

WHY EGYPT'S FIRSTBORN WERE SLAIN?

In Exodus 4:22-23, God commands Moses to go before Pharaoh and request that he allow Israel to leave Egypt: "And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Thus saith the Lord, Israel is my son, even my firstborn: And I say unto thee, Let my son go, that he may serve me: and if thou refuse to let him go, behold, I will slay thy son, even thy firstborn."

God knew that Pharaoh — because of the hardness of his heart — probably would not grant this request unless overwhelming power and force were used. Power, might and force were the only things Pharaoh understood.

Thus, God sent ten plagues upon Egypt, with increasing intensity and devastation, culminating in the death of their firstborn.

To break Pharaoh's defiant stance and to secure the release of the Israelite people, the firstborn of the Egyptians, both man and beast, were slain. Not a single Egyptian household was spared from the death of the firstborn, including Pharaoh's.

He had been given ample warning. The magicians of Egypt admitted that the plagues were the "finger of God" (Exodus 8:19). He personally witnessed the reality of God's power and supremacy over the very gods of Egypt.

After the plague of hail, Pharaoh conceded that "I have sinned this time: the Lord is righteous, and I and my people are wicked" (Exodus 9:27).

Yet, when the plague was withdrawn and the danger was passed, he stubbornly refused to acknowledge Him. He defiantly rejected the power of God. Thus he and his people experienced the one final, catastrophic display of God's absolute might: the death of the firstborn.

Plague after plague from God demolished the pagan gods of Egypt, exposing their impotence. Osiris, worshipped extensively throughout Egypt as the source of all knowledge and as the great provider, could not prevent the death of Egypt's firstborn.

Thus the Great Almighty God established the unrivaled greatness of His sovereignty to both the Egyptians — and also the Israelites!

These wonders, these supernatural works were intended by God to re-establish a relationship with His people who had lost all knowledge of Him and His ways as a result of over 400 years of slavery in Egypt: "And I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God: and ye shall know that I am the Lord your God, which bringeth you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians" (Exodus 6:7).

God wanted them to know that He remembered the promises He had made to their fathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He wanted to reassure them that He was going to keep His promises and bring them out of Egypt unto a "land flowing with milk and honey" (Exodus 3:8).

The firstborn of Egypt were slain to compel Pharaoh to release the Israelites; it established the total supremacy of the true God over the pagan gods of Egypt; and, it confirmed the covenant promises He had made to His People Israel.

Pharaoh arrogantly held God's firstborn Israel as slaves in Egypt, brutalizing and killing many of them. Therefore, he and Egypt lost their firstborn to death. As God's Word so powerfully promises: whatever you sow, that is what you will reap (Galatians 6:7).