

Title: **CHRIST THE FIRSTBORN**
Text: Exodus 4:22
Date: Sunday Evening — March 12, 2006
Tape # Exodus 15

Introduction:

In Exodus 4:22 the Lord God declares, “*Israel is my son, even my firstborn.*” Let’s read Exodus 4:21-23.

(Exodus 4:21-23) “And the LORD said unto Moses, When thou goest to return into Egypt, see that thou do all those wonders before Pharaoh, which I have put in thine hand: but I will harden his heart, that he shall not let the people go. (22) And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Thus saith the LORD, *Israel is my son, even my firstborn:* (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.*”

(Exodus 4:22) “And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Thus saith the LORD, *Israel is my son, even my firstborn.*”

Here is the authority and power by which a true prophet of God speaks. — “**Thus saith the LORD.**” This is the first time we find that expression in Holy Scripture. From this point on, throughout the Old Testament, inspired prophets frequently prefaced their declarations with these words. — “*Thus saith the LORD.*” But this is the first mention of the phrase. **With those words, Moses was commanded to declare to Pharaoh that he stood before him as God’s ambassador, with God’s message. God’s preachers are men who come with boldness, because they come with the authority of God to proclaim the Word of God.**

Here is the name by which God’s people are identified. — “**Israel.**” The name was **first given to the patriarch Jacob.** It was given to him because, when the Lord wrestled with him and prevailed over him by his mighty grace, he prevailed with the Lord (Gen. 32:28). Israel means, “**Prince with God.**” It conveys the idea of **one who has power with God.** Those who are conquered by Christ, over whom grace so prevails that they confess their sin (“*My name is Jacob.*” — 1 John 1:9), have power, authority with God and prevail. We are more than conquerors with Christ, in Christ, and by Christ.

Next, the Lord God declares, “**Israel is my son.**” With those words the God of Glory identifies his special relationship with the descendants of Jacob. **Specifically, he is here talking about Jacob’s physical descendants.** He chose Israel from among the nations of the earth and bestowed special privileges and blessings upon them (Deut. 7:6-8; 14:2). **But its broader, fuller reference is not to Jacob’s physical descendants, but to believing sinners, his spiritual descendants** (Rom. 9:4-8).

(Romans 9:1-8) "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, (2) That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. (3) For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh: (4) Who are Israelites; to whom *pertaineth* the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; (5) Whose *are* the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ *came*, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen. (6) Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they *are* not all Israel, which are of Israel: (7) Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, *are they* all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. (8) That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these *are* not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed."

And there is a definite reference here to our Lord Jesus Christ. When the Lord God said, "*Israel is my Son,*" he was not just talking about his covenant people, he was talking about the Lord Jesus Christ. We know that is the case because the Holy Spirit tells us so in Hosea 11:1 (compare Matt. 2:15).

(Hosea 11:1) "When Israel *was* a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt."

(Matthew 2:13-15) "And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him. (14) When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt: (15) And was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son."

Hosea 11:1 and Matthew 2:15 tell us that when God said, "*Israel is my son,*" he was not talking about the nation of Israel, or even his elect, alone. **He was talking about the Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior, that baby boy brought up from Egypt by Joseph. He was telling us that the man Christ Jesus is God the Son.**

This is the message God gave to Moses to declare to Pharaoh. Indeed, this is the message God gives to every man who is his ambassador among men, the message God's servants must proclaim to all men everywhere throughout the ages. — "*Israel is my Son, even my Firstborn.*" Israel typified Christ, who is here said to be God's Firstborn, that One man who is "*above all people that are upon the face of the earth*" (Deut. 7:6).

Tonight I want to show you what the Word of God has to say about Christ the Firstborn, as he was typified in Israel and throughout the Old Testament.

GOD'S PURPOSE

In all things, the triune God has purposed and determined that his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ have preeminence, as the God-man Mediator, the Savior of his people. Therefore he is declared to be "*the firstborn.*"

- The Holy Spirit tells us that God's purpose in saving his elect is that his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, "*might be the firstborn among many brethren*" (Rom. 8:28-29).
 - We read, in Colossians chapter one, that our Savior, "*is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn from the dead...the head of the body, the church: the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.*"
 - And in Hebrews 12:23 the church of God is called "*the church of the firstborn.*"
- The Lord God is determined that his Son, our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ be exalted and have all preeminence as his Firstborn (Ps. 89:27).

(Psalms 89:27) "Also I will make him *my* firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth."

OLD TESTAMENT TYPES

Throughout the Old Testament the preeminence of our Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior is typified as the first, the firstborn, the firstfruits, and the firstlings of the flock, and of the herd. Indeed, everything recorded in the Old Testament foreshadows him who is the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, and the Sum and the Substance of all things in the salvation of his people (Luke 24:25-27, 44). **There is nothing in the Book of God that does not speak of our all-glorious Christ, nothing that does not, in one way or another, set forth his supremacy, excellence, and glory as God our Savior.** Nowhere is this fact more evident than in those passages dealing with the firstborn.

The firstborn symbolized a father's might and strength, "*the excellency of dignity and the excellency of power*" (Gen. 49:3). In that awesome night, when the Lord God slew the firstborn of both man and beast among the Egyptians (Ex. 12:29), he claimed the firstborn of both man and beast in Israel as his own, requiring that they be sanctified unto him (Ex. 13:2).

(Exodus 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.*"

THE DIFFERENCE

It was God himself, and God alone, who put a difference between the firstborn in Egypt and the firstborn in Israel on that night — (A Great Gulf Fixed). We are expressly taught by the Spirit of God that everything on that passover night was typical of Christ, who as "*our Passover was sacrificed for us*" (1 Cor. 5:7). **The sprinkling of the blood of the lamb of the first year, without blemish, and without spot, on the houses of the Israelites, was the one thing that put a difference between the first-born of Israel**

and the first-born of Egypt. The blood of the lamb alone saved them from destruction. This we are plainly told in Exodus 11:7.

(Exodus 11:7) "But against any of the children of Israel shall not a dog move his tongue, against man or beast: that ye may know how that the LORD doth put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel."

As it was on that great night of judgment and mercy, so the year of Christ's redeemed is both the day of vengeance and the day of salvation (Isa. 63:3-5).

(Isaiah 63:3-5) "I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people *there was* none with me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment. (4) For the day of vengeance *is* in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come. (5) And I looked, and *there was* none to help; and I wondered that *there was* none to uphold: therefore mine own arm brought salvation unto me; and my fury, it upheld me."

When the Son of God died as our Substitute upon the cursed tree, he bore all the vengeance of God's holy wrath for us, to the full satisfaction of divine justice; and obtained eternal redemption and salvation for us (Heb. 9:12). At the same time, he declares, "*the day of vengeance is in my heart.*" Yet, there is a day, appointed and fixed by him, when our God will execute judgment upon his enemies, as well as of mercy upon his people.

THE BIRTHRIGHT

The birthright belonged to the firstborn among the children of Israel, and gave him preeminence in the family. To him belonged **the right of priesthood** (Num. 3:12-13, 40-45; 8:15-18).

(Numbers 3:12-13) "And I, behold, I have taken the Levites from among the children of Israel instead of all the firstborn that openeth the matrix among the children of Israel: therefore the Levites shall be mine; (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."

(Numbers 3:40-45) "And the LORD said unto Moses, Number all the firstborn of the males of the children of Israel from a month old and upward, and take the number of their names. (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. (42) And Moses numbered, as the LORD commanded him, all the firstborn among the children of Israel. (43) And all the firstborn males by the number of names, from a month old and upward, of those that were numbered of them,

were twenty and two thousand two hundred and threescore and thirteen. (44) And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, (45) Take the Levites instead of all the firstborn among the children of Israel, and the cattle of the Levites instead of their cattle; and the Levites shall be mine: I *am* the LORD.”

(Numbers 8:15-18) “And after that shall the Levites go in to do the service of the tabernacle of the congregation: and thou shalt cleanse them, and offer them *for* an offering. (16) For they *are* wholly given unto me from among the children of Israel; instead of such as open every womb, *even instead of* the firstborn of all the children of Israel, have I taken them unto me. (17) For all the firstborn of the children of Israel *are* mine, *both* man and beast: on the day that I smote every firstborn in the land of Egypt I sanctified them for myself. (18) And I have taken the Levites for all the firstborn of the children of Israel.”

The firstborn was given a double portion among his brethren (Deu. 21:17). — (*Elisha’s Desire*).

(Deuteronomy 21:17) “But he shall acknowledge the son of the hated *for* the firstborn, by giving him a double portion of all that he hath: for he *is* the beginning of his strength; the right of the firstborn *is* his.”

And to the firstborn it was promised, “*thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise: thy hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies; thy father’s children shall bow down before thee*” (Gen. 49:8). All these Old Testament declarations were intended to show forth the majesty of Christ, as “*the firstborn among many brethren.*” All the offerings required of God for every male that opened the womb pointed to our Lord Jesus (Ex. 13:2; 34:19-20; Lev. 12:6; Luke 2:21-24).

(Exodus 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.”

(Exodus 34:19-20) “All that openeth the matrix *is* mine; and every firstling among thy cattle, *whether* ox or sheep, *that is male.* (20) But the firstling of an ass thou shalt redeem with a lamb: and if thou redeem *him* not, then shalt thou break his neck. All the firstborn of thy sons thou shalt redeem. And none shall appear before me empty.”

(Leviticus 12:6) “And when the days of her purifying are fulfilled, for a son, or for a daughter, she shall bring a lamb of the first year for a burnt offering, and a young pigeon, or a turtledove, for a sin offering, unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, unto the priest.”

(Luke 2:21-24) “And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, his name was called JESUS, which was so named of the angel before he was conceived in the womb. (22) And when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they brought him to

Jerusalem, to present *him* to the Lord; (23) **(As it is written in the law of the Lord, Every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord;)** (24) And to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said in the law of the Lord, A pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons.”

OPENS THE WOMB

Robert Hawker suggested that the Scriptures, when speaking of “*the firstborn that openeth the womb,*” must have been **prophetic of the virgin birth** of our Savior. “For strictly and properly speaking, none but the Lord Jesus ever did open the womb...In every other instance, from the creation of the world, as anatomists well know, it is accomplished at the time of conception.”

Our blessed Savior, “*the firstborn,*” was conceived in Mary’s virgin womb by the overshadowing power of God the Holy Spirit. **He opened Mary’s virgin womb when he came forth from it to accomplish our redemption.**

Thus, throughout the Levitical dispensation, the firstborn of man and beast directed the eye of faith to him whom the triune God appointed to have everlasting preeminence as “*the firstborn.*” In all things, it is, was, and forever shall be the will of the eternal God, that Christ have preeminence in all things as the God-man, our Mediator and Redeemer.

FIRSTBORN REDEEMED

Yet, the law of God required redemption of the first-born among the children of Israel (Num. 18:15-16).

(Numbers 18:15-16) “Every thing that openeth the matrix in all flesh, which they bring unto the LORD, *whether it be* of men or beasts, shall be thine: nevertheless the firstborn of man shalt thou surely redeem, and the firstling of unclean beasts shalt thou redeem. (16) And those that are to be redeemed from a month old shalt thou redeem, according to thine estimation, for the money of five shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary, which *is* twenty gerahs.”

The firstborn was brought to the priest, along with “*five shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary.*” The priest received the child in the name of the Lord as his own. Then the priest returned the child to the care of its parents; but it belonged to the Lord.

All the firstborn had to be redeemed. And we who are called “*the church of the firstborn,*” had to be redeemed to our God by the blood of Christ, either redeemed or killed.

However, **the firstborn of the Levites was not redeemed** (Num. 1:47-48; 3:12-13).

(Numbers 1:47-48) “But the Levites after the tribe of their fathers were not numbered among them. (48) For the LORD had spoken unto Moses, saying,”

(Numbers 3:12-13) “And I, behold, **I have taken the Levites from among the children of Israel instead of all the firstborn** that openeth the matrix among the children of Israel: therefore the Levites shall be mine; (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.”

Why was this exemption made? Why did God require that the firstborn of the Levites not be redeemed? Because the Levites represented our Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ; and he, who is our Redeemer did not need to be redeemed.

Though our Savior came, as a man, from the tribe of Judah, the Levites, being chosen as the priestly tribe, portrayed the whole election of grace as a people holy and accepted in the Beloved, “*a kingdom of priests*” and “*a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people,*” redeemed and called in Christ (Ex. 19:6; 1 Pet. 2:9). And the whole Levitical priesthood typified Christ our Priest and Mediator, whom God took in the stead of his firstborn ones. He who is the Redeemer did not need to be redeemed.

FULFILLED IN CHRIST

The law of God distinguished a man’s firstborn in all these ways. While these distinctions were to be observed ceremonially throughout the Mosaic dispensation, they are all gloriously accomplished in Christ, the Firstborn. Let me show you.

1. **The firstborn was considered “the beginning of his [father’s] strength”** (Deut. 21:17; Gen. 49:3; Psalm 78:51).

(Genesis 49:3) “Reuben, thou *art* my firstborn, my might, and the beginning of my strength, the excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power:”

(Psalms 78:51) “And smote all the firstborn in Egypt; the chief of *their* strength in the tabernacles of Ham:”

The firstborn was **particularly near and dear to his father**. So the Lord Jesus Christ, as the God-man Mediator, because of his accomplishments as the Firstborn, is precious in God’s sight and beloved of the Father (John 10:17).

(John 10:17) “Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again.”

(Proverbs 8:22) “The LORD possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old.”

(Proverbs 8:30) “Then I was by him, as one brought up *with him*: and I was daily *his* delight, rejoicing always before him;”

(Matthew 3:17) “And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

(Hebrews 1:9) “Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, *even thy* God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.”

2. **The firstborn was consecrated to the service of God** (Ex. 13:1-2, 12).

(Exodus 13:1-2) “And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, (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.”

(Exodus 13:12) “That thou shalt set apart unto the LORD all that openeth the matrix, and every firstling that cometh of a beast which thou hast; the males *shall* be the LORD’S.”

It was because they were consecrated to God that the firstborn had to be redeemed (Ex. 13:13; 34:20).

(Exodus 13:13) “And every firstling of an ass thou shalt redeem with a lamb; and if thou wilt not redeem it, then thou shalt break his neck: and all the firstborn of man among thy children shalt thou redeem.”

(Exodus 34:20) “But the firstling of an ass thou shalt redeem with a lamb: and if thou redeem *him* not, then shalt thou break his neck. All the firstborn of thy sons thou shalt redeem. And none shall appear before me empty.” — WITHOUT A SACRIFICE! — WITHOUT ATONEMENT!

Israel was “*redeemed from the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh*” because they were, typically, Jehovah’s firstborn (Deut. 7:8; Ex. 15:13) and were consecrated to the service of God (Ex. 19:1-6; Rom. 9:4).

The priestly duties of the firstborn were transferred to the Levites (who ceremonially and typically became the tribe of the firstborn) in Numbers 3. And all the Levitical priesthood typified our Savior’s priesthood (Hebrews 8-10), whose priesthood is the priesthood of God’s Firstborn.

3. **The firstborn received a double portion of his father’s estate** (Deut. 21:17; 2 Kings 2:9).

All nations and people receive a goodly portion from our Father, in that he bestows physical blessings upon them (Matt. 5:45). But God’s Israel has been doubly blessed,

with not only physical blessings but also with “*all spiritual blessings*” in Christ (Eph. 1:3). We have received of the Lord’s hand double for all our sins (Isa. 40:2). And our Lord Jesus Christ, the Firstborn, is gloriously blessed. The Father has given all things to the Son, “*whom he has appointed heir of all things*” (Heb. 1:2). **Now, watch this** — We are heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ (Rom. 8:17-18).

(Romans 8:17-18) “And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with *him*, that we may be also glorified together. (18) For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time *are* not worthy *to be compared* with the glory which shall be revealed in us.”

4. **The firstborn could never be deprived of his birthright** (Deut. 21:15-17).

(Deuteronomy 21:15-17) “If a man have two wives, one beloved, and another hated, and they have born him children, *both* the beloved and the hated; and *if* the firstborn son be hers that was hated: (16) Then it shall be, when he maketh his sons to inherit *that* which he hath, *that* he may not make the son of the beloved firstborn before the son of the hated, *which is indeed* the firstborn: (17) But he shall acknowledge the son of the hated *for* the firstborn, by giving him a double portion of all that he hath: for he *is* the beginning of his strength; the right of the firstborn *is* his.”

- **Christ the firstborn will never be deprived of His birthright** (Psa. 2:8; 1 Cor. 15:24-28; Rev. 11:15).

(Psalms 2:8) “Ask of me, and I shall give *thee* the heathen *for* thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth *for* thy possession.”

(1 Corinthians 15:24-28) “Then *cometh* the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. (25) For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. (26) The last enemy *that* shall be destroyed *is* death. (27) For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith all things are put under *him*, *it is* manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him. (28) And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.”

(Revelation 11:15) “And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become *the kingdoms* of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.”

- **And God’s Israel, the firstborn nation of his elect** (Rom. 11:1-5), **the church of the firstborn, who are grafted into and made one with Christ** (Rom. 11:13-26), **will never be deprived of its birthright** (Ex. 19:5-16 & 1 Peter 2:9-10).

5. **The firstborn succeeded his father as head of the family** (2 Chron. 21:3). Although the Lord our God, by reason of his eternality, will never be succeeded, he nevertheless has appointed Christ his Son, his Firstborn to be head of the nations, *“a special treasure above all the people that are upon the face of the earth”* (Deut. 7:6). He has appointed Christ to be Head over his family the church (Eph. 3:14-22; 3:15; 5:23), and the Head over *“every man”* (1 Cor. 11:3), the Head over *“all principality and power”* (Col. 2:10), the Head over *“all creation”* (Col. 1:15), even the Head over *“all things”* forever and ever, to the praise of his glory (Eph. 1:22).

“Christ,” the Firstborn *“is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth”* (Rom. 10:4). Oh, may God graft you into Christ, his Firstborn, giving you faith in him, that you may be counted his firstborn, with Israel his Son, his Firstborn!

(Romans 10:1-13) “Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. (2) For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. (3) For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. (4) For Christ *is* the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. (5) For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth those things shall live by them. (6) But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down *from above*;) (7) Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) (8) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, *even* in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; (9) That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. (10) For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. (11) For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. (12) For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. (13) For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

As God destroyed Egypt and many nations since for not honoring His Firstborn, so he will destroy all who refuse to honor his Son, his Firstborn, the Lord Jesus Christ. Honor him, by trusting him, even as the Father has trusted him with all things from eternity, and God will honor you with everlasting life before him. If you refuse to trust him, God will destroy you with everlasting destruction in hell.

Amen.