

ADOPTION

Adoption as Adult Sons:

Adoption in the Greek *huiiothesia* and in the Latin *adoptio* usually occurred at the age of fourteen. One could adopt one's own son or some other more qualified young man. This was usually done when the person to be adopted reached the age of fourteen. It conferred adulthood on a natural child or on a child adopted as the heir. A wise Roman aristocrat could adopt as his heir anyone he deemed worthy. So just being the son of an aristocrat did not mean you would inherit your father's land, wealth, or title; you had to be adopted. Roman aristocrats would adopt as their heir whomever they considered most worthy to carry on the family name and wealth. Therefore, the family fortune and opportunities were passed down through that adopted person.

When a Roman boy was said to have reached adulthood, he laid aside his *bullae* (similar to an amulet) and the *toga praetexta* of his childhood and took up the *toga virilis* (of manhood) in a ceremony that signified him becoming a man and a full Roman citizen. Adoption in ancient Rome was practiced and performed by many of the emperors, and the upper classes. For example, a large number of adoptions were performed by the Senatorial class. Succession and family legacy were very important; therefore, Romans needed ways of passing down their fortune and name when unable to produce a qualified male heir. Adoption was one of the few ways to guarantee succession, so it became a norm to adopt young males into the homes of high-ranking families.

Regarding adoption, the following is taken from 'The New Unger's Bible Dictionary, page 41 by Merrill F. Unger.

“Roman. Adoption was a familiar social phenomenon, and its initial ceremonies and incidents occupied a large and important place in their laws. By adoption an entire stranger in blood became a member of the family in a higher sense than

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some of the family kin, emancipated sons, or descendants through females. Such a one assumed the family name, engaged in its sacrificial rites, . . . and to all intents and purposes, a member of the house of his adoption. The tie thus formed could only be broken through the ceremony of emancipation, and formed as complete a barrier to intermarriage as relationship by blood.”

Roman Ceremony:

During the Roman ceremony of adoption (*adrogatio*) the entire family was assembled, including everyone who might have been the heir. The father would recognize his adopted son, using his new name, declaring him to be his heir. He would then give him the *toga virilis* (toga of manhood), a white linen robe with a purple border, and put the signet ring of heirship on his finger. These two gifts meant that he was the permanent heir. The law of adoption could not be reversed, so that as long as he lived, he was the heir.

In Summary:

Adoption was brought about as a means of introducing a stronger society in early Rome. So, adoption was a system of selectivity for heirship, in which a capable person would succeed another capable person. Therefore, aristocratic parents were encouraged to train their natural born sons that they may develop the humility and virtue to receive the *toga virilis*. However, if this failed, they would select another (usually a nephew etc.) other than their natural born son. For example, Julius Caesar adopted his nephew, Octavius; Octavius adopted his step son, Tiberius, Tiberius adopted his great nephew, Caligula; Caligula adopted no one and so the Senate made Claudius the next ruler. Claudius adopted his step-son, Nero – this was Emperor Claudius’ greatest mistake. Adoption was a great system, but sometimes aristocrats and royalty failed to properly apply it.

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Adoption conveyed aristocracy, special privilege, wealth and rank. The lowest person in Roman society, if he had ability, could be adopted, and therefore have the greatest of opportunities.

In Scripture:

Historically, the believer is adopted as an adult son of God at the point of his salvation. From the viewpoint of God's omniscience, his adoption was entered into the divine decree billions of years ago. The omniscience of God knew that he would believe in Jesus Christ and so entered that information into the decree (the divine computer) billions of years ago. The sovereignty of God then said, "Elected and predestined" and the printer printed "This Christian is elected and predestined." In time the person via his human volition believes in Jesus Christ as his savior and enters into union with Christ. Adoption takes place in union with Christ as a result of his having been predestined in eternity past.

Even as He [Father] has chosen [elected] us for Himself in Him [the Christian in union with Jesus Christ] before the beginning of the world that we keep on being holy [experiential righteousness on earth] and blameless [resurrection body without the sin nature] in the presence of Him [Father]. By means of love, He has predestined us for the purpose of adoption as adult sons to Himself through Christ Jesus our Lord according to the grace purpose of His will (Ephesians 1:4, 5).

Adoption emphasizes God's ability; He makes every person an adult son at salvation. Even though the believer had a bad environment, genes and family background, he is now a member of the family of God, the highest status possible. Galatians 3:26 states, "For all are sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus."

But when the fullness of time had come, God [Father] sent His Son [First Advent], born of a woman [beginning of His Hypostatic Union], born under the

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Law [dispensation of Israel], that He might redeem the ones [Old Testament believers] who were under the Law, that we [Church Age believers] might receive the adoption of sons (Galatians 4:4-5).



When a Christian in the first or second century discovered that he had been adopted by God the Father, this was extremely significant to him. Also astonishing to this early Church Age believer was that both male and female believers were adopted by God, for in the Roman custom only men could be adopted as heirs.

So, Paul uses the word to remind us that we are spiritual aristocracy of God. Before the Church Age, never were believers entered into union with Christ and

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adopted as adult sons of God and never again after the Church age will this adoption occur.

Adoption connotes many wonderful things. Adoption connotes responsibility, purpose, and a planned life. Adoption means being given rights, power, and authority; the Christian wears the royal toga of the family of God. Adoption grants the believer the right to wear God's signet ring on his finger: unlimited assets and blessings! The Christian is in union with Christ, royal family of God, eternal aristocracy.

Although all Church age believers are adopted into God's royal family, many do not think or act like members of God's family. In order to think like aristocracy, the believer must learn the plan of God. In order to act like aristocracy, he must develop humility in order to handle properly the rights, authority and the power given to him. In order to have correct motivation and to appreciate the many blessings which God wants to give his adopted sons, he must develop a love for God the Father, God the Holy Spirit and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Romans 8:15, 16, 17, 23 (If adoption, then children; if children, then heirs of the Father and potential heirs of Christ. The greater inheritance begins at spiritual maturity, but the greatest inheritance occurs at the resurrection.)

Romans 8:15-16. For you have not received again a lifestyle of slavery [to the sin nature] for the purpose of fear, but you have received the lifestyle of adoption [as adult sons of God by positional sanctification] by whom [Holy Spirit] we keep shouting [with great happiness when we understand the significance of adoption], "Abba" Father! [Aramaic for God the Father] (16). The Spirit Himself testifies together [bears witness] with our [human] spirit, that we are the children of God [as a result of adoption].

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John 1:12. But as many as received Him [concept], to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name [the mechanics of salvation],

In the above verse, we are told that we are children of God; in Romans 8:16. We are told that the Holy Spirit through his teaching, will convince us that we are children.

Romans 8:17. Now, if *we are* children, *we are* also heirs [as the result of adoption], on the one hand heirs of God [the Father], and joint heirs of Christ *provided that* if indeed, we share in suffer with Him [if we receive underserved suffering as He received undeserved suffering], in order that also we will be glorified with *Him*.

Romans 8:23. And not only [does nature groan] but also we ourselves [mature believers under undeserved suffering] even though possessing the first fruits [the adult sons receiving the inheritance of greater blessings in time, a guarantee of greater blessings in eternity] from the Spirit [the Holy Spirit contributes to the believer's maturity for example in His Filling and prayers for the Christians (Romans 8:26)], even we ourselves groan [from undeserved suffering especially evidence testing] within ourselves, eagerly anticipating the adoption, that is, the resurrection of our body [the adult sons receiving their greatest inheritance from the Lord at the Rapture of the Church; these blessings are imputed to their resurrection bodies].

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Based on the scholarly work of R.B. Thieme Jr.

I recommend downloading 'THIEME'S BIBLE DOCTRINE DICTIONARY' from this website: rbthieme.org