

# WHY THE FIRSTBORN SUFFERED.

“The smiting of the first-born of Egypt contained two lessons: (1) It was the most severe blow because the first-born of the nation would be the more prominent persons in each family. (2) But the special object in confining the plague to the first-born was to show that only the first-born of the Hebrews were spared or passed over. The other members of the Hebrew families were in no more danger of that plague than were the other members of the Egyptian families. Only the first-born were marked, indicated as in danger, while the rest were to be saved. The Scriptures clearly show that the Lord thus intended to indicate the passing over or sparing of the Church in the present time. The type therefore has nothing whatever to do with the world. Only the household of faith, known in the Scriptures as the Church of the First-born, have that degree of light and knowledge that would permit them to be on trial for eternal life, with the danger of losing the same in the Second Death.

The world in general is not in this danger; they are still under the original condemnation, and hence not subject to the second condemnation or the Second Death. This type marks clearly what all the Scriptures so forcefully express, namely, that the present is the trial time of the Church, as the Apostle expresses it, “If we sin willfully after that we have received a knowledge of the truth there remaineth no more a sacrifice for sin, but a certain fearful looking forward to of judgment that would devour us as adversaries of God.” Again he says, “As touching those who were once enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the holy Spirit and tasted the good Word of God and the powers of the age to come, if these fall away it is impossible again to renew them unto repentance; seeing that they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh and put him to an open shame.”—Heb. 6:4, 6; 10:26, 27.

Not only is the Gospel Church scripturally termed the “Church of the First-born,” but it is also spoken of as the first-fruits unto God of his creatures. (Heb. 12:23; Jas. 1:18.) The two thoughts are in full accord; first-born ones imply later-born ones, first-fruits imply later-fruits. Thus does the Lord draw our attention to the fact that, while his plan has had its most gracious beginning with the elect of this Gospel age, his favor will not end with these, but ultimately proceed to all the families of the earth in accord with his great Oath-Bound Covenant to Abraham, “In thy Seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.” The First-born constitute the Seed class. Christ is the Head or first of this First-born company, but it will not be complete until the last member of the body of Christ shall have been passed over from the earthly to the heavenly life and nature.’—Zion’s Watch Tower, May 15, 1907. [R3993]



“The firstborn of both Israel and Egypt were liable to death. The antitype of the Egyptian firstborn—those who were not under the blood and hence were slain—is a Second Death class, namely, those of the consecrated who forsake the blood of Christ. Those who make a consecration must not leave the Lord. To be the Lord’s disciple, one must forsake all and follow *him* until death. Hebrews 6:4–6 states, “For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.” Revelation 16:15 is a dispensational warning to us right now to keep the robe of Christ’s righteousness on. “Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.” God Himself will smite the antitypical “Egyptians,” the Second Death class. Hence “it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (Heb. 10:31).’—Exodus 12:23, Old Testament Studies by Frank Shallieu

