



"Firstborn" in the Bible

Luke 2:22-24 And when the days for their purification according to the law of Moses were completed, they brought Him (Jesus) up to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every firstborn male that opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord"), and to offer a sacrifice according to what was said in the Law of the Lord, "A pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons." NASB

Please read these scriptures and answer the related questions:

(A) Exodus 4:22-23 Who does God call His firstborn? _____

(B) Hebrews 11:28 Who destroyed the firstborn of Egypt? _____

(C) Exodus 13:1-2, 14-16 What was the purpose of the redemption sacrifice for the firstborn?

(D) Exodus 22:29 Who were the firstborn to be dedicated to? _____

(E) Deuteronomy 15:19 What were to be consecrated to the Lord your God? _____

(F) In Genesis 27:1-46 Jacob and Rebekah go to great lengths to deceive Isaac into thinking Jacob is his firstborn son, Esau. How could a deception make any difference? Wasn't Esau still the "firstborn" regardless of their manipulations?

Think & Pray _____

Please read these scriptures and answer the related questions:

(G) Matthew 1:25 What did Joseph name Mary's son? _____

(H) Luke 2:7 What did Mary do with Jesus when He was born? _____

(I) Romans 8:28-29 How many brothers will the Son of God have? _____

(J) Colossians 1:13-15 Who is the firstborn of all creation? _____

(K) Colossians 1:16-20 Who is the firstborn from the dead? _____

(L) Hebrews 1:1-6 Who worships the Son? _____

(M) Hebrews 12:22-24 Who are enrolled in heaven? _____

(N) Revelation 1:5 Who is the firstborn from the dead? _____

(O) John 1:1-5 In what sense is Jesus "firstborn?" Was Jesus a created being?

Think & Pray _____

----- "FIRSTBORN" ANSWERS -----

- (A) Exodus 4:22-23 Who does God call His firstborn? The entire nation of Israel
- (B) Hebrews 11:28 Who destroyed the firstborn? Doesn't say here, but it was God (See Exodus 12:29)
- (C) Exodus 13:1-2, 14-16 What was the purpose of the redemption sacrifice for the firstborn?
To remind future generations of their miraculous deliverance from slavery in Egypt.
- (D) Exodus 22:29 Who were the firstborn to be dedicated to? The Lord Ex 20:22 (an exercise in context)
- (E) Deuteronomy 15:19 What were to be consecrated to the Lord your God? Firstborn male animals
- (F) The Hebrew word *bekowr* translated "firstborn" had a wider meaning than just birth order. It meant "first." That could be first in birth order, or first in affection, or first in importance, or first in anything at all. "Foremost" or "Designated Heir" might be a better way to understand the word in this passage. It was customary in that culture for the blessings and belongings of a father to be bestowed on the oldest son, but if a man did not like his oldest son, he had the option of naming someone else "firstborn," even someone outside his family altogether. So in Gen 27:37 when Isaac tells Esau that Jacob has been made his master and given the inheritance, he was quite serious. Jacob did not try to enforce this later on, and Esau ended up with all the physical belongings. However, it is through Jacob that the blessings of Abraham descended on the Chosen People, and it was from Jacob that Jesus Christ was physically descended.
- (G) Matthew 1:25 What did Joseph name Mary's son? Jesus
- (H) Luke 2:7 What did Mary do with Jesus when He was born? Wrapped him and put Him in a manger
- (I) Romans 8:28-29 How many brothers will the Son of God have?
Many will be conformed to His image
- (J) Colossians 1:13-15 Who is the firstborn of all creation? His beloved Son Col 1:13
- (K) Colossians 1:16-20 Who is the firstborn from the dead? His beloved Son Col 1:13
- (L) Hebrews 1:1-6 Who worships the Son? Angels of God
- (M) Hebrews 12:22-24 Who are enrolled in heaven? The church of the firstborn
- (N) Revelation 1:5 Who is the firstborn from the dead? Jesus Christ
- (O) Jesus was not created. He existed with the Father for all eternity. (Col 1:16) He is "firstborn" in three ways. He was physically the "firstborn" of Mary. (Matt 1:25, Luke 2:7) He is the "firstborn" of the resurrection, the first to be permanently freed from the grave. (Col 1:18) He is the "firstborn" in the sense of "designated heir" of everything. (Heb 1:2). The really Good News here is that our eldest brother is generous beyond imagination. He has made us heirs with Him! (See Titus 3:3-7)

For further thought:

- [p] Compare Genesis 41:51 with Genesis 48:1-21. In your family is being "firstborn" an earned right, a right by heritage, or something bestowed at the whim of your immediate ancestors?
- [q] Compare Joshua 6:26 with 1 Kings 16:34. Some people say that Hiel actually buried his sons beneath the wall and gate of Jericho in order to obey Joshua 6:26 as a law. Others say that God took their lives as punishment for Hiel's disobedience. What do you think, and why?
- [r] In Deuteronomy 25:5-10 there is an interesting custom described. How would things be different if we still did this sort of thing?
- [s] What does "firstborn of death" mean in Job 18:13?
- [t] "Firstborn" appears almost 125 times in the Bible, mostly the Old Testament. We have looked at all the New Testament references in this lesson, but with a concordance you should be able to find many more passages to read and discuss in context.