

#1288 The Mark of the Beast – Jesus Christ as the Firstborn Sacrifice

*Exodus 13:14-16 (NIV) "In days to come, when your son asks you, 'What does this mean?' say to him, 'With a mighty hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. 15 When Pharaoh stubbornly refused to let us go, **the LORD killed every firstborn in Egypt, both man and animal. This is why I sacrifice to the LORD the first male offspring of every womb and redeem** [obtain release by means of payment] **each of my firstborn sons.**' 16 And it [the Consecration of the Firstborn (representing the event of the Passover), either through sacrifice or through obtaining release by means of payment] will be like a [figurative] **SIGN** on your **HAND** and a symbol on your **FOREHEAD** that the LORD brought us out of Egypt with his mighty hand."*

Key Understanding: Jesus Christ as the firstborn sacrifice. The death of Jesus Christ on the cross represents the picture of the sacrifice of the firstborn. He is also the "firstborn from the dead" (Colossians 1:18; Revelation 1:5), referring to his resurrection, which assures victory – for those who follow him – over sin and death.

The following is from *Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary* about the biblical theme of the *firstborn*:

Firstborn – the first offspring of human beings or animals. In memory of the death of Egypt's firstborn and the divine protection of Israel's firstborn in connection with the Exodus, God placed a special claim on the firstborn of man and beast (Exodus 13:11-13). This meant that the nation of Israel attached unusual value to the eldest son and assigned special privileges and responsibilities to him.

Because of God's claim on the first offspring, the firstborn sons of the Hebrews were presented to the Lord when they were a month old. Since the firstborn were regarded as God's property, it was necessary for the father to redeem, or buy back, the child from the priest. The redemption price, established by the priest, could not exceed five shekels (Numbers 18:16).

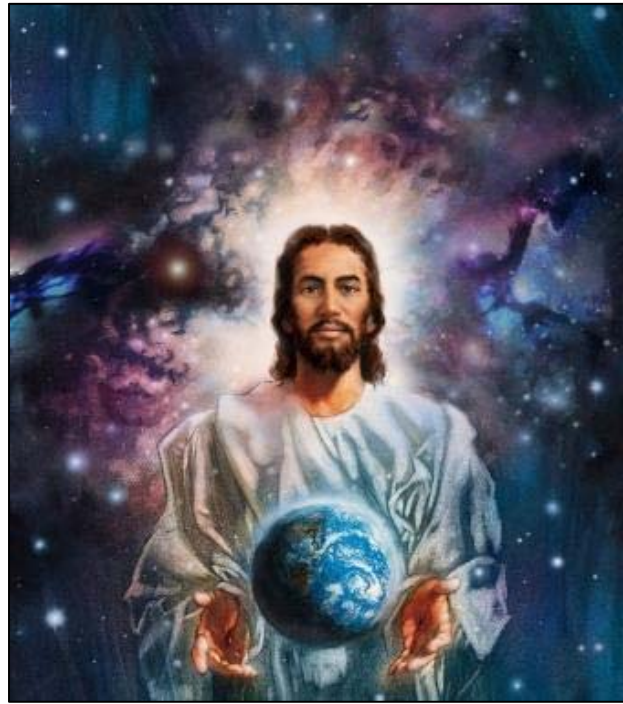
Early Hebrew laws also provided that the firstlings of beasts belonged to the Lord and were turned over to the sanctuary (Exodus 13:2, 34:19; Leviticus 27:26). The clean animals – those that could be eaten under the law of Moses – were sacrificed to the Lord. The unclean beasts were either destroyed, replaced, or redeemed at a price set by the priest.

In Israel, the firstborn son was loved in a special way by his parents and inherited special rights and privileges. His birthright was a double portion of the estate and leadership of the family. As



head of the home after his father's death, the eldest son customarily cared for his mother until her death, and provided for his unmarried sisters until their marriage. He was the family's spiritual head and served as its priest. The inheritance rights of the firstborn son were sometimes transferred to a younger brother. Jacob, for example, stripped Reuben of his firstborn right because of his incestuous conduct and transferred the birthright to his son Joseph (Genesis 48:20-22; 1 Chronicles 5:1).

In figurative language, the term firstborn stands for that which is most excellent. This expression is applied to Jesus in several New Testament passages. All of them point to Jesus' high standing and His unique relationship to His Father and the Church. In Colossians 1:15, Jesus is described as the "firstborn over all creation," indicating that He existed before creation and actually participated in the creation process (John 1:3). His unique birth to the Virgin Mary is depicted by the expression "brought forth her firstborn son" (Matthew 1:25). [The sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross represents the sacrifice of the firstborn.] The phrase "firstborn from the dead" (Colossians 1:18; Revelation 1:5) refers to Jesus' resurrection, which assures victory over sin and death to all who trust in Him. Paul's description of Jesus Christ as "firstborn among many brethren" (Romans 8:29) refers to His exalted position as head of the Church. Because of his atoning death and resurrection, Jesus Christ heads a new spiritual race of twice-born men and women (Colossians 1:18). The author of Hebrews foresees a joyful gathering of "the church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven" (Hebrews 12:23).



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