

What Does It Mean to Be Firstborn?

by Anton Bosch

The sermon explores the significance of being firstborn in both the Old and New Testaments, emphasizing the privileges and responsibilities that come with this status in God's family.

Scripture: Exodus 4:22, Numbers 3:13, Deuteronomy 21:17, Romans 14:8, Colossians 1:18, Hebrews 12:15, Hebrews 12:23, 1 Peter 1:4, Revelation 5:10

Topics: "Firstborn Rights", "Spiritual Inheritance"

Description

Anton Bosch delves into the privileges and responsibilities of being the firstborn in the Old Testament, highlighting the greater inheritance, blessing, succession rights, and special place in the father's heart that the firstborn received. He draws parallels between the firstborn in families and the concept of Israel as God's firstborn, emphasizing the consecration and dedication required of the firstborn. In the New Testament, believers are referred to as the 'church of the firstborn,' signifying their special and privileged status as children of God, each receiving an inheritance, blessing, and favored treatment from the Father.

Transcript

In the Old Testament there were many privileges attached to being the firstborn (This applied to male children only). The first privilege was that the firstborn son received a greater inheritance. In some cases the firstborn received the whole estate and in other cases he would be given a double portion of the estate.

The firstborn also received a greater blessing from the father than the other sons. While this may seem to just be words, it was not. The blessing pronounced over the firstborn with the laying on of the right hand was powerful and was backed up by Heaven itself.

Thirdly, the firstborn received the right of succession from the father. So, the firstborn would receive the title, authority and status of the father. Today we still see some of this in monarchies where the throne is passed on to the oldest son of the deceased king.

Finally, the first born usually had a special place in the heart of the father.

These privileges were so substantial that younger brothers would sometimes murder the older one in order to inherit the privilege themselves. We also know how Jacob and Esau struggled over the rights of the firstborn from the womb throughout their earlier lives. Even though Esau despised the birthright, he

recognized the value of the blessing after he had lost it. The rights of the firstborn were not just customary but are also enshrined in the Law (Deuteronomy 21:17).

God refers to Israel as His firstborn (Exodus 4:22). By this He means that Israel has a special place in His plans and that Israel would be the means through which His blessings would flow to other nations. This does not mean that others could not also be His children, but that Israel would have a special place in God's family.

When Pharaoh refused to release the people of Israel, God responded by killing the firstborn, of the people and the animals, in every house in Egypt that did not apply the blood to the doorposts and the lintel. God specifically links the death of the firstborn and the enslavement of God's firstborn - Israel (Exodus 4:23).

Because the Lord had spared the firstborn of the Israelites, He required that the firstborn of the Israelites be consecrated to Him. This meant that every firstborn Jew would belong to the Lord and that they were to be set apart specifically for the Lord and His service (Exodus 13:2). God provided a system of substitution whereby the firstborn could be redeemed (bought) from God, and later, Levites could be substituted to take the place of the firstborn. However, this did not change the principle that the firstborn belonged to the Lord and was to be dedicated to the Lord.

Being firstborn made one part of a very small and very special minority in Israel. According to Numbers 2:26 and 3:43 the firstborn made up less than 4 percent of all the men of Israel!

It is interesting to see that one of the names of the church is the "church of the firstborn" (Hebrews 12:23). Why this name? Why is it not "the church of the born-again" or "the church of the children of God". There must be a specific reason why we are "the church of the firstborn". We know that Jesus is called "the firstborn from the dead" (Colossians 1:18), but Hebrews 12 does not refer to Jesus but to all Christians whose names are written in the Book of Life.

So, everyone who is born again is born again as a firstborn. This means that we are all at the same level, we are all first class, first born, children of God. There are no special children who get special privileges and special treatment - we are all special and we are all extremely privileged!

Every one of us receives an inheritance (1Peter 1:4). Every one of us receives the full, and complete blessing of our Father. Every child of God gets to be a successor of the throne of God, (Revelation 5:10) and each one of us gets special and favored treatment by our Father.

There are many Christians who feel they are second-rate or are step-children, but the Bible does not teach that. Every one of us is firstborn, special and privileged. Every single born-again believer receives the full benefits of being firstborn.

But, with this privilege comes a certain obligation. Numbers 3:13 says "all the firstborn are Mine. On the day that I struck all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, I sanctified to Myself all the firstborn in Israel, both man and beast. They shall be Mine: I am the Lord". Just like the privileges of being firstborn has not changed in the New Testament, so does the Lord's claim on the firstborn not change. "Whether we live or die, we are the Lord's" (Romans 14:8). Thus each Christian is to be consecrated and set apart to the Lord and His service. We no longer belong to ourselves or to the world. We belong to Him.

There is one aspect that does change from the Old Testament to the new. In the Old Testament the firstborn could be released from his obligation by paying money (silver) which would employ a Levite to take his place. There is no such provision in the New Testament. I know many believers feel they have paid money towards the pastor's salary and that sets them free of their obligation to be totally consecrated to God's service. But this is an unbiblical view which is strongly opposed by the Bible. If we want the privilege that comes with being firstborn, we must also accept the obligation that comes with such privilege.

The only way out of this obligation is to sell our birthright. It is important to note that the same chapter that speaks of the "church of the firstborn", contains the following warning: "looking carefully... lest there be any fornicator or profane person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright" (Hebrews 12:15,16). However, when we get out from under the obligation, we also lose the privileges. It seems Esau wanted the privileges without the responsibility.

May I urge you take hold of the wonderful blessings that come with being firstborn, but to also fulfill the obligations of being dedicated to the Lord, and don't ever be tempted to trade your inheritance for the passing pleasures of sin.

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