

DOCTRINE OF ADOPTION

I. Introduction.

- A. It has been stated that Hebrew law knew nothing of the custom of adoption.
- B. In the LXX neither the noun or verb relating to adoption is used.
- C. However, adoption was obviously a feature of Egyptian society as seen in the formal adoption of Moses. Ex. 2:10
- D. Therefore, while there is no Hebrew equivalent for the term adoption, they were not unfamiliar with the fact that the practice existed. IKings 11:20; Esther 2:7,15
- E. In fact, Paul demonstrates a clear understanding of the fact that Israel was the first adopted son of God. Rom. 9:4, cf. Ex. 4:22; Hosea 11:1

II. Vocabulary.

- A. As stated above there is no Hebrew term for the practice of adoption.
- B. Greek vocabulary.
 - 1. huiothesia, f.noun, 5X, a compound from huios and thesis, a placing as a son.

III. Definition and description.

- A. Adoption is defined by Webster as the voluntary act of an adult to establish a parental relationship with a child of another set of parents.
- B. It is a personal process based on some factor which motivates the new parent to accept another's child as if he was his natural child.
- C. Generally, the reason was due to a lack of natural heirs and the desire to perpetuate the family, although sometimes the reason was based merely on personal affection.
- D. It was clearly understood by all parties that this was also a legal matter, binding on all who were involved.

IV. Historical background.

- A. Some societies in the ancient world practiced adoption as a regular feature of life.
- B. Some, including the Romans, considered adoption to be severe and binding on all who were involved.
- C. By the time of Paul, adoption played an increasingly important part in the culture.
- D. From late in the first century to the middle of the second century, Roman emperors adopted men with the intention that they should succeed them as Caesar.
- E. The actual process of adoption.
 - 1. A man, generally without an heir, determined to adopt someone who was not related to him by blood.

2. The adopted was transferred from the power and control of the natural parents and previous family relationships to the power of the adopting father.
3. The Roman term was patria potestas--the power of the father, since the emphasis of the Roman world was on the father's power and the adopted son was little more than a slave.
4. Once adopted, the new son was, in all legal respects, on a level with those who were natural born sons.
5. If the son was already of age, the ceremony was known as adrogatio.
6. Seven witnesses were required to validate the adoption.
7. Their testimony that a legal and binding adoption had taken place was crucial if, after the father's death, the natural heirs contested the validity of the will, and/or adoption.

V. Spiritual adoption.

- A. The Roman process of adoption forms the background for the theological doctrine of adoption.
- B. All mankind is viewed as being born under their father the Devil. Jn. 8:41-44
- C. All are abject slaves to Satan based on their slavery to the I/STA, and are under condemnation from birth. Eph. 2:1-3
- D. God the Father determined in eternity past to adopt certain members of the human race based on two distinct facts:
 1. His love and mercy. Eph. 1:5-7, 2:4-7
 2. His foreknowledge of positive volition. Eph. 1:5; IPet. 1:1-2
- E. The one who believes receives the right to become a child of God. Jn. 1:12
- F. They are then separated from the Satanic/cosmic family and entered into a new and permanent relationship with God, enjoying the same legal status of The Natural Son.
- G. The pre-salvation phase of our existence is taught in the analogy of Gal. 4:1-3.
 1. Under Roman law, the son was considered a minor (Greek nũãioj--nepios--a child, one who has not come of age) until he completed his fourteenth year.
 2. During this time, he was under a tutor, nominated by his father in his will, after age 14 the child was under the authority of a curator until age 25.
 3. The age (14) at which a child was no longer considered a child was fixed by statute, however, some discretion was reserved to the father to delay that status.
 4. The time fixed by the father was specified in his will.
 5. The period when the son was under the constraints of appointed individuals represents the time before our salvation when we were under the ignorance and legalism of the cosmos. Gal. 4:3

6. During the time of his childhood, the heir was an heir de jure (a legal heir), but not an heir de facto (heir in fact).
7. In one sense we were no different than our cosmic counterparts and although the inheritance was ours legally we had no power to access or dispose of it.
- H. The salvation phase of our adoption. Gal. 4:4-7
 1. At the proper time, God the Father sent the Son into the world to redeem us from our previous state. vs 4
 2. His purpose in redeeming us was so that we could receive the realities of adoption. vs 5
 3. We are adopted into the family of God by faith. Jn. 1:12; Gal. 3:26
 4. Believers are then children of God, given their freedom and the power to use it responsibly.
 5. Three sure tokens of this new relationship are:
 - a. The invocation of God as Father. Gal. 4:6
 - b. The spontaneous, uncoerced acknowledgement of Jesus as our Lord. ICor. 12:3
 - c. The internal witness of the Holy Spirit. Rom. 8:16
 6. The new relationship with the Father is set forth as being in diametrical opposition to the spirit of bondage. Rom. 8:15

VI. The practical and logical conclusion of adoption--heirship.

- A. While one may be adopted into a family in order to preserve the family or the way of life, it was readily understood that the adopted child would share in the inheritance.
- B. In fact, the adopted child would inherit equally with a natural son, based on the decision of the father.
- C. Once you are an adopted son of God through faith in Christ, you become an heir of God. Rom. 8:17
- D. You become a fellow heir with Christ, based on your willingness to apply Bible doctrine in Phase 2. Rom. 8:17
- E. God the Father owns everything, He is the Father par excellence. Ex. 9:29; Ps. 24:1; ICor. 10:26
- F. Therefore, He will disperse the inheritance among the children as His wisdom demands.
- G. The natural Son, Jesus Christ, is the heir of all things based on His birth and perfect obedience to the Father. Lk. 20:14; Phil 2:8; Heb. 1:2
- H. The experiential enjoyment of our inheritance is contingent upon the resurrection body, which is one part of our inheritance. Rom. 8:23

VII. Concluding observations.

- A. God the Father had but one natural Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Lk. 1:32, 10:22; Jn. 3:16
- B. He was a son by birth, and demonstrated His fidelity to His Father by His obedience. Gal. 4:4; Phil. 2:8
- C. He took an active part in the process of providing the possibility of adoption for God's enemies. Gal. 4:5
- D. All who believe in Him are taken irrevocably from the Satanic family and given the right to become children of God. Jn. 1:12; Col.

- E. All who become sons are promised a portion of the inheritance which God will distribute to His heirs.
- F. The portion for all will include a resurrection body, no I/STA, a home in Heaven, and eternal life.
- G. For those who pursue Bible doctrine, accepting the sufferings of Christ, a greater portion awaits (SG3). Rom. 8:17; Heb. 10:32-39
- H. God provided a down payment as proof of the certainty of our inheritance in the form of the I/HS. Eph. 1:13-14
- I. The future glory of creation is keyed to the consummation of our adoption. Rom. 8:19-21
- J. An often overlooked feature of the blessing of adoption is that of parental discipline. Heb. 12:7

"For you have not received a spirit of
slavery leading to fear again, but you
have received a spirit of adoption
as sons by which we cry out,
"Abba! Father!"

Rom. 8:15