

GOD'S CLAIM ON THE FIRSTBORN

Exo 13:2 Sanctify unto me all the firstborn, whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and of beast: it is mine.

In the ancient world, the firstborn child carried the weight of the parent's, and the nation's, expectations. Whatever made Egypt, for example, the great power that it was, was invested into the lives of the firstborn children whose responsibility it was to take the nation to greater heights. Understood in this light, we begin to appreciate God's threat to Pharaoh.

Exo 4:22 And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Thus saith the LORD, Israel is my son, even my firstborn:

Exo 4:23 And I say unto thee, Let my son go, that he may serve me: and if thou refuse to let him go, behold, I will slay thy son, even thy firstborn.

Why is God so zealous for the firstborn? He said 'it is mine'. God had a plan to establish a family and a nation. By killing the firstborn of Egypt, God was sending a very serious message to Pharaoh: 'Your firstborns will not wield a whip over my children anymore'. Paradoxically, it was Moses, the firstborn of a Hebrew family, who killed an Egyptian. This was a harbinger of the coming intervention of God. God was eager to claim the youth for himself and teach them his ways before the world and the enemy corrupted them. The future of a nation is only as strong as its youth. It was for this reason that the Babylonians captured the best of Judah's youth, took

them to Babylon and sought to indoctrinate them with their religion, sciences and tastes. The ground zero of the battle for the future is the souls of youth.

Dan 1:3 And the king spake unto Ashpenaz the master of his eunuchs, that he should bring certain of the children of Israel, and of the king's seed, and of the princes;

Dan 1:4 Children in whom was no blemish, but well favoured, and skilful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science, and such as had ability in them to stand in the king's palace, and whom they might teach the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans.

Witness the immense tragedy that follows when the adults sinned against the Almighty! Their children grew up as captives in the land of the sworn enemy. Clearly, Daniel and his companions would have desired to serve their God in Israel, and not lend their strength and gifts to the Babylonians. How could Daniel be happy when his beloved Jerusalem lay in ruins and he served the king who destroyed the holy city?

The doctrine of the firstborn points beautifully to the Lord Jesus Christ. We know that a lamb had entered every house in Israel and its blood on the doorposts was the reason the angel of death passed over, sparing the lives of all in the family. If the blood was absent, the firstborn in the family would die. The lamb which died to save the firstborn is Jesus Christ. This is why God declared that the firstborn of every family is his. However, God decided to take the tribe of Levi instead of the firstborn from every family as his inheritance.

Num 3:13 *Because all the firstborn are mine; for on the day that I smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt I hallowed unto me all the firstborn in Israel, both man and beast: mine shall they be: I am the LORD.*

Num 3:41 *And thou shalt take the Levites for me (I am the LORD) instead of all the firstborn among the children of Israel; and the cattle of the Levites instead of all the firstlings among the cattle of the children of Israel.*

The above reminds us that Jesus Christ redeemed us from death. He was the lamb that entered every house in Israel and delivered each family from the angel of death. Hence, he has the right to ask for the best that we have – the firstborn. All the young today are the firstborn. In fact, Jesus himself is called the firstborn.

Heb 12:23 *To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect.*

In summary, the firstborn represents the future. They carry on their shoulders the seed of the promises of God just as the children of Israel carried the bones of Joseph into the Land of Canaan. God has a special claim on the youth; he redeemed his people as the lamb. By definition, a lamb is young; God gave the best he had for us. Now he expects the youth to give their best to him. There is no sacrifice that can compare to giving one's youth to Jesus because youth is like a clean slate upon which God can write a beautiful story.

Isa 28:9 *Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts.*