

## ADOPTION

One of the key doctrine words of grace that is rich is the word “adoption.” Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer said, “The peculiar position of one who is adopted is an important feature of the riches of divine grace” (*Systematic Theology*, Vol. 3, p. 242).

Our American concept of adoption is not the same as the Biblical concept of adoption. When we think of adoption we think in terms of the human custom as we understand it. **Adoption, as we view it, is the act in which one child legally becomes a member of a family of which he was not originally born. As we will see, Biblical adoption really does not have much in common with our modern day legal adoption, because in Biblical adoption the child is actually born into the family of which he is adopted.**

**QUESTION #1** – Where is the word “adoption” used in the Bible?

**The word “adoption” is a word used solely by the Apostle Paul and is part of the grace gospel he develops. It is strictly a Pauline word, which is not found in the O.T. or anywhere else in the N.T..**

Paul uses the word in five passages:

- 1) Romans 8:15 - “you have received a spirit of adoption as sons”
- 2) Romans 8:23 - “waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons”
- 3) Romans 9:4 - “who are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons...”
- 4) Galatians 4:5 - “that we might receive the adoption as sons”
- 5) Ephesians 1:5 - “He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself”

We may observe that one of the Pauline uses refers to national Israel having a special relationship with God as the children of God (Rom. 9:4).

All other Pauline uses describe the New Testament believer in Christ having a unique chosen status of being children of God.

**QUESTION #2** – What does the word “adoption” actually mean?

The actual Greek word Paul uses for adoption (υιοθεσια) is a word that literally means to place one or set one as a son or daughter (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, pp. 454, 445).

In adoption, as we know it, someone outside a family legally becomes a member of another family. What happens in a human adoption is that one legally has a family relationship with a substitute father and mother, versus the real father and mother.

In other words, the adoptee does not have the DNA of the adopted family, even though he does have legal status as a real son or daughter.

In Biblical adoption the person is actually born into the family. As Chafer said, it “is primarily a divine act by which one already a child by actual birth through the Spirit of God is placed forward as an adult son in his relationship with God” (*Ibid.*, p. 242).

Dr. C. I. Scofield said, “In ordinary usage the term ‘adoption’ signifies the placing of an outsider into the family as a legal, not a natural son. A careful study of the forgoing passages with the context should make it clear that this is not the doctrinal meaning of the term. In the New Testament, “adoption” is not a word of relationship, but of position. The believer’s relation to God as a child results from the new birth (John 1:12,13); whereas adoption is the act of God by which one already a child is placed in the position of an adult son” (C. I. Scofield, *26 Great Words of Scripture*, p. 1062).

An adopted son in the family of God is a real son or daughter who has really been born into the family. He/she is a child with real Holy Spirit DNA.

At the moment a person believes in Jesus Christ, He is born again with a new birth, which immediately places him into the family of God. This person is immediately advanced to a level of being a complete adult child.

Floyd Barackman said that this status means that we are responsible to act like adult children of God. It said it is our responsibility as an adult-son, to cultivate a spiritual life that pleases our Father and is not given to false doctrine and sinful habits (*Practical Christian Theology*, p. 364).

**QUESTION #3** – What are some observations we may make about Biblical adoption?

When we examine passages that emphasize Biblical adoption, we may observe the following:

- 1) In Biblical adoption God sovereignly chose and predestined those who would become His Children. **Eph. 1:4-5**
- 2) In Biblical adoption, it was a determination of God’s will, not our will. **Eph. 4:5**
- 3) In Biblical adoption, a believer is actually freed from sin to the point that God is the actual Father. **Rom. 8:15**
- 4) In Biblical adoption, the believer waits for the redemption of the body. **Rom. 8:23**

The full display of the believer’s adoption will be seen when our bodies are ultimately like that of Jesus Christ (I John 3:2).

- 5) In Biblical adoption, the believer is freed from the O.T. law. Gal. 4:5

6) In Biblical adoption, the believer has a real intimate relationship with God the Father.  
Gal. 4:5

**QUESTION #4** – How does adoption relate to Justification?

In justification God declares a sinner righteous and considers him as righteous and at peace with Himself. In adoption the father views the one justified as His own son and this relationship is emphatically stressed.

**QUESTION #5** – How does adoption relate to progressive Sanctification?

In sanctification the believer is progressively and experientially set apart as a child of God. In Adoption, the believer is permanently and legally and forever a son of God.

**QUESTION #6** – How does adoption relate to Regeneration?

In regeneration the believer is actually born into the family of God. In adoption the believer is given the legal status of full son-ship.

Without God the Father adopting us as a full son, we would always have the status of a child.

**QUESTION #7** – What are the benefits of Adoption?

There are two main benefits:

**Benefit #1** - Every believer has full son status and has the opportunity to experience all of the rights and privileges and blessings of every other legal believer.

Every believer has access to God as an adopted son. Every believer is part of the church and body of Christ as an adopted son. Every believer has liberty as an adopted son.

**Benefit #2** - Every believer is guaranteed a new body of adult son-ship. **Rom. 8:23**

Paul anticipates a time when our body will be redeemed from its flesh corruption. Our adoption guarantee is that we will receive a glorified body like that of Jesus Christ (I John 3:2; I Cor. 15:50-57).

Now the fact that we have been adopted does give us status as an adult son, however, we are still like children here because we are still in our unsaved body. Our soul has been saved, but our body has not.

This is why we still need God's grace and forgiveness and help because we are living in a fallen, sinful world and we are living in a fallen, sinful body.

Our adoption guarantees that we will receive that new body.