

The General Assembly and Church of the Firstborn: Every Child of God Is Equally Important and Equally Beloved

Discover Your Spiritual Identity!

The Revelation of the Names and Titles God Has Given His People

“But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels; to THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY AND CHURCH OF THE FIRSTBORN, who are enrolled in heaven; to God, the Judge of all; and to the spirits of the righteous ones made perfect” (Heb. 12:22-23, emphasis added).

This title for God’s people appears only once in Scripture, yet provides one of the most powerful insights available concerning our spiritual identity, inheritance and purpose.

The phrase “general assembly” means this status is for every child of God.

The word “church” means called-out ones, for God has “called” us “out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Pet. 2:9).

All who are washed in the blood of Jesus are equally loved, equally cleansed, equally righteous and equally gifted with eternal life. For this reason, they are named the “church of the firstborn” or, as another version states, “the whole Church in which everyone is a firstborn-son and a citizen of heaven” (Heb. 12:23 MEV, JB).

The Firstborn Status

In the Hebrew culture, a firstborn son obtained exceptional blessings, privileges and responsibilities. He received the "birthright" and the primary "blessing." The birthright was the status of being the head of the household, following the demise of the father, and the primary inheritor of his estate. Though a blessing was normally given to all the offspring, a greater blessing was reserved for the one given "firstborn" status (see Gen. 25:21-34; 27:1-41; 48:1-22; 49:1-43).

A mystery of the kingdom of God unfolds when we inspect those chosen as "firstborn sons" in the patriarchal line of the Old Testament:

– Cain was literally Adam's firstborn but went the way of evil. Abel was the second son yet obtained the firstborn status, for his worship was received (see Heb. 11:4).

– Ishmael was literally Abraham's firstborn son by Hagar but was disinherited. Isaac was Abraham's second son (Sarah's first), a child of promise, and he obtained the firstborn status.

– Esau was Isaac's firstborn son but sold his birthright for a bowl of lentils. Jacob, the second son, obtained the firstborn status (see Rom. 9:13).

– Reuben was Jacob's firstborn son but forfeited his inheritance because of incest. Joseph, the eleventh son, obtained the firstborn status and the coat of many colors.

– Manasseh was Joseph's firstborn son but Ephraim, the second son, obtained the firstborn status (see Gen. 48:8-20).

Over and over again, the first was last and the last was first—a spiritual pattern in God's plan (see Matt. 19:30; 20:16). In these examples, those qualified in the flesh to obtain the firstborn status were excluded but those who were graced by God prevailed.

On a larger scale, Egypt was the greatest of all nations but when God searched the world over to find a covenant people, He chose Israel, “the smallest of all nations” (Deut. 7:7, NLT). Thus the least became the greatest—the lowest became the highest—the last became the first—and the “tail” became “the head” (Deut. 28:13). God even boasted, “Israel is My son, even My firstborn” (Exod. 4:22, MEV).

How does that relate to our placement in the “church of the firstborn”? Because none of us qualified by our own goodness or greatness to be included in God’s family; we were saved by grace alone. We were all unworthy and unfit. Some of us were among the worst but God sent His unmerited love into our lives to lift us from the bottom to the top.

The Double Portion

In Hebrew tradition, the “firstborn son” received the “double portion” inheritance (Deut. 21:17). This did not always mean twice as much; it just indicated a larger amount. The smaller portion remaining was divided among the other heirs.

Jesus was titled “the firstborn among many brothers,” “the firstborn over all creation” and “the firstborn from the dead” (Rom. 8:29, MEV; Col. 1:15, NKJV; Rev. 1:5, NKJV)? If so, what was His “double portion” inheritance? Could it be the dual aspect of His nature?

– He was “the Word” that “became flesh” (John 1:14, NKJV).

– He received “the Spirit without measure” (John 3:34, MEV).

These two wondrous gifts are also imparted to every member of the church of the firstborn, for we are:

– Begotten of the Word (James 1:18 KJV, see also 1 Cor. 4:15, 1 John 5:1);

– Born of the Spirit (John 3:1-7).

By these two inheritance gifts we are made whole, for “of His fullness we have all received” (John 1:16, NKJV). Yes, every child of God has this double portion inheritance.

In the resurrection, these two aspects of our inheritance will be brought to utter perfection. We will also “inherit all things,” in realms terrestrial and celestial (Rev. 21:7). So regardless of the disappointments we have faced in this life, we can claim God’s promise:

“Instead of your shame you will receive a double portion, and instead of disgrace you will rejoice in your inheritance. And so you will inherit a double portion in your land, and everlasting joy will be yours” (Isa. 61:7, NIV).

These truths are magnificent!

To explore this wonderful subject more deeply, listen to a past episode of Mike Shreve’s weekly podcast called, “Discover Your Spiritual Identity.” {eoa}

*A product of the Jesus Movement Era, **Mike Shreve** has traveled evangelistically in the United States and overseas since 1970 with an emphasis on healing and the prophetic. His primary biblical teaching for over 35 years has been the spiritual identity of believers. This powerful insight is featured on his weekly podcast on and his TV program—both titled Discover Your Spiritual Identity. It is also the theme of his Charisma House book titled WHO AM I? Dynamic Declarations of Who You Are in Christ. The first three categories on his YouTube website expand on this amazing revelation:*

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