

Adoption as Sons

These are some notes which I collected in 2013 from various sources, concerning the meaning of the word 'adoption' as used in the New Testament. We had been discussing it in our weekly home group.

I cannot necessarily endorse every word, but these contributions should help us to understand what the word means, with its implications for our life in Christ.

Dave Taylor December 2016

Galatians 3:22 - 4:7 Law to lead us to Christ, just as a pedagogue would lead the heir around until his coming of age (= 'adoption', *huiothesia* = 'placing as son')

paidagogos

"Schoolmaster" is a translation of *paidagogos*, literally, "child-leader." This *paidagogos* was not a teacher but a slave, to whom in wealthy families the general oversight of a boy was committed. It was his duty to accompany his charge to and from school, never to lose sight of him in public, to prevent association with objectionable companions, to inculcate moral lessons at every opportunity, etc. He was a familiar figure in the streets, and the (sour) "face of *paidagogos*" and "to follow one like a *paidagogos*" were proverbial expressions. Naturally, to the average boy the *paidagogos* must have represented the incorporation of everything objectionable. Hence, Paul's figure may be paraphrased: "The law was a *paidagogos*, necessary but irksome, to direct us until the time of Christ. Then was the time of our spiritual coming-of-age, so that the control of the *paidagogos* ceased." The word *paidagogos* was taken over into Aramaic at an early date, and Paul's language, which is hardly that of a mere adult observer, suggests that he had had personal experience with the institution. Wealthy and intensely orthodox Jewish parents living in a Gentile city may well have adopted such a precaution for the protection of their children.

No English word renders *paidagogos* adequately. "Schoolmaster" is quite wrong, but Revised Version's "tutor" (compare 1Co 4:15) is little better in modern English.

(International Standard Bible Encyclopedia)

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Thayer Definition:

1) a tutor, i.e. a guardian and guide of boys. Among the Greeks and the Romans the name was applied to trustworthy slaves who were charged with the duty of supervising the life and morals of boys belonging to the better class. The boys were not allowed so much as to step out of the house without them before arriving at the age of manhood.

(Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament)

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PEDAGOGUE, a teacher or schoolmaster, a term usually now applied with a certain amount of contempt, implying pedantry, dogmatism or narrow-mindedness. The Gr. *paidagogos* (*pais*, boy, *agogos*, leader, *agein*, to lead), from which the English word is derived, was not strictly an instructor. He was a slave in an Athenian household who looked after the personal safety of the sons of the master of the house, kept them from bad company, and took them to and from school and the gymnasium. He probably sat with his charges in school. The boys were put in his charge at the age of six. The *paidagogos* being a slave, was necessarily a foreigner, usually a Thracian or Asiatic. The Romans adopted the *paedagogus* or *pedagogus* towards the end of the republic.

He probably took some part in the instruction of the boys (see Schools).
(**Encyclopaedia Britannica** 1911 edition)

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Rom 8:15 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 8:23 And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for *our* adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.

Rom 9:1 I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience testifies with me in the Holy Spirit,

Rom 9:2 that I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart.

Rom 9:3-8 For I could wish that I myself were accursed, *separated* from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh, who are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons, and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the *temple* service and the promises, whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen. But *it is* not as though the word of God has failed. For they are not all Israel who are *descended* from Israel; nor are they all children because they are Abraham's descendants, but: "THROUGH ISAAC YOUR DESCENDANTS WILL BE NAMED." That is, it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of the promise are regarded as descendants.

Eph 1:3 - 6 Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.

This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased.
You are my son, today I have fathered you.

As typically rendered, Romans 8:15 says that Christians "have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father" (KJV).

Verse 23 says that we "who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body."

The next chapter says that Israel, God's nation, was given the promise of, according to most English translations, "adoption" (9:4). Similarly, Galatians 4:5 and Ephesians 1:5 in the New King James Version both use the phrase "adoption as sons" for the standing God gives us.

A number of versions, however, instead use the term "sonship" or something like it, as the New International Version does in Romans 8:15. In its entry on "adoption," Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words (1985) explains that the original Greek word here is "huiiothesia . . . from huios, 'a son,' and thesis, 'a placing,' akin to tithemi, 'to place'"—so the placing as a son. Scholars have noted that this word was used a few times in the ancient Greek world in reference to adoption, and that is certainly fitting.

Vine's states: "The KJV, 'adoption of children' is a mistranslation and misleading. God does not 'adopt' believers as children; they are begotten as such by His Holy Spirit through faith."

So what was Paul talking about? While *huio-thesia* (placing or setting as a son) was certainly applicable to adoption, Paul obviously meant it in a different sense.

We can start to see what he means in Galatians 4:1-5, where the NIV translates the word as "full rights of sons." Notice why from the context: "What I am saying is that as long as the heir is a child, he is no different from a slave, although he owns the whole estate. He is subject to guardians and trustees until the time set by his father. So also, when we were children, we were in slavery under the basic principles of the world. But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons" (verses 1-5, NIV).

Note that in the parallel the one receiving the *huiothesia* (the setting as a son) was already the child of his father who was setting him as such. So this circumstance was not adoption.

Paul's imagery fits well with the Roman world of the time. Historian Will Durant tells us: "The child found itself absorbed into the most basic and characteristic of Roman institutions—the patriarchal family. The power of the father was nearly absolute . . . He alone of the family had any rights before the law in the early Republic . . . Over his children he had the power of life, death, and sale into slavery" (*The Story of Civilization, Vol. 3: Caesar and Christ, 1972, p. 57*).

By Paul's day this had softened somewhat, but it was still generally the case. During a boy's teen years, his father would determine when it was time for him to pass from childhood to adulthood—typically around 14 or a little later. In a formal public ceremony, having put aside his childhood toga, he would appear in the *toga virilis* (toga of manhood), mark of citizenship and his right to now vote in the assembly:

"No special ceremony marked a girl's passing into womanhood, but when a boy reached his majority, he discarded the crimson-bordered toga (*toga praetexta*) of a child and donned the pure white toga of a man. The year of the boy's coming of age varied, somewhat on his physical and intellectual development, somewhat on his father's decision, more perhaps on the time in which he lived. In general, a man's toga was assumed between the fourteenth and seventeenth years - the later age being customary in earlier times. In the classical period the boy's age was usually about sixteen. After that, a boy was placed by his father in the care of some man who was prominent in the army or in civil life, with whom the youth spent a year in training. It seems to have been customary to select the date for the coming of age ceremony according to the birthday that came nearest to March 17, the *Liberalia* (the festival of Liber).

A boy's coming-of-age ceremony began when the boy laid his *bullae* and bordered toga before the *lares* (household gods) of the house in the early morning. A sacrifice was offered. The *bullae* was hung up (it was worn later if the man needed protection from envy).

(*Bullae*:- a piece of jewelry, often made of two concave gold pieces, like a locket, fastened together by a wide spring contained an amulet as a protection against evil, worn on a chain, cord, or strap hung around the child's neck by the father upon the child's birth or on the day of purification. Golden *bullae* were originally only worn by patrician children (plebeians had leather imitations on a narrow strap), but later anyone could wear them. Worn by a girl until the eve of her wedding day, when she laid it aside with other childish belongings; worn by a boy until the day he became a citizen, when it was dedicated to the *lares*.)

The boy then dressed himself in a white tunic, adjusted by his father. If he was the son of a senator, this had two wide crimson stripes; if his father was a knight the tunic had two narrow ones. Over this was draped the toga virilis (toga of the grown man), also called the toga libera. The toga was not necessarily bestowed at Rome, even if the family usually lived there. When the boy was ready, the procession to the Forum began. The father had gathered his slaves, freedmen, clients, relatives and friends, using all his influence to make his son's escort numerous and imposing. Here the boy's name was added to the list of citizens, and formal congratulations were extended. Then the family climbed up to the temple of Liber on the Capitoline Hill, where an offering was made to the god. Finally they all returned to the house, where the day ended with a dinner party given by the father in honour of the new Roman citizen." ("Roman Children", ClassicsUnveiled.com).

A son's status was elevated at this point. He was now legally invested with all the rights, powers and privileges of a son and heir of his father—and of a citizen.

This coming of age at maturity must be what Paul is referring to. God has begotten us as His children. And in one sense He reckons us as already having reached a certain maturity—considering us beyond the status of being as slaves to being set as sons with certain privileges (even though we are as mere babes!). Yet the fullness of our coming of age is yet future—at the time of "the revealing of the sons of God" in the resurrection (Romans 8:19).

Notice Romans 8:23 in the New Living Translation: "And even we Christians, although we have the Holy Spirit within us as a foretaste of future glory, also groan to be released from pain and suffering. We, too, wait anxiously for that day when God will give us our full rights as his children [huiiothesia], including the new bodies he has promised us."

So these verses from Paul do not in any way take away from our destiny as God's full and literal children. Indeed, they only confirm and clarify this incredible biblical truth!

(Much of this from the website of the United Church of God -???)

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The word used throughout the New Testament to denote God's adoption of believers, is transliterated "huiiothesia". The concept of "huiiothesia" to the New Testament culture is explained by the NKJV Greek English Interlinear New Testament:

"Adoption: Greek: huiiothesia. Noun, a compound noun from 'huio', a son and 'thesia' a placing, thus meaning adoption. The word was a legal technical term for a father's declaration that his natural born child was officially a son or daughter, with all the rights and privileges that this included."

(NKJV Greek English Interlinear New Testament, translated by Farstad, Hodges, Moss, Picirilli and Pickering. Published 1994 by Thomas Nelson Nashville. Page 663.)

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The Biblical term 'huiiothesia' refers to a declaration of a natural born child. It is the exact opposite to what would be required to justify the modern concept of adoption, to transpose a child from its biological family to another unrelated family.

And in the overall context of what the Bible is really all about, 'huiiothesia' makes far more sense.

The Bible is a story about a Father. A Father who had children. And these children were stolen from him by the false father - the father of lies. And the Bible is really the story of how our true Heavenly Father pursued us at great cost to Himself, just to buy back His natural children, just so He could make a declaration of the true inheritance He has set aside for us, just to hear us call Him, "Daddy! Father!" As he truly is.

(from <http://www.originsnsw.com/fathers/id2.html>)

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It also seems that there were occasions when a Roman or Greek man would adopt someone else's son as his own, **in order to ensure succession**. (e.g. Augustus was adopted by his uncle Julius Caesar)

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Born or Adopted?

Most of the time when I have been asked, "Is a man born into the family of God, or adopted?" I have replied, " 'Born' or 'adopted' are simply two different terms indicating a method of entering a family, so it does not matter." I was simply indicating what every reference work and dictionary to which I have access says. I now believe we have overlooked some interesting, though not crucial things.

The Greek term translated "adoption" is "huiiothesia" about which Thayer says, "The nature and condition of the true disciples of Christ, who by receiving the Spirit of God into their souls become sons of God." He adds, "It also includes the blessed state looked for in the future life after the visible return of Christ from heaven -- i.e., the consummate condition of the sons of God which will render it evident that they are sons of God." We wish that we and our readers were always able to differentiate between a casual opinion expressed by an "authority," and a scholarly, definitive conclusion, arrived at and proven by the proper analytical methods. Also, we wish the authority or the student would make a proper distinction between the meaning of a term and the thing to which the term refers in a particular context. For example, "baptizo" means "dip, plunge, immerse, overwhelm, etc." It may refer to immersion in water for the remission of sin, being overwhelmed with grief, suffering, etc., or in some denominational terminology, "a water ritual by which one is designated a member of a religious group."

So, we suggest to you that the term "huiiothesia" means "standing as sons." Whether it refers to some 'standing' or 'position' which sons may have in a particular situation, or whether it refers to a COMING INTO a position as a son depends on how we actually find it used in the Bible. The only clear statement of which we are aware which indicates its use in the New Testament is the one in which Thayer says "it ALSO includes" in Romans 8:23, which says, "And not only so, but ourselves also, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for our adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body."

As far as we know, it is not used in the Septuagint, and as far as our limited ability and resources allow us to check, we find no case from Herodotus to the "church Fathers" (including the New Testament) where the word clearly means "coming into a family."

We admit that all the reference works to which we have access define the word "adoption" as "an act by which a person takes another person into his family," or words to that effect. But a careful

student may notice that NONE of them in that definition gave as a reference the word "huiiothesia" and shows that IT was used in that way. In EVERY case we have checked, the "authority" takes the English word, "adopted," and applies IT to what has happened, such as Jacob adopting Ephraim and Manasseh, or Mordeciah adopting Esther, or the daughter of Pharaoh adopting Moses. But the word "huiiothesia" is never used about these cases.

We have no objection to the use of the word "adopted" in those cases, but we DO have serious objections when a "scholarly authority" makes a group of statements about "adoption" and ASSUMES, and allows his readers to assume, that he has somehow defined the term "huiiothesia" which God used, and which men have erroneously translated "adoption." The reason we say this is because the word, in any use we have found, NEVER clearly refers to what the term "adoption" means to us -- "the act by which a person takes a stranger into his family."

The etymology of the word suggests that it literally means "standing as a son," and probably most of us, including the "authorities," have ASSUMED that means "becoming a son." Keenly aware of my limited ability, training, and resources for scholarly research, I am still forced to conclude, at this moment, that the word refers to one who IS a son coming into a certain standing AS a son, but in NO case, simply BECOMING a son, equivalent to what we mean by being born, or adopted. In EVERY case, we think it is not "sonship," per se, that is being considered, but the standing or position to which the sonship entitles one.

The only verse I know that clearly defines one such aspect of "adoption" is Romans 8:23, to which we previously alluded. The "redemption of the body" CANNOT refer to our PRESENT SALVATION, for it is "we who have the firstfruits of the Spirit" who are "waiting for our adoption, the redemption of our bodies." There are four other times the word is used in the New Testament, NONE of which violates the basic meaning of the term. It is true that they do not as clearly express the idea as this passage, but if ONE passage sets out what a term means, and no other passages show any other meaning, how better can we discover the meaning of ANY term?

In Romans 8:15, we find, "For ye received not the spirit of bondage unto fear, but ye received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, 'Abba, Father'." It is apparently assumed by most of us that Paul means, "When you BECAME a son, you received the spirit of a son, whereby you can now say, 'Father'." My judgment is that the "spirit of adoption" is the spirit of one who IS ALREADY A SON, now looking forward to what Paul expresses in the next two verses -- the glorification with Christ when we come into our inheritance as heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. Is there anything wrong with the concept that one who IS a son should have the "the spirit of sonship" -- the spirit in which he yearns for a particular standing as a son (which is what the word "huiiothesia" means)?

In Romans 9:4, the Israelites are mentioned as those "whose is the adoption." Most commentators, I presume, would admit that the term has nothing whatever to do with "being born again," but refers to their standing as sons. Yet, no commentary of which I am aware does any more than make a statement about the meaning of the English word "adoption" as if it were the meaning of "huiiothesia" which all scholars admit means "standing as sons" not "becoming a son." The point I am making is that "huiiothesia" NEVER refers, as far as we can tell, to COMING INTO THE FAMILY, as being "born again" or literally, "being generated from above" does. It ALWAYS refers to the standing or position of a son who has the rights and privileges of the inheritance -- whatever they may be. In our case, they involve the redemption of the body, and whatever glorification we shall have with Christ.

This seems to be very close to the idea found in Galatians 4:1-4. The Israelites were heirs, but it did not do them much good as long as they were like bondservants. But God sent forth his Son to redeem them that they might receive the "adoption of sons." Most of us have apparently ASSUMED that he meant "that they might be adopted AS sons." But it does not say that. Although I do not approve of the NIV in general, I happened to notice right now that it is here translated, "The full right of sons." I do not know how the translators arrived at the conclusion that this is the correct idea, but I suppose even a blind hog can occasionally find an acorn. Instead of Paul saying that Christ came to redeem the Israelites that they might COME INTO the family of God, he is saying that he came to redeem them that they might receive the "adoption OF sons" -- the full right of sons -- a special position that an adult son will receive as an heir, as verse 7 suggests.

In Ephesians 1:5, we are told that he "foreordained us unto adoption as sons." This has been understood (or misunderstood) to mean "adopted INTO the family of God that we might BECOME sons." It does not say that. What it actually teaches is that he chose us before the foundation of the world that we, who have chosen to be holy and without blemish -- sons of God -- might receive the "adoption as sons" -- the standing or position AS adult sons, to the praise of the glory of His grace, or as verse 14 climaxes it, "Unto the redemption of God's own possession."

I do not know that this concept is crucial, but I think it better to be right than wrong. When God speaks of generating us from above (commonly translated "born again"), the idea involves the fact that we thus become partakers of a new nature. The English word "adoption" does not involve that fact! It is therefore inadequate and inaccurate representation of our relationship with God. But the Greek word, "huiiothesia," since it does not actually mean "adoption" in the first place, DOES represent accurately the STANDING OR POSITION which we, as sons, will have at the redemption of our bodies. Being born from above is an ACT. "Huiiothesia" is a STATE. I am willing to stick with Paul's definition in Romans 8:23, unless someone can show that God somewhere gives another one. So far I have not found it. Have you?

Since writing the above, I checked Vine's Expository Dictionary and find that on page 32 he says, "Adoption is a term involving the dignity of the relationship of believers as son; it is not a putting into the family by spiritual birth, but a putting into the position of sons." (Emp. mine, TPB).

T. Pierce Brown Published in The Old Paths Archive (<http://www.oldpaths.com>)

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The Adoption of Sons by David Weber

I feel the need to express a few things today; some things that are foundational to our understanding of "sonship," as many Christians are not very familiar with the true meaning of "sonship" or "the adoption of sons" or "the placement of sons" as those things are revealed to us in scripture.

It is no wonder that a dark veil has been pulled over the understanding of most Christians regarding "sonship," for the revelation of sonship is something that the devil ferociously withstands, and that because the Christian progression from spiritual children to spiritual sons means the enemy's very undoing.

"For the anxious longing of the creature waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subject to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth until now. And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons..." (Romans 8:19-23)

Beloved, even a brief glimpse into this passage of scripture from Romans should reveal to us that the "adoption of sons" or the unveiling of the Son in fullness in a company of sons is something which yet lies ahead for the body of Christ. We, who have received a measure of the Spirit now wait ...GROANINGLY WAIT! for our adoption as sons. We were foreordained unto adoption as sons, but the actual adoption is something for which we are now waiting. Thus, this "adoption" is not simply the matter of our coming into the family of God through regeneration of our spirit, but rather, it is something which is the end result of God's fiery dealings with us unto the full and complete surrender of our souls!

There have been vast amounts of erroneous teaching about "adoption" and "sonship" in the body of Christ, and that mostly because men have looked at biblical adoption through the eyes of modern western culture. But beloved, the traditional Hebrew view of "the adoption of a son" has absolutely nothing to do with the placement of an orphan into a foster home, rather, it has to do with a young man coming into a place of maturity whereby the full authority and resources of his father are bestowed upon him.

With this in mind, can you not see why the devil would do everything in his power to blind the children of God to the message of their full inheritance and adoption as sons? When MATURE sons of God are made manifest beloved (the man-child of Revelation 12), the enemy will lose his place, he will lose his kingdom, he will lose his title, he will even lose his evil grip on creation! He loses everything!

"Now the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ has come, for the accuser of the brethren has been thrown down..." (Revelation 12:10)

Dear ones, the catching up of the manchild of Revelation 12 to the throne of God is none other than the sons of God coming into their place of full authority and power in the kingdom; that which the devil has feared the most, and that for which all of creation has been groaning like a woman in the travail of childbirth. The devil has fought hard to keep the light of the inheritance in Christ from Christian believers ... but beloved ... it is now time for us to rise and shine for our light has come! It is time for us to know by the spirit of wisdom and revelation the hope of our calling; which is the full riches and power and authority of our Father bestowed upon us, and that for the purpose of setting all of His creation free from its slavery to corruption and death so that even it (creation itself) might come into the freedom of the glory of the children of God come into their inheritance as sons! Oh glory!

With these things in mind and heart, let me share with you something about the true scriptural meaning of "adoption" and "sonship" as it applies to the above quoted verse from Romans 8 (our inheritance), and as it can be seen in the life and development of the average Hebrew boy ... and even Jesus Himself!

The original Greek word translated as "revealing" in Romans 8:19 is the word "apokalupsis," which simply means "disclosure." In other places throughout the New Testament, it is also translated as "appearing," "coming," "enlighten," and "revelation." The definition assigned to its root word is, "to take off the cover." Therefore, when we come across this word "apokalupsis" in Scripture, it has to do with the exposing of something that has been hidden from view, or bringing into light that which has been kept in obscurity. In this passage of scripture it should be pretty clear that what has been hidden and held in obscurity is ... the sons of God! Certainly even the understanding of sonship has been hidden from many Christians up until now, but thank God, we are coming into a day of a great unveiling of God's inheritance in the saints.

As the above passage of scripture about the sons of God appears to us in English, "sons" could be taken in several different ways, but in the original language, Paul was very careful in his choice of words. For the word "sons" Paul very carefully chose the word "huios" rather than the word "teknion" (which means infant) or "teknon" (which speaks of a child or a youth) because he was not referring to mere children. "Huios" specifically speaks of matured, fully developed sons, or those who have come of age into full maturity. Of the three words, "huios" is the only word that the Holy Spirit inspired Paul to use when he spoke of those to be manifested as sons of God in Romans 8, and it is also the only word that the Holy Spirit inspired the beloved John to use when he referred to the manchild in Revelation chapter 12. Is that possibly because those are one and the same? I think so.

With this understanding somewhat established, we should be able to see that the manifestation of the sons of God is not merely the unveiling or revelation of God's children, since that manifestation has been occurring for the past two thousand years, but it is a revelation of those children coming into their full maturity in Christ, when they will come of full age (spiritually speaking) and be presented by the Father as full grown "sons" (huios) of the Kingdom.

According to John's Gospel, those who receive the Christ are given the power to become the children (teknon) of God, and that through the regeneration of their spirit. But what Paul then reveals in Romans is that from these children will come forth "mature sons;" the manifestation of which all of creation has been anxiously awaiting. Take a look again at verse 21 from Romans, but this time from the J.B. Phillips translation;

"And the hope is that in the end the whole of created life will be rescued from the tyranny of change and decay, and have its share in that magnificent liberty WHICH CAN ONLY BELONG TO THE CHILDREN OF GOD!"

Beloved, this means that the "sons of God" can only come forth from the "children of God," or in other words, the "manchild" can only come forth from the "woman" (she who is made up of "sun clad" believers, but is yet to come to full maturity in Christ for she is still in a sense, a spiritual "child," not having put the self-life fully to death). The manifestation of the sons of God will not be the disclosure of God's offspring in the infant stage (teknion) or the adolescent stage (teknon)... No, it shall be a manifestation of those who have come to the full stature of Christ; nothing less than Christ's own perfection (that's maturity)! Oh, may the spirit of wisdom and revelation open the eyes of your understanding to this wonderful truth!

This article is getting a little bit long, and I want to try to wrap it up, but I would like to take a quick look at the life of Jesus as it is revealed to us in the Gospels because in His life we can see

a pattern which reveals the three stages of spiritual growth in a believer ... from infancy (teknion) ... to puberty (teknon) ... to maturity (huios). This is revealed in Jesus' manger birth and circumcision on the eighth day, to His appearing in the temple at age 12, to His adoption ceremony and His Father's proclamation of His Sonship at the Jordan at age 30 ("30" is the biblical number for "maturity").

The pattern shown to us in the life of Jesus, is also revealed to us in the life of the average Israelite male (which I mentioned earlier). Jesus then spiritually amplifies for us that pattern with His life.

In the life of the average Hebrew boy there were three major events which drew broad public attention to him. The first of these events was his "Circumcision," which occurred when he was an infant, at eight days old. This was the moment that he was marked as a "covenant man" in Israel, and was celebrated throughout the community.

The second major event was his "Bar-Mitzvah," which took place as he was about to enter into puberty. The word Bar-Mitzvah actually means "a son accountable," and this signified the time, not only when he was held accountable for keeping the Commandments of God, but also when he was to become an apprentice under his father in the family business. This, too, was celebrated as a very special event in the life of the child, just as it is today.

The third event was what was known as the "Huiiothesia," or the (young man's) "adoption ceremony." The word "Huiiothesia" means "Son Placement," and indicates the time when a male child reached what was considered to be the age of maturity (somewhere around 30). At this time, the father of the young man would place his hand on the head of his son and openly proclaim, "This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased! I bestow upon him now all of my riches and power and authority (through power of attorney) so that he might act on my behalf in all of my affairs."

Beloved friends, can you see that the three experiences that are described in the life of an Israelite male, and the three stages shown to us in the life of Jesus, are to be spiritually discerned so that we may understand God's enduring process for our own spiritual growth into sons? Can you now understand why Jesus would say to Mary and Joseph at age 12, "Know ye not that I must be about My Father's business?" Can you see that He was proclaiming His just then entered apprenticeship under the Father? At that point Jesus was just entering an 18 year stage of "learning the family business" so to speak. His Sonship ceremony at the Jordan which would "fulfill all righteousness" and launch His glorious Sonship ministry would not be performed until He reached the full stage of "maturity." The Holy Spirit's descent like a dove upon Jesus was in essence the hand of the Father coming upon the Son to proclaim His Sonship ministry! The Father said, "This is My Beloved Son in Whom I AM well pleased!" Many of us have not understood the full ramifications of those words, or that ceremony, until now. But there is now a great light of revelation being shed upon such things in this day.

Why?

Because the time for our adoption as "sons" is drawing nigh beloved. Our Father is preparing to bestow the riches and the power and the glory of His Kingdom upon a people, and that without measure! But He won't give that power to spiritual infants! No, He won't. Nor will He give it to spiritual children... But the Father is waiting (as is all of creation) to bring forth sons. This is the precious fruit of the earth for which the Husbandman has been patiently waiting.

Oh yeah ... one last thing.

Growth from spiritual childhood to that of a son comes only one way beloved... lots and lots of chastening, suffering, trials, and tribulation. Hardly the escape "rapture" folks ... sorry.

May the Lord give us the grace to endure the trials and the chastening that we must suffer unto sonship, and that, so that He may have that company of sons upon whom He can place the great authority and power that is needed to rule and reign with Him in the Kingdom of God.

(<http://www.sonstoglory.com/spiritualadoption.htm>) DEC 20, 2008

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Teknon, Huios & Huiiothesia

A writer said:

"In the Western world we think of adoption in terms of taking a child from one family and making it a member of another. However, the Greek or Roman father adopted as a son his own child. Birth made him a child (teknon); adoption made him a son (huios). Between the period of birth and adoption, there were stages of growth, education and discipline, until the maturity was reached for adoption into sonship. With adoption the son was recognized as one who could faithful (sic) represent the father. He had arrived at the point of maturity, where the father could entrust him with the responsibility of overseeing the family business. The son becomes the "heir" of his father's inheritance. Birth gives one the right to the inheritance, but adoption gives one the participation in the inheritance.

R. B. Jones, Bible commentator states: "To be a son is infinitely more than to be a child, and the terms are never loosely used by the Holy Spirit. It is not a difference in relationship, but in position. Every "born again" child of God has in him the nature of His Father, and is a beloved member of His Father's family. Adoption cannot make the child any nearer or dearer, yet it gives the child a status he did not enjoy before, a position he did not occupy. It is his recognition as an adult son, the attaining of his maturity, the seal upon his growth to maturity of mind and character. A child is one born of God; a son is one taught of God. A child has God's nature; a son has God's character.

Another aspect of this Greek word, huios, that cannot be overlooked involves "likeness." The New Testament contains the concept expressed in the proverb, "Like father, like son" (Matt. 5:45,48). It was typical Hebrew usage to employ the word "son" to express likeness. For instance, those who are peacemakers will be called God's sons because they are like God (Matt. 5:9). God's likeness, His image, will be "stamped" upon those who have been brought to maturity and adopted as sons (Rom. 8:29; I John 3:2-3).

Sonship and Maturity

The Bible speaks of sonship both in terms of "positional" and "experiential" truth. For example, some passages relate to the "positional" aspect of sonship, where God declares us legally to be "adopted" as sons through His sovereign election (Rom. 8:15; Gal. 3:26; 4:5-7). The Scriptures do clearly indicate that there is a degree to which we are expected to enter into sonship

“experientially,” in this present age (Matt. 5:9, 45; Rom. 8:14). For instance, we are exhorted in Hebrews 6:1 to “press on to maturity” (i.e.; “sonship”), to think as mature men (I Cor. 14:20), and we are to grow up in all aspects into Him (Ephes. 4:15).

All of these passages, and numerous others, call us to maturity, which is synonymous with the concept of sonship.” (Understanding “Sonship” by Don Walker)

Another writer says:

"The word translated poorly as “adoption” is *huiiothesia* and it occurs only five times in the New Testament. It is not found in the gospels although the proper meaning or principle is there. Before we examine the five Scriptures, and the context in which they are used, it is better to first look at the word *huiiothesia* itself. Lexicons do not agree precisely on the meaning of the word. Typically, they give meanings such as, adoption as a son, but this is a vague compromise."

"The word *huiiothesia* is never used to mean make anyone a son. It is to place a son. Each son who is placed already exists as a son. The Greek does not suggest making anyone a son and some lexicons point this out. Strong G5206 also gives the placing of a son. Following this up in Thayer we find: “That relationship which God was pleased to establish between himself and the Israelites, in preference to all other nations ... that blessed state looked for in the future life after the visible return of Christ from heaven ...”

"The word appears in five verses where we should read placing of a son rather than “adoption.”

"Rom 8:15 “For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption (placing of a son), whereby we cry, Abba, father”.

It is this indwelling spirit which enables those who are begotten from above to cry [krazo] “Abba Father”. Dr. Bullinger’s comments: Abba that is, father. Is said that slaves were never allowed to use the word Abba. Strictly therefore, it can be employed only by those who have received the gift of the Divine nature.

Paul continues:

v16 The Spirit beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.

Rom 8:22,23 “For we know that the whole creation (*ktisis*) groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now, and not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption (placing as sons), to wit, the redemption of our body”.

In this verse we can see an explanation of what adoption is, namely the redemption of our body.

"The AV does not discriminate between *teknon* and *huios*." (W.E. Vine in Vine's New Testament Words)

(All emphasis are mine - SG) POSTED BY STEPHEN GARRETT AT 7:53 AM
(<http://baptistgadfly.blogspot.co.uk/2008/12/teknon-huios-huiiothesia.html>)

Divine sonship Rodrigo Abarca

A house, according to the Scriptures, is basically a family. Thus, for example, "Jacob's House" is not the physical place where Jacob lived with his children, but his family and descendants. The house of God is, then, the family of God. And this family is made up by His sons. These sons have come to be part of the house by means of faith in His Son.

Small children and mature sons

In the New Testament, and especially in John's writings, there are two words that are translated indistinctly with the appearance of the word "son" in many versions. The first of them is "teknon" and it is always used in connection with the saints. The second is "huios" and it is always used to refer to the Lord Jesus Christ and, on occasions, to the saints. Thus, every time that we find in our Bible the word "son" applied to the Lord, the Greek expression is "huios." But, when we find the word "son" referring to the believers, the Greek words can be "teknon" or "huios."

The difference of these words in the Greek is extremely important, because it is related with the eternal purpose of God. In our western culture we don't have two words that mean exactly the same thing as the Greek words "teknon" and "huios" And this is due to the fact that certain customs behind these words existed which don't exist in our culture. When the apostle Paul, in Ephesians 1:5 tells us that we were predestined by God to "adoption as sons by Jesus Christ" it refers to one of those customs. For us, the adoption of a son is a legal act by which a boy born of biologically different parents is introduced into a different family, with whom they have no biological link.

Therefore, he becomes another "son" in that family. It doesn't matter what age he is because for us a "son", in this sense, is somebody who we recognize legally as such and who in turn recognizes us as parents.

Therefore, when we read that God predestined us to be adopted as his sons (Eph. 1:5), we mistakenly think - due to our socio-cultural background-that this is the "legal" act by which, through justification and reconciliation, God received us into His family as children. We were strangers, but now we are "adoptive sons" by means of Jesus Christ. Although all the above-mentioned is correct in a sense, in another, it is not. The New Testament "adoption" is, truly, something very different to what we call adoption in our days, since it is linked with the final and supreme goal of God for his own people. To understand this we need to take note of the marked distinction that the Greek text makes between a "teknon" and a "huios."

In that time, "teknon" referred to small children. During the process of their formation, the children were in the father's house, subjected under governors and tutors until the time in which they reached a mature age. This formation process received the name of 'discipline', and its objective was to transform the children into mature sons, able to inherit and to administer the father's house and his belongings. So the 'teknon' were the children in a formative process, being prepared for the responsible life of an adult. On the other hand, when a boy reached the age of maturity, the father prepared a great party and he invited all his relatives, friends and servants. That day the boy was dressed with different clothes to those which he had worn until then, and was presented before all the invited guests as his father's legitimate heir, with all the rights and

responsibilities that it implied. From then on, he would not be considered a "teknon" any longer, but a "huios", that is, a young adult and a mature son who could take his place next to his father in the administration and government of the house. This ceremony, by means of which a teknon became a huios, received the name of "adoption" (of the Greek "huiiothesia" that literally means, "to put in the place as a son")

However, because the word "adoption" has such a different meaning at the present time, it is preferable that we use the expression "sonship" in its place, because it better reflects the character of the issue that we are considering.

Growing toward maturity

As a result, sonship was not the beginning of a process but the end. We enter into the house of God as "teknon", just as John tells us in his gospel: "But as many as received him, to them gave he the right to become children of God (teknon), even to them that believe on his name who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. (John. 1:12-13). So, what transforms us into 'teknon ' of God is a new birth by means of which the divine life is imparted by the Spirit to our spirit, which thus makes us participants of the divine nature. Hebrews tells us that God is the Father of our spirits. Christ has made our spirit his dwelling place by means of the Holy Spirit.

This is the only way of entering into the house of God. It is not something simply external nor is it a change of attitude, form of life or direction; a clinging to certain beliefs or mental convictions, or experiencing certain emotions. Everything by itself is insufficient to introduce us into the house of God: a new birth carried out in the root of our being is required. The renovation and regeneration of our spirit by work of the power of Christ's resurrection are, then, the starting point of the process that will finally transform us into mature sons of God (huioi).

Without this new birth all the rest of Christian life becomes inaccessible. Because the life that is imparted to us through new birth has the power to make us grow and to make us develop and to conform us fully to the image of God's Son (huios), Jesus Christ. Those who are currently 'teknon ' of God, according to John, are those of us who have the seed of God within us, that is to say, the Son of God in our spirit. This seed is, in itself, holy and unable to sin. But God works from the center toward our being's circumference. First He puts His life (His Son's life) in our spirit, and then, by means of a long process of formation and discipline, this life expands until transforming our being. It is this process that is progressively converting us into a "huios" of God. As we learn how to live by means of the divine life, governed by His Spirit, and we make our all the Father's thoughts and purposes (when appropriating that which is of Christ), we cease to be teknon and we become huios. At the end of that process is the 'huiiothesia' or 'sonship'. So maturity is something that should be reached during our walk with the Lord here on the earth. The final perfection of this process is only reserved for the time to come; that is, our full sonship when in glory.

The fundamental question then is, are we in possession of that life? If our answer is affirmative, then are we living by means of that life? Because reaching maturity means that we have learned how to live by means of the divine life, or, what is synonymous, the Holy Spirit has taken a place of governing over all our being, as the apostle Paul tells us: "Because all who are led by the Spirit, these are the sons (huioi) of God." When this happens, Christ can be expressed without us being an obstacle. And this is not something merely external. The sons of God are manifested when

they express and show Christ in their words and actions. John's expression to refer to the Christian life in its visible dimension is the "manifestation", because it is something within and invisible that one reveals and makes visible. He is manifest through the sons of God. They are the incarnation of an eternal purpose, a heavenly mystery. It is the divine and eternal life manifested in men and women on the earth. Because this was true of Christ, the Son of God who was manifest on the earth, and to whose image we must be conformed as sons of God.

"That which we have heard, that which we have seen... and our hands handled... and declare unto you the life, the eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us." Eternal Life is something that must be manifest and become visible among men. John tells us that this is the proof of his presence and operation in the sons of God. A child of God is one who possesses the life of God; on the other hand, a mature son is one who lives by means of the divine life. So, the test and the evidence of our growth and development as sons of God are not in our doctrines, our creeds, our declarations, nor our teachings, but in the presence of the life and its manifestation, which makes us increasingly similar to His Son, Jesus Christ. A life that, in all senses, is a constant miracle; a life that triumphs time after time over the world, over sin, over death and over Satan, because it is the resurrection life, Christ's own life in us through the Spirit.

Therefore, what God looks for in us, above all things, is not a mere external behavior, or the statement and systematizing of certain correct and "biblical" doctrines, but the development and the manifestation of His life. It is not that we are simply good husbands, parents, workers or believers, but rather that His Son is expressed through us. It is not the human life trying to imitate the divine life, but the divine life being expressed through the human life. It isn't the human mind systematizing and exposing truths, but the revelation and living knowledge of Jesus Christ, as the sum of all divine truths, imparted in our spirit and illuminated in our hearts by the work of His Spirit. How could we explain in words the infinite distance that there is between one and the other?

Bringing many sons to glory

The house of God is the place where those "children" of God are being prepared and formed "unto adoption as sons" (or "for Sonship") (Ephesians 1:5) along this dispensation. Hebrews tell us that God will bring many sons to glory (Heb. 2:10). And the Greek word there is "huios." It is worth saying that that which God waits to present in glory is mature sons and not small and immature children. For that reason, the whole letter to Hebrews is concerned with an urgent call to grow toward maturity.

Glory and Sonship are identical. The transferal of the children of God to glory won't simply be a physical event from one place to another; from a place called 'earth' to another called 'heaven'. It will be much more than that. It will be a dispensational change, the definitive introduction of a totally new order. A heavenly order by means of His children who will eternally express His glory. Thus, the glory of God is something that must be deeply wrought into His children before His final manifestation in the divine Sonship.

But let us first ask, what is glory? In the Scriptures, the glory of God is the expression and the manifestation of God Himself, in His character, His power and His authority. The glory of God is inseparable from Himself: "I am Jehovah, that is my name; and my glory will I not give to another..." (Is. 42:8). The works of God express the glory of God, that is to say, they express the kind of God that He is, His exclusivity and total sovereignty with regard to all that exists. The

purpose of God is to express the fullness of His glory by means of His sons. This is something that completely overcomes all our natural capacity to understand and to comprehend. For who can know the fullness of what God is? The most powerful of the heavenly beings that surround His throne cannot even understand the infinite greatness and power of His glory.

But God -the Scripture says- according to the kind intention of His will, wanted to share the fullness of His glory with His sons and to manifest it in them to the whole universe. Nevertheless, how could we, as creations, who are even inferior to the angels, express His glory? The answer is this: by means of His divine life imparted in our spirit and expanded to give total life to our whole being. And this expansion is what is being completed in us each day by means of the operation of the cross on our natural man and the power of resurrection operating upon our interior or spiritual man. An increasingly excellent and eternal weight of glory goes on accumulating in us according to the measure that we are formed as sons of God. Finally, when a sufficient and overflowing measure of that glory has secretly and invisibly accumulated in the interior of the church (the corporate company of His sons) through the present dispensation, His visible manifestation, the day of adoption and of the redemption of our body will come (Rom. 8:23, where the redemption of the body is also called "huiiothesia" or Sonship). Then, our transfer to glory won't simply be a physical or objective event, but also the final moment of a subjective process that goes on within us, changing us with ever increasing glory into the same image as our Lord.

In that day, our body will even be transformed into the likeness of the body of His glory, because that glorified body will be the last stage of the work that God is carrying out in His "children", to transform them into mature sons. We must therefore be prepared for that day; formed and trained in all spiritual lessons that will enable us to enjoy the inheritance of the saints in light. Because flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God, nor corruption inherit the incorruptible. Because of this, if so many of those who call themselves Christians had the slightest glimmer of the coming glory, they would soon see that their natural and earthly life is inadequate for this glory.

Therefore, a work must be carried out before we can enter into glory; an expansive work of the divine nature and life in our being until Christ fills all and in all. Because only what there is of him in us gives us the capacity of being taken to glory. By means of a new birth we were introduced in the house of God as His children and for this reason, we have in us the potentiality to become mature sons and reach glory. This is God's final goal for this dispensation. Regeneration is the starting point. For this reason we become "teknon" of God. But God wants to obtain, above all other things, a corporate company of "huios" who understand His thoughts and take the responsibility of carrying out His will on the earth. He needs His children to grow toward maturity and finally, take their place as His legitimate heirs, with all the rights and duties that are implied as coheirs with His first-born Son. This is His final goal: the Sonship of His children; the bringing of His "huios" to glory.

(<http://www.livingwaters.cl/magazine/23/03.htm>)

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