

THE BATTLE OVER “FIRSTBORNS”

Exodus 4:22–23 (NKJV)

22 Then you shall say to Pharaoh, ‘Thus says the Lord: “Israel is My son, My firstborn.”

23 So I say to you, let My son go that he may serve Me. But if you refuse to let him go, indeed I will kill your son, your firstborn.”

The Name LORD here is YHWH, which is associated with the title “I AM” in Ex. 3:15 and is associated with God’s covenant relationship with Israel.

The firstborn son was special. It was the position of privilege. It denoted special endearment and honor. God is making it very clear to Pharaoh that the Jews are His chosen and favored people. They are special to Him (cf. Jer. 31:9, Hos. 11:1). This was a battle over “firstborns”. It was Israel versus Pharaoh’s child.

The sign miracles Moses performed came with a message. By the way sign miracles in the Bible always come with a message. They do not happen in a vacuum. There is always a message. The message here to Pharaoh was that the supernatural God of Israel is at work and He has a special relationship with this people – the Hebrew people.

Even though Israel as a nation was the special chosen people group – yet within the nation salvation was a personal matter involving a choice in the heart of each individual.

The command of YHWH was clear. “Let My son go that he may serve Me.”

The word serve here is the idea of worship (cf. Ex. 3:12). The purpose of this deliverance is stated repeatedly in Exodus to be so that the Israelites might SERVE God – that is that they might be free to worship God as He instructs (cf. 4:23, 7:16, 8:1, 20, 9:1, 13, 10:3, 7-8, 11, 24, 26, 12:31). They were called to be a worshipping people.

God then said, **“But if you refuse to let him go, indeed I will kill your son, your firstborn.”** ’ ’

How is that for a wakeup call? I mean this is BLUNT! This is in your face brutally straightforward giving him the full medicine without any sugar at all.

God was stating just how important Israel is to him and that if Pharaoh does not comply then his firstborn son will die. It was a contest over the

firstborns. It was Israel (God's "son") versus Pharaoh's child. This is a high stakes battle and one that Pharaoh would have been wise not to take on. But alas his foolish heart was hardened and indeed God did kill his son – his firstborn.

This was no idle threat. God's threats should always be taken seriously. The wise heed. The Exodus story in one way starts and ends over the issue of firstborn. This is really a Lordship issue. Would Pharaoh respond to God's terms or would he harden himself to the truth of the LORD?

Here is how the story ended...

Exodus 12:29–31 (NKJV)

29 And it came to pass at midnight that the LORD struck all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sat on his throne to the firstborn of the captive who was in the dungeon, and all the firstborn of livestock.

30 So Pharaoh rose in the night, he, all his servants, and all the Egyptians; and there was a great cry in Egypt, for there was not a house where there was not one dead.

31 Then he called for Moses and Aaron by night, and said, "Rise, go out from among my people, both you and the children of Israel. And go, serve the LORD as you have said.

God's LORDSHIP could not be denied! Pharaoh was bludgeoned into submission! In the end what God has sovereignly ordained for His "son" will be accomplished. God is God! He is the God of Israel – His first-born son. God has chosen to reveal Himself to the world through Israel! And the EXODUS was a major revelation that He is the God over all other (false) gods.