hand, some parts of the descriptions of these two and "the Little Horn" cannot apply *literally* to a "covering cherub". Angels *cannot* die (cf. Luke 20:36), yet these three in some sense *will* die (see the contexts in Isaiah, Ezekiel and Daniel, especially Ezekiel 28:18-19).

This then is the answer: "the King of Tyre", "the King of Babylon" and this "Little Horn" all refer to the same human being -- the end-time political leader that Revelation 13 calls "the Beast", to whom "the Dragon" (that is, Satan the Devil: Revelation 12:9) gives "his power, his throne, and great authority" (13:3). But they also refer to the spiritual "power behind the throne" -- that is, Satan himself. If the human leader "exalts himself in his heart" beyond all rational levels, it can only be because Satan himself works through or even *possesses* him, and the human leader's figurative thinking actually reflects Satan's own literal intent. Thus Satan and the human leader may be described alternately in the same contexts.

Notice that just as "the King of Babylon" ascends to heaven to challenge the Most High God (and the "Little Horn" rises up against "the Prince of the host"), so Satan the Devil ascends to heaven to fight against God's servant Michael. (In Revelation 12:7 and Jude 9, we see that Satan and Michael are *peers* of a sort, confirming they are in the same class of being.) Likewise, as the "Little Horn" casts down "some of the host and some of the stars", so does Satan (Revelation 12:3).

Finally, Satan the Devil **"was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it"** (John 8:44). This could hardly be any other being than the one also called "the King of Babylon", "the King of Tyre" and "the Little Horn" in supernatural type.

Imagine it! A covering cherub -- from all indications, one of the three greatest created beings in the Universe -- became **"that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world"** (Revelation 12:9). As in his original rebellion with one-third of the angels (verse 3), so in the vision of a time yet future, **"he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him"** (verse 9).

Why did this happen?

Herbert W. Armstrong, in his latter years, spent much time exploring this question. He noted that God created angels long before He created man. Let us review the biblical "prehistory" Mr. Armstrong reconstructed, which I will state

in my own words.

Originally, Lucifer and those angels under him were given charge of the earth. From the day he was created, Lucifer was "perfect in all his ways" -- that is, perfect in moral character. Yet Lucifer's eventual infatuation with "materialistic" values -- beauty especially, but also wealth and trade -- corrupted his wisdom (Ezekiel 28:16-17; cf. Jeremiah 9:23-24). He and his followers became filled with *violence* instead of *love*, and chose the way of *competition* rather than *cooperation*, *selfishness* rather than *support*, and *rebellion* rather than submission to *direction*. This naturally led to their transgression of the *moral* principles (*justice, mercy and faith*) of "God's government" as those principles applied to them.

The rebellion of Lucifer and his followers (as Mr. Armstrong concluded) proved that only beings with God's own nature could be trusted never to sin (that is, to rebel against "God's government"). Thus, God proposed to "reproduce Himself through humanity" -- to spiritually beget full Sons of God who could share creation with the One who would become God the Father and the One who would become Jesus the Messiah.

Yet "**God, who cannot lie, promised before time began**" that eternal life would be offered to man (Titus 1:2). Before "time" from man's perspective began, a major catastrophe occurred in Creation. The earth literally "**had become chaotic and disordered**" (Genesis 1:2, author's translation). This *change of state* from a perfect creation must surely have been the result of Satan's sin -- a punishment from God that accompanied the former Lucifer's fall to earth. The phrase *tohu vabohu* ("chaotic and disordered") found in Genesis 1:2 refers to *destruction* as punishment for sin wherever else it is found (Jeremiah 4:23; Isaiah 34:1; cf. 2 Kings 21:13). Therefore, it must have been before God said, "**Let there be light**", thus beginning "time" from man's perspective (Genesis 1:3-5), that the promise of eternal life to man was made.

Now consider: One of the three covering cherubim that the Bible mentions had rebelled, and his angels with him. As Mr. Armstrong perceived, that meant only full Sons of God could be counted on never to sin for all eternity. Therefore, a means had to be worked out to "**bring many sons to glory**" (cf. Hebrews 2:10). For the rest of the angels to remain faithful, they had to be involved in the process. Thus the righteous angels "set their character" (to use Mr. Armstrong's term) and became "**ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation**" (Hebrews 1:14). As an added guarantee (it would seem), those angels who rebelled against "God's government" were permitted to bear the consequences of their rebellion, as a perpetual, *living* example to those who might think of following in their footsteps.

The symbolism of the Ark of the Covenant summarizes this whole marvelous plan, from the point of view of *government*. Mr. Armstrong rightly said that "God's government" must be restored over the whole earth, thanks to Lucifer's rebellion. No surprise, then, that the "covering cherubim" (representing Michael and Gabriel) are in a bowed posture on the Ark. In submission to God and each other through looking to God's justice, mercy and promises toward man, they have made their choice to love God, each other and humanity, in anticipation of the restoration of "God's government" on the earth. This is the choice that Lucifer and his angels rejected -- more's the pity for themselves (Revelation 20:10; "they" refers to the Devil and his angels in that passage).

Notice one more thing: Part of the very moral foundation of God's throne and "government" (as symbolized by the Ark) is the command to *keep the Sabbath day holy*. The Sabbath is a particularly "earthbound" institution, one tied to earthly timekeeping. It was created (as it were) by God resting after six days of renewing the earth after its catastrophic change of state. The fact that the Sabbath is included in the symbolism of the Ark indicates that the Ark represents a *covenant made at creation* -- at "the foundation of the world", when the promises of the sacrifice of the Lamb of God (cf. Revelation 13:8) and the calling of God's children out of this world (cf. Revelation 17:8) were made.

Thus the Sabbath points not only to God as *Creator*, but also to God as *Redeemer*. As it is written, **"There remains therefore a rest [sabbath rest -- in Greek, sabbatismos] for the people of God. For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His"** (Hebrews 4:9-10). When that "rest" finally comes which the Sabbath typifies -- the Millennium (Revelation 20:4-6) -- the LORD (in the person of the Messiah) and His saints shall establish His Kingdom and Government on earth (as numerous verses show).

Meanwhile, humanity is transgressing the "eternal covenant" represented by the Ark, and Creation suffers accordingly (Isaiah 24:4-5). This "eternal covenant" (as founded on the Ten Commandments) is the basis not only of the Old Covenant, but of the New Covenant as well (cf. Jeremiah 31:31-34).

When God finally brings this sinning world to account, He will show a sign in heaven: not the *cross of Messiah*, but the *Ark of the Covenant* (Revelation 11:19). The "word of the cross", as important as it is (cf. 1 Corinthians 1:18), points to but one part of the plan of salvation and of "God's government". The Ark of the Covenant points to the complete picture: how "God's government" was lost on earth, how it will be restored, and how humanity will be saved thereby as Sons of God. ###

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