

Dedication of Firstborn

Key Verse: “*When the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they brought him to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord.*”
—**Luke 2:22**

Selected Scriptures:
Exodus 13:13-15;
Luke 2:22-32

TODAY’S LESSON TEACHES

the difference between Jesus and the church in their standing as firstborns. In our Key Verse we see that every aspect of Jesus’ life was in keeping with the requirements of the Mosaic Law, because he was a Jew and obligated to keep it. He said, “Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.”—Matt. 5:17

We find in the Luke account of our lesson that Jesus’ parents brought him to the Temple when he was forty days old. This was in accordance with the requirements concerning newborn children under the Law. (Lev. 12:1-7) The narrative says there was a devout man named Simeon in Jerusalem who had been assured by the power of the Holy Spirit that before he died he would see the long awaited Messiah. Led by the Spirit to the Temple, and taking this firstborn babe into his arms, he blessed God and declared, “My eyes have seen thy salvation, Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.”—Luke 2:25-32

John explains that Jesus was this light. (John 1:9) He was the “firstborn from the dead,” the Redeemer and “head of the body, the church,” during this Gospel Age. (Col. 1:18-23) Jesus will also be the Deliverer of Israel and all mankind in his coming earthly kingdom. (Rom. 11:25,26) Paul further explains that Jesus was made a priest “after the similitude of Melchisedec.” He “needeth not daily . . . , to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people’s: for this he did once, when he offered up himself.”—Heb. 7:15,26,27

By contrast to Jesus, who needed no redeemer, the firstborn mentioned in our selected Scriptures were chosen by God to be sanctified for his service. (Exod. 13:2) Later these firstborn ones were represented by the tribe of Levi. (Num. 3:12) Exodus 13:13-15 follows the account in the previous chapter of the original Passover night, during which the angel of death passed through the land of Egypt, killing all the firstborn in the land, both man and beast. In order to protect Israel’s firstborn from this plague, God instructed each household to take an unblemished lamb on the tenth day of the month, kill it on the fourteenth day, and sprinkle its blood on the side posts and upper door posts of the house.—Exod. 12:3-14

We see a beautiful picture in the events of that night as they relate to the firstborn. Unlike Jesus, these firstborn needed to be protected from the certainty of death. The Passover lamb, whose slaying and shed blood provided this protection, was a picture of Jesus, our Redeemer, whom the Apostle Paul clearly identifies: “Christ our passover is sacrificed for us.”—I Cor. 5:7

Thus we see that Jesus “is the head of the body, . . . the firstborn from the dead,” and his footstep followers are “the church of the firstborn.” (Col. 1:18; Heb. 12:23) Finally, Paul states that God’s Son would “be the firstborn among many brethren.” (Rom. 8:29) Let us rejoice to have such a mighty Redeemer and loving God. ■