

June 11th, 2023

The Threat Against the Firstborn

Exodus 11

A conversation in the darkness

Presumably this conversation happens in the thick darkness that was still on Egypt from 9th plague. At the end of chapter 10 Pharaoh summoned Moses to negotiate for relief. There were voices in the room, but they couldn't see each other. After Moses refuses to negotiate with Pharaoh, Pharaoh says in v.28 "Get away from me; take care never to see my face again, for on the day you see my face you shall die." ²⁹Moses said, "As you say! I will not see your face again." But Moses did not yet leave. We know this because, it's not until 11:8 that we read that "...he went out from Pharaoh in hot anger." Here at the beginning of chapter 11, in the darkness of that room—another Voice speaks—the LORD Himself in v.1-2, threatening the last plague upon Egypt and declaring that afterwards Pharaoh will drive away Israel out of the land, and the Egyptians will finance their new nation by giving them their silver and gold.

The threat

Now whether Pharaoh and his court heard Yahweh's voice, I don't know. But Moses picks back up his conversation with Pharaoh in v.4, and threatens Egypt with the last and most terrifying plague: "Thus says the LORD: About midnight I will go out in the midst of Egypt, and every firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die..." Now mind you *this is only the threat of the 10th plague*, not the plague itself. The plague doesn't occur until 12:29. So dreadful is this last plague that it takes nearly two chapters to describe it before it actually occurs.

The Big Idea...

The threat against the firstborn is God's most terrifying and ancient judgment toward any people

★ Our Doctrine

★ Our Duty

★ Our Delight

I. Our Doctrine

Israel's last night in bondage

Even though much space is dedicated to this last plague, it all happens very quickly. Please look at v.4 '*About midnight* I will go out in the midst of Egypt...' Death would come in the middle of the night, and before the Egyptians finished burying their dead the next day, Israel left Egypt. Numbers 33:3-4 says "On the day after the Passover, the people of Israel went out triumphantly in the sight of all the Egyptians, ⁴while the Egyptians were burying all their firstborn..." This was Israel's last night in bondage.

The scope of the 10th plague

v.5 "...and every firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sits on his throne, even to the firstborn of the slave girl who is behind the handmill, and all the firstborn of the cattle." This idea of "firstborn" is absolutely prominent starting here in ch.II running through ch.I3 being

mentioned 17 times. Here the scope of this threat is staggering. From Egypt's most powerful man (Pharaoh) to the most lowly Egyptian (the slave girl grinding grain) to every beast of the field (cattle being a generic term)—all firstborns of man or beast, wherever they were in Egypt *shall die*.

Focus on the firstborn

Now the Hebrew word for “firstborn” בְּכוֹרָה (bek-ore’) refers to the first born male. It’s never used directly in Scripture to refer to a firstborn female. It’s not that girls could not be born first, they obviously can and are. But the threat is not against who was chronologically born first. Rather this threat is against the one child on whom the future of the family depends. In Scripture that is always the firstborn son. Ask yourself, in the genealogies we find in Scripture, which child is always mentioned first? The first born son.

- Genesis 35:22-23 “Now the sons of Jacob were twelve. ²³The sons of Leah: *Reuben (Jacob's firstborn)*, Simeon, Levi,” etc.
- Genesis 36:15 “These are the chiefs of the sons of Esau. The sons of Eliphaz *the firstborn of Esau*”
- We saw this in our Scripture reading from Genesis 38. v.6-7 “And Judah took a wife for *Er his firstborn*, and her name was Tamar. ⁷But Er, *Judah's firstborn*, was wicked in the sight of the LORD, and the LORD put him to death.”

Search it out yourselves, look up all the genealogies: the firstborn son is always distinguished from all the rest, he has a position of prominence. This is the pattern of all Scripture.

A Biblical Theology of “firstborn”

So *why* does the Bible focus on firstborn son? Because the firstborn son is *the new patriarch of the next generation. He is the representative head.* Adam was the firstborn of the old world, and as such he represented the entire human race. Abraham was the ‘firstborn’ of the nation of Israel and as such he was the root of that entire nation.¹ Now sometimes this status can be transferred from one son to another like in the case of Jacob and Esau.² Esau, naturally speaking should have had the birthright of the firstborn, but God told Rebekah that their roles would be reversed that “the older shall serve the younger” (Genesis 25:23). And Esau in fact sold his birthright to Jacob (v.33) and later Isaac gave the firstborn blessing to Jacob and not Esau (Genesis 27:29). So the firstborn status isn’t about chronology—who came first?—per se. The firstborn status was about which son was charged with being the torcher bearer for the next generation. That’s *why* the firstborn was given a double portion of his father’s inheritance. Deuteronomy 21:16-17 “...on the day when he assigns his possessions as an inheritance to his sons...he shall acknowledge the firstborn...*by giving him a double portion of all that he has.*” The firstborn was given a double portion because “the care of [his] parents and family leadership”³ fell to him. Additionally, the firstborn was first in line to be the kinsmen redeemer (Ruth

¹ compare Romans 11:1 with 11:16

² This is also true of David the youngest in his family who became the firstborn (Psalm 89:20-27) and Ephraim who was younger than Manasseh but made the firstborn (Genesis 41:51-52 and Jeremiah 31:9).

³ Rousas John Rushdoony, *The Institutes of Biblical Law, Vol. 2: Law and Society*, (Vallecito, CA.,: Ross House Books, 4th Printing 2010), pg. 177

3:12⁴) and the first in line to be king in royal families (2 Chronicles 21:3). The firstborn was given double the inheritance because he bore double the responsibility.⁵

The firstfruits of Israel's strength

Let's consider two more places. Turn with me to Genesis 49:3. This is when Jacob blessed his sons. Look what he says to Reuben *his firstborn*. "Reuben, you are my firstborn, my might, and the firstfruits of my strength, preeminent in dignity and preeminent in power." In v.4 Jacob tells him he will not have the preeminence because he slept with one of Jacob's concubines. But don't miss the point. Reuben—the firstborn—was blessed with *the firstfruits of his strength*." This is a metaphor. *Firstfruits* in Scripture represents the first and best portion that God required from Israel at the harvest.⁶ Jacob was saying that Reuben—being the firstfruits—held a position of honor and preeminence above his brothers. The expectation would have been (had he not lost it) that the family legacy would be extended through him and his descendants.

The firstfruits of Egypt's strength

Now turn with me to Psalm 78:51. "He [the LORD] struck down every firstborn in Egypt, *the firstfruits of their strength* in the tents of Ham."⁷ You see it wasn't merely that the Egyptians were losing a child, they were losing their family legacy. We know from else where that this was to be under the curse of

⁴ compare with Deuteronomy 25:5-10. There were some relatives first in line to be the kinsman redeemer, presumably the firstborn would have the first position.

⁵ Fathers gave their firstborn the greater inheritance. Inheritance meant succession. Succession meant the family had a future.

⁶ Deuteronomy 26:1-4

⁷ Also cf. Psalm 105:36

God. Joshua cursed the man who would rebuild Jericho with the death of his firstborn son. Joshua 6:26 “Joshua laid an oath on them at that time, saying, “Cursed before the LORD be the man who rises up and rebuilds this city, Jericho. *“At the cost of his firstborn shall he lay its foundation...”*”⁸ Egypt lost their firstborn because they were under the curse of God.

The greatest cry in Egypt

Let’s turn back to Exodus 11. Please look at v.6 “There shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as there has never been, nor ever will be again.” I can’t think of any greater pain than losing a child.⁹ The cry in Egypt would be great. But it wasn’t just a child they lost. Remember that Egyptians did not have large families (Exodus 1:7-9). They were not obeying the cultural mandate—to be fruitful and multiply—that’s why they were so threatened by Israel population growth. The death of the firstborn for some of these families meant not only the sorrow of losing a child, but it meant their families were cut off forever. It meant that Pharaoh’s son would not inherit the kingdom, that the slave girl would not have a son to take care of her, that even the beasts would lose their strongest and most ablest offspring. The cry in Egypt was greater than the pain of any previous plague, and greater than any sorrow that nation has ever experienced down to this present day. The status of the firstborn is the most valuable asset a family (or nation) has and to lose it is to be brought to ruin.

⁸ This curse was fulfilled in 1 Kings 16:34

⁹ “Nothing on earth is more precious to us than our children.” *The Reformation Heritage KJV Study Bible*, (Grand Rapids, MI.,: Heritage Reformation Books, 2014), pg. 105

Our doctrine: the threat against the firstborn a terrifying judgment

That brings us to **our doctrine:** *The threat against the firstborn is God's most terrifying and ancient judgment toward any people.* Consider three examples from Genesis of the despair of losing one's firstborn status.

Example #1: Cain

Cain was the firstborn of Adam and Eve. When he murdered Abel, how did God punish him? He essentially revoked his firstborn status. He would not be the one who would carry on his father's legacy. That would fall to Seth (Genesis 5:3). God told Cain in Genesis 4:11-12 "And now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. ¹²When you work the ground, it shall no longer yield to you its strength. You shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth." How did Cain respond to this revoking of his firstborn rights? v.13 *"My punishment is greater than I can bear."*

Example #2: Esau

Esau was the firstborn of Isaac and Rebekah. When Jacob swindled Esau out of his firstborn blessing from his father, Genesis 27:38 says "Esau said to his father, "Have you but one blessing, my father? Bless me, even me also, O my father." *And Esau lifted up his voice and wept.*" Do you know how he comforted himself over this loss? He planned Jacob's murder. Rebekah tells Jacob in v.42 "Behold, your brother Esau comforts himself about you by planning to kill you."

Example #3: Reuben

Reuben was the firstborn of Jacob. He believed that if he could just rescue Joseph from his brothers, that he could regain his firstborn rights. But Genesis

37:29 says When Reuben returned to the pit and saw that Joseph was not in the pit, he tore his clothes ³⁰ and returned to his brothers and said, “The boy is gone, and I, where shall I go?” He cared more about restoring His firstborn status than rescuing Joseph. His one concern was “*where shall I go?*”

Summa Theologica

Now, we modern Christians may not understand this. But in Scripture, as one author puts it “The rites of the firstborn...set forth the priority of life...The firstborn represents all.”¹⁰ The firstborn status represented the foundation of Egypt’s entire society. In the previous 9 plagues, God destroyed the house, now He threatens their foundation. The threat against the firstborn, meant that some families lines would cease forever to exist. As one author put it: “When God struck down the firstborn of Egypt in the tenth plague, He thereby destroyed the [inheritance] of apostate man.”¹¹ That’s **our doctrine**: *The threat against the firstborn is God's most terrifying and ancient judgment toward any people.*

II. Our Duty

Informatory

Though there were many Egyptians that left with Israel, Egypt *generally speaking* represents the world, or the apostate man. So our **first duty** is to *ask: what happens to the inheritance of the apostate?* God gives it to His people. That is precisely what is happening in v.2-3. Look there with me. God says to Moses

¹⁰ Rousas John Rushdoony, *Commentaries on the Pentateuch: Exodus*, Vallecito, CA.,: Ross House Books, 2004), pg. 170-171

¹¹ Rushdoony, Vol. 2, pg. 180

“Speak now in the hearing of the people, that they ask, every man of his neighbor and every woman of her neighbor, for silver and gold jewelry.”³ And the LORD gave the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians.” Isn’t that something? The death of the firstborn and the plundering of the Egyptians is connected in our passage.¹²

Who would have inherited this silver and gold? The firstborn of Egypt. But Israel receives it. Why? *Because Israel is the firstborn of God.*

Look back to Exodus 4:22. “Then you shall say to Pharaoh, ‘Thus says the LORD, *Israel is my firstborn son...*’” Israel had the right of the firstborn. Thus God caused the hearts of the Egyptians to give the inheritance of their firstborn¹³—over to Israel—the firstborn of God. Dear congregation, this is the story of history. One author says it well:

¹² No doubt there were several reasons for Israel receiving this plunder. This plundering 1) was a restitution payment for all their years of slavery. 2) would provide these slaves the currency necessary to build a nation--to exercise dominion over the earth. 3) It would provide them with the silver and gold needed to build all the cultic materials of the tabernacle. Exodus 38:24-25. But the larger point is that “God has placed value upon precious metals and stones, and He has built in us an attraction for them; but He has also made it clear that these things cannot be permanently owned or enjoyed apart from fellowship with Him. The ungodly are allowed to mine for these materials, and to own them for a time, in order that their wealth may ultimately be possessed by the restored people of God: “Though he [the wicked man] piles up silver like dust, And prepares garments as plentiful as the clay; He may prepare it, But the just shall wear it, And the innocent will divide the silver. (Job 27:16-17) “To the sinner He has given the task of gathering and collecting so that He may give to one who is good in God's sight” (Ecclesiastes 2:26). “He who increases his wealth by usury and extortion, gathers it for him who will be kind to the poor” (Proverbs 28:8). Indeed, there is a basic principle that is always at work throughout history: “The wealth of the sinner is stored up for the righteous” (Proverbs 13:22), “for evildoers will be cut off, but those who wait on the LORD will inherit the earth” (Psalms 37:9). A God-fearing nation will be blessed with abundance, while apostate nations will eventually lose their resources, as God inflicts the Curse upon rebellious people and their culture.” David Chilton, *Paradise Restored: A Biblical Theology of Dominion*, (Horn Lake, MS.,: Dominion Press, 2007), pg. 35

¹³ —those who were going to die

“In every age, God strikes at the power and the firstborn of the world to deliver His chosen sons¹⁴...God’s purpose in history works towards the dispossession of false sons who seized the earth after the Fall, and its repossession and succession in the hands of his sons of grace.”¹⁵

That’s what Proverbs 13:22 says “The sinner's wealth is laid up for the righteous.” This is *how* the meek inherit the earth (Matthew 5:5). God is still doing what He did in days of old. He’s *still* striking at the firstborn of this world and giving it to His people. Don’t you see? The culture of death is God’s judgment. What is abortion and homosexuality and transgenderism but our own culture’s assault against the ‘firstborn’? Why is the current birth rate below the number required to sustain a society in the entire western world?¹⁶ What are all these things? God’s judgment against the firstborn of this rebellious world. It’s not the church that is being disinherited. It’s the new Egypt. Do you realize that the Church, like Israel of old is called *the firstborn*? Hebrews 12:23 calls us “the church of *the firstborn* who are enrolled in heaven.”¹⁷ God’s people have *firstborn status* over the earth. We are the heirs of the world (Romans 4:13). What’s happening in the world right now is an echo of the tenth plague. God is dispossessing apostate man of their inheritance, and giving the plunder over to God’s people. It may feel dark, like the darkness in the that room when Moses spoke with Pharaoh. But that is because the morning has not dawned yet. Wait on the LORD. Look to

¹⁴ Rushdoony, Vol. 2, pg. 172

¹⁵ *Ibid*, pg. 175

¹⁶ <https://www.nbcnews.com/health/womens-health/americans-aren-t-making-enough-babies-replace-ourselves-n956931>

¹⁷ NASB

how God has dealt with Old Egypt. He will certainly do the same with the New Egypt.¹⁸

Experimental/Elenctic Use

Our **second duty** is to *examine* ourselves. Dear congregation, do you know what makes you *different* than the New Egyptians? How did you come to be saved, while others are perishing? There would be an exceeding great cry in Egypt when the angel of death visited. But, look at v.7 “But not a dog shall growl against any of the people of Israel, either man or beast, that you may know that the Lord makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel.” Not a dog shall growl. This is an idiom, it means a complete absence of opposition.¹⁹ This was to show, end of v.7, *that you may know that the LORD makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel.* A distinction means that God treated Israel differently than Egypt. He didn’t kill one Hebrew firstborn.²⁰ This is shocking because Israel acted no differently than Egypt.

The goat demon worshippers who didn’t want to be saved

Some people have the notion that God saves good people. That doesn’t work here. Turn to Leviticus 17:7. Here the Israelites are in the wilderness post-Egypt and God is telling them how they must worship now that they are free. “So they shall *no more sacrifice their sacrifices to goat demons*, after whom they

¹⁸ "When God struck down the firstborn of Egypt in the tenth plague, He thereby destroyed the [inheritance] of apostate man. By declaring Israel to be His firstborn, to be delivered from Egypt, He affirmed the [inheritance] of covenant man to the earth." Rushdoony, Vol. 2, pg. 180

¹⁹ Egypt was be wailing, but not the slightest agitation—not a dog growling—would come against Israel. It is probably also a slight against the Egyptian god Anubis. He was the god of the dead. He had canine features—He was the dog god—a god with a dog’s head. And this dog god of the dead had no power against Israel.

²⁰ Only He did. But that would come much later.

whore.” Notice those two words “no more”—meaning they had previously worshipped goat demons in Egypt.²¹ While Yahweh was making His plans to kill the Egyptian’s firstborn and spare the Israelites, His people were given over to the worship of goat demons.²² And they didn’t want to be saved, at least not in the way that God wanted. Turn to Exodus 14:11-12. This is when they were at the Red Sea in danger from Pharaoh chasing after them with his army. v.11 “They said to Moses, “Is it because there are no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? What have you done to us in bringing us out of Egypt? *Is not this what we said to you in Egypt: ‘Leave us alone that we may serve the Egyptians?’*”²³ Why would God treat these goat demon worshipping rebels in Israel any different than the goat-demon worshipping rebels in Egypt? Did they have better breath? Don’t you see, this illustrates the doctrine of God’s election. “I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.” ¹⁶So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy” (Romans 9:15-16).

What makes you different from the new Egyptians?

So back to my question: Dear Christian what makes you *different* than the New Egyptians? How did you come to be saved, while others are perishing?

²¹ Joshua says the same thing in Joshua 24:14 “Put away the gods that your fathers served...in Egypt, and serve the LORD.” Ezekiel 20:6-9 tells us that they refused to quit worshipping these demon gods.

²² “But” you might say, “they changed their tune, they called on the LORD.” Did they? Let’s revisit Exodus 2:23 together. I missed this the first time when I preached it. It says “During those many days the king of Egypt died, and the people of Israel groaned because of their slavery and cried out for help. *Their cry for rescue from slavery came up to God.*” They did cry out for help. And God did ‘hear’ their cry. But the text doesn’t say “they cried out to God.” The text says “God remembered His covenant”—that’s why He acted, not because they made the first step towards Him. See A.W. Pink, Gleanings in Exodus, pg. 135-136, Source: <https://www.monergism.com/thethreshold/sdg/pink/Gleanings%20In%20Exodus%20-%20Arthur%20W.%20Pink.pdf> accessed June 10, 2023. “But, didn’t they believe and worship the LORD in 4:31?” This was shown to be duplicitous and insincere in 5:20 and 6:9.

²³ They continue to complain about God once they are free Exodus 15:24; 16:2 et. al., and even try to revolt and go back to Egypt in Numbers 14:4

This gets to the heart of what it means to be saved by grace. You were just like the New Egyptians. You worshipped goat demons. I don't mean literally. I mean like Israel, you worshipped the gods of this world. You worshipped yourself. You didn't want God. You didn't want His Bible, you didn't want His law, you didn't want His gospel. You would have been perfectly content to stay in the prison of your own sin. Yes, your sin made you miserable, but you would have never parted with it if it meant you had to worship the LORD. John 3:19 "... this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, *and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil.*" But then something happened. God made a distinction between you and the world. And you were born again. And for the first time you believed the Lord, and now you love Him, and want to live for Him. Dear friend that is what saving grace is. It is not something you asked for. You didn't make yourself a Christian. Grace is un-owed, undeserved, un-merited. "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy." And God doesn't do that with everybody. And He wants you to see that.

"But I'm Jacob?"

Ah, but you might say "But I was raised as a covenant child, in a covenant home, in the Church, with Christian friends and a Christian education, I never dabbled in Egypt." Ok fine. So you are a Jacob. What about Esau? They were brothers, raised in the same covenant home. And yet God says "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated" (Romans 9:13). Grace doesn't flow through blood lines. John 1:12-13 "But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, ¹³ who were born, *not of blood* nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God." Salvation doesn't come because you were raised in the right home, or because you exercised your 'free will.' You are saved *only* because it was God's good pleasure to save you. You looked and

smelled and acted like an Egyptian but God chose to have mercy upon you. “This one, I choose to love this one! I’ll have pity and compassion on him, on her, on this child, on that child. They belong to Me.” God showed a distinction in Israel, not because of anything in Israel. Loved ones, God saved you, not because of anything that is in you, but entirely because of what is in Him.

III. Our Delight

Celebratory Use

Do you realize this is not the first time God threatened the death of the firstborn? In fact, the most ancient threat in the Bible is a threat against a Firstborn Son. It’s the most ancient story. Adam and Eve betrayed God by aligning themselves with the serpent—the original goat demon—in the garden. And by their sin, death came into the world. *But God* did something wonderful, something unthinkable. He threatened the life of His own Firstborn Son so they could be saved. He promised that the Seed of the Woman—the firstborn Son of the virgin Mary²⁴—would crush the serpent’s head. But this would cost Him His life.²⁵ Don’t you see dear friends? God wasn’t letting the Hebrews off the hook. He had already threatened their Firstborn Son. The threat against the Lord Jesus Christ—the Firstborn Son of God²⁶—is what saved them and their children. And dear congregation, this ancient threat against God’s Firstborn Son is how we are saved

²⁴ Matthew 1:25; Luke 2:7

²⁵ Genesis 3:15

²⁶ Psalm 2:7; Hebrews 1:6

John 3:16 “For God so loved the world, that he gave *his only Son*, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

Christ the Firstborn

All over the NT our Savior Jesus is called the Firstborn.

Hebrews 1:6 “And again, when he brings *the firstborn into the world*, he says, “Let all God's angels worship him.”

Colossians 1:15 “He is the image of the invisible God, *the firstborn of all creation*.”²⁷

Colossians 1:18 “He is the beginning, *the firstborn from the dead*, that in everything he might be preeminent.”

Romans 8:29 “For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be *the firstborn among many brothers*.”

What about the cults?

The NT over and over again refers to Jesus as the Firstborn, and this has caused cults to claim that Jesus was a created being. That He is not equal with God, but God's first created being—His firstborn. But as we've seen, the term *firstborn* in Scripture doesn't *primarily* refer to birth. Girls were not counted as the firstborn even if they were born first because they would not carry on the family line. Furthermore, the firstborn status could be transferred from the

²⁷ Adam was the firstborn of the old creation. Christ is the firstborn of the new creation.

oldest male son to younger male sons. First born status is not *primarily* about birth.

The ultimate status

Rather, to be the Firstborn means to be the Patriarch, the Head, the King, the Kinsmen Redeemer. It means to have double portion of the inheritance, to be the Heir who has ultimate preeminence over all. Don't you see? That's what the NT *means* when it calls Jesus Christ the Firstborn. He is the Firstborn of the New World.

- He is not *merely* heir of one family line, He is the heir of all that is—Hebrews 1:2 “But in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son, *who He appointed the heir of all things.*”²⁸
- His inheritance is not limited to one family *only*, the nations are His inheritance—Psalm 2:8 “Ask me, and I will make *the nations your inheritance*, the ends of the earth your possession.”
- He does not have authority over one household only but over all Heaven and Earth—Matthew 28:18 “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.”

He is unlike any firstborn that ever came before Him. He is the True and Better Firstborn—the Lord of Firstborns, the King of Firstborns. Beloved this Jesus—this Firstborn Son—is who the Father threatened for Your sake. No threat came

²⁸ cf. Matthew 21:38

against Israel's firstborn, because Father threatened His own Son for their sake. And no threat will ever come against You. Because Jesus is the Firstborn, not only does He have all the preeminence but He has all the responsibility. He is the Head of our family, our Kinsmen Redeemer and King. The Father charged Him with losing nothing of all that He has entrusted to Him. It is Christ's full responsibility to make sure that we will be kept and preserved and cared for in this age all the way to glory. And that is exactly what He has promised to do. John 6:39 "And this is the will of him who sent me, *that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me*, but raise it up on the last day."

Hortatory Use

So then, what is our charge this morning? Simply this, we are to carry the responsibility of the firstborn in this age. Like Israel before us²⁹ the Church is called the firstborn.³⁰ Hebrews 12:23 calls us "the church of *the firstborn*. That means something for us. It means we have infinite inheritance in Christ, and a greater responsibility to care for this world. Children, boys and girls, which of you are firstborn children? Can you raise your hand? Who is in charge when your parents leave? You are. Responsibility falls to the firstborn. . So it is with the Church. As the Firstborn, the Church has the great responsibility to lead the nations to Jesus Christ. This was Israel's responsibility in the OT. As one

²⁹ Exodus 4:22

³⁰ In fact there is a striking parallel between Egypt's tribulation here and Jerusalem's future tribulation. In Exodus 11:6 we read "There shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as there has never been, nor ever will be again." Similarly we read of Jerusalem's fate in 70 AD. Matthew 24:21 "For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be." What was the cause of Egypt's sorrow? They lost their firstborn (Exodus 11:4-5). What was the cause of Jerusalem's tribulation? They lost their firstborn status among the nations. Matthew 21:43 "Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing its fruits." It would now be the church who has the firstborn status (Hebrew 12:23). Israel was the holy nation set apart among all the rest of the nations (cf. Exodus 19:5-6), but now it is the church who possesses this status (1 Peter 2:9-10).

author says “As Yahweh’s firstborn, Israel was set apart to be his brothers’ keeper...[he] was Yahweh’s servant among the nations, called to bring the light of divine redemption to the Gentiles.”³¹ Dear congregation that is our charge. We have been given an inheritance that is far more abundant than all that we could ask or think. We are united to Christ, filled with the Spirit, loved by the Father. We belong to the kingdom of God, all righteousness, peace and joy are our world without end. And our responsibility as the firstborn is to serve as a kinsmen redeemer to the nations. To draw, evangelize, and disciple them back to the LORD. Romans 1:5 “to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of His name among all nations.” This is our charge in every sphere of influence, in every generation until the Lord returns. This is how Paul puts it, and I will end here. Colossians 1:28-29 “Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. ²⁹For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me.” May we, as the church of the firstborn, fulfill that same mission all to the glory of His name.

³¹ L. Michael Morales, *Exodus Old and New: A Biblical Theology of Redemption*, (Downers Grove, IL.,: IVP Academic, 2020), pg. 108