

The Spirit of Adoption

Position, fruitfulness and eternity

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Introduction

To understand adoption we have to look in some depth at what it means to be a son.

Here we will try to keep it as simple to understand as possible.

Once understood we will be better placed to understand God's purposes, to be like Jesus and to do the works He did – it is as important as that!

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Chapter 1

What the adoption is not.

In the English language the term adoption means 'legally to take another's child and bring it up as one's own' *Oxford English Dictionary*.

So when we consider the term 'family*' we take in both naturally born children and adopted children

* Family - A group consisting of two parents and their children *Oxford English dictionary*.

We have to discard completely the usage of the word adoption that we are used.

Biblical adoption is not ..

Biblically the word adoption does not mean being brought into the family of God.

We are born into the family of God by rebirth.

Jesus did not say you must be adopted again – no, He said, '*Unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*' John 3:3

This Jesus explained more to Nicodemus when he came to see Jesus by night.

'Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of flesh is flesh and that which is born of Spirit is spirit.' John 3:5

God does not adopt believers as children – adoption is **not** a putting of unbelievers into the family of God making them believers.

So we will move on to see what adoption is all about.

Chapter 2

What it is.

Adoption is a term involving aspects of the relationship of sonship with God enjoyed by every born again believer.

To fully grasp our position as sons of God we will need to look more closely at the use of the word son in the scripture.

- 1 Greek '*teknon*' - a child born by descent - the emphasis 'being born - that which is born.' Frequently translated as 'child' or 'children.' Also translated as son or daughter. We as *teknon* are those who are born of God
- 2 Greek '*pais*' - according to Greek dictionaries the word refers to aspects of descent and age and condition. It is translated variously as, son, servant, child, maid, menservants. The diminutive '*paidon*' being a young child.
- 3 Greek '*huios*' literally a son. Translated as child, children, son and sons. The emphasis being relationship with the Father within the family. In our understanding of adoption it is a son as a *huios* that is relevant.

The moment one believes in Jesus as his or her Saviour he or she is born again by the Spirit of God and immediately becomes a *teknon*, a *paidon*, and a *huios*. A son of God, literally born into the kingdom of God.

The moment one believes in Jesus the Holy Spirit brings rebirth to our human spirit, which had been dwelling in death. Immediately the Holy Spirit takes up residence within our human spirit never to leave and guaranteeing our eternal salvation. This makes us a *teknon*, a son, a member of the family of God.

In Ephesians 1:3-5 Paul starts to explain God's actions and purpose. *'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 should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will.'*

Here Paul is saying it was predetermined, by His choice in foreknowledge, that we would be brought into sonship relationship with God the Father.

So we will need to look at adoption to understand what it means.

The Spirit of adoption

'You did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, Abba, Father. The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.'* Romans 8:15-16

* Children of God here is *teknon* – children born into the family of God literally.

In this scripture the Spirit of adoption enables / encourages us to cry out 'Abba, Father.' Then the Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are *teknon* children born of God. The scripture goes on to say, if *teknon* children then heirs and joint heirs with Christ. We are heirs and joint heirs due to our rebirth by God – done by the Holy Spirit.

Vines Expository Dictionary of Bible Words explains adoption like this, 'God does not adopt believers as children; they are begotten as such by His Holy Spirit through faith. Adoption is a term involving the dignity of the relation of believers as sons; it is not a putting into the family by spiritual birth, but a putting into the position of believers as sons.'

What is Adoption

'*huiiothesia*' is the Greek word for adoption. It is made up of *huios* and *thesis* – where *huios* is son and *thesis* is placing or positioning.

So biblically adoption signifies the placing and position of a son, given to one to whom it does not naturally belong.

It is the Lord's intent that we should all receive the adoption as sons – that is the placing in position just like Jesus.

What is predestination?

We read 'predestined us to adoption as sons.' Eph 1:5

The Greek word '*prognosis*' is foreknowledge – God's foreknowledge and intent. It shows God's intent for us but does not exclude our freewill by us determining every step of our journey through life. However the final outcome is predetermined.

So at the point of being born again we receive the Spirit of adoption. That is a characteristic imparted by God through the Holy Spirit into us from initial belief.

The Spirit of adoption is all about our relationship with God as His sons – not about becoming His Son by rebirth.

Chapter 3

Starting as sons.

'For you are all sons (huios) of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus...' Galatians 3:26-28

We have previously shown that being born of God as a child (*teknon*) makes us an heir, a joint heir with Christ.

Now Paul will tell the Galatians in verse 29 *'you are all sons (huios) of God through faith in Jesus Christ.'* It will be as sons (*huios*) that we will receive the Spirit of adoption – that is the placing of us into position within the family of God. Not placing into the family but placing into position within the family – this by the Holy Spirit. *'For as many as are led by the Spirit of God these are the huios of God.'* Romans 8:14

The principle he is teaching applies to all born again believers of course. Adoption within the family of God is connected with our relationship with the Father as sons. This is positioning us for the works He has prepared for us beforehand so that we can walk in them. (Ephesians 2:10)

So we all qualify as *huios* when we become believers. So that includes women because in Christ there is no distinction between the sexes. Christ's kingdom is a spiritual kingdom which can and does exert influence over creation and the whole natural realm.

Just babes

When we first become believers we are likened to babes. Babes are expected to grow and mature over time and by the influence of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

As spiritual babes are urged to take the pure milk of the word that we may grow thereby. 1 Peter 2:2

Under guardians

Babes in Christ are equally heirs with Christ, but whilst babes we are under the guardianship of the Holy Spirit.

'Now I say that the heir so long as he is a child does not differ from a slave, though he is master of all, but is under guardianship and stewards until the time appointed by the father.'* Galatian 4:1-2

* (In the Greek it is *nepios* babe – a child without coherent speech)

Chapter 4

Maturing as sons

As heirs and joint heirs with Christ we will inherit the kingdom with Christ. Without doubt that will be the final outcome – it is the promise of scripture. *‘Knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of inheritance.’* (Colossians 3:24)

However, there is a journey from starting as spiritual babes to becoming mature. The purpose of adoption goes with bringing *huios* sons to maturity through being led by the Spirit. *‘For as many as are led by the Spirit, these are the (huios) sons of God.’* Romans 8:14

Biblically adoption signifies the place and condition of a son given to one to whom it does not naturally belong.

It is the Lord’s intent that we should all receive the fullness of the adoption as sons – that is the placing in position just like Jesus

Paul goes on to say that when we were literal babes we were in bondage under the elements of the world – so the Lord God sent Jesus to redeem us – that we might receive the adoption as sons. And ...

... He sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying out ‘Abba, Father.’ Therefore we are no longer slaves but sons and as sons heirs of God through Christ.

Growing in grace - sanctification

The life of a born again believer is a journey, from babe unable to speak coherently, to mature Christian reflecting the character of Jesus and participating in His works.

It is the work of the Holy Spirit in us and with us –
‘But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.’
2 Corinthians 3:18

This work of the Holy Spirit changing us bit by bit from glory to glory is His ongoing work within us. This is developing character change and refinement bringing us more and more into maturity – into His likeness.

Our co-operation

We do have an important part to play in this process of growing into maturity. The scripture is given to us for instruction in righteousness. The scriptures are able to make us wise. The scriptures are there *‘that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.’* 2 Timothy 3:17

‘Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of God.’ 2 Timothy 2:15

Spirit and truth working together

Our journey to maturity will be enabled by the Holy Spirit leading us into all truth. Our study of the scriptures will fill our hearts and minds with truth – essential in a world full of lies and distortions.

My frequent prayer, ‘Holy Spirit fill me with more and more truth and understanding’ helps to set the direction of my journey towards maturity – I recommend it.

The sons of God

‘As many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons (huios) of God.’ Romans 8:14

To be led by the Spirit of God it is necessary to put to death the deeds of the body so that we are not living according to the flesh. (8:13)

Being led by and living according to the Spirit will be the evidence of being put into position within the family - knowing one’s calling in the Lord, some will be apostles, some will be prophets, some will be pastors and teachers, many will be called to secular occupations. All are expected to be used in the gifts of the Spirit – teaching, exhorting, ministering, giving, being merciful – indeed behaving like a son, loving without hypocrisy, abhorring evil, clinging to what is good, preferring one another, not lagging in diligence, fervent in Spirit serving the Lord.

Pursuing love and being zealous for spiritual gifts as found in 1 Corinthians 12 and especially prophesy 14:1 becoming mature.

Chapter 5

As He is - Glorifying the Father

When we consider the life of Jesus we will see the principle of being placed in position as a son – the ‘adoption – the placing’ at work.

When Jesus was baptized God the Father spoke from heaven – *‘This is My beloved son in whom I am well pleased.’* When Jesus had been baptized John *‘saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him.’* At this time Jesus was 30 years old - that is the age at which Jewish priests took up their position as priests. (Matthew 3:15-17 and Mark 1:9-11 and Luke 3:21-23)

Jesus position in this ‘adoption - placing’ was further confirmed at the transfiguration - *‘Jesus took Peter, James and John his brother, led them up on a high mountain by themselves; and He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun and His clothes became as white as the light’* Then a voice came from heaven, *‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him.’*
Matthew 17:1-2 and 5

In Jesus’ day

At the time appointed by a father he would take his son to the marketplace and announce ‘this is my son, you can deal / trade with him as with me - on my account.’ **This is the purpose of adoption** - the putting in place of the son who can now fully represent his father and the family. For believers today the principle of adoption is the same - glorifying the Father in so doing.

Before Jesus was 30, was He the Son of God? – yes of course. There is no record of Jesus going about teaching and performing miracles. What we hear of Jesus after He went to Jerusalem with his parents to the Passover when He was 12, is that they returned to Nazareth and He was subject to them. The next reference is to His baptism by John.

The placing of Jesus into His position where He speaks for the Father and does the works of the Father came after His baptism by John when the Spirit came down and clothed Him with power. For us, this coming of the Spirit with power, is the adoption as sons - already sons born of God we are placed as sons in position for fruitfulness.

Jesus own confession confirms this recorded in Luke 4:18-19. *'The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.'*

By His confession all that He did, that we find recorded in the scripture, he did under the anointing of the Holy Spirit. That He did the works of His Father is recorded for us in John 5:36, 9:4, 10:25, 10:32, 10:37-8, 14:10-11.

As He is so are we in this world. 1 John 4:17

We have just established that Jesus did the works of the Father in the anointing and power of the Holy Spirit.

Then Jesus went on to say: *'Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also, and greater works than these he will do, because I go to the Father. And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name, I will do it.'* John 14:12-14

How do we ask in His name. Surely not by just adding 'in His name' to our prayers. Rather by being in the same position of adoption – placed in position as sons – and by the same anointing of the Holy Spirit.

The promise of the Father.

Before Jesus' ascension He said to the disciples: *'Behold I send the promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power* from on high.'* Luke 24:49

This is the promise - that you will receive power when the Spirit comes upon you. This promise was fulfilled for the disciples at Pentecost – seen visually, being like tongues of fire upon each of them – and heard as they all spoke in other tongues. This was the intention of the adoption for them - the placing in position as sons – from this point they would start to do the same works as Jesus. Thus glorifying the Father.

Receiving the promise of the Father is similar for us, frequently evidenced by speaking in tongues.

Not every born again believer receives power - because some are taught that everything of the Spirit is given at rebirth or at water baptism. This is not the case as shown by Acts 8 :14-20 where born again, baptized believers had not received the Spirit in power.*

* Power is *dunamis* – that is power capable of action and in action. Inherent ability to effect the purposes of God as He directs.

Chapter 6

The sower

When we consider our own lives and observe the lives of others it becomes very clear that neither we nor many other brethren are really fulfilling Jesus' statement of 'greater works.' The parable of the sower explains all:

'A sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some fell by the wayside; and it was trampled down, and the birds of the air devoured it. Some fell on rock; and as soon as it sprang up, it withered away because it lacked moisture. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up with it and choked it. But others fell on good ground, sprang up, and yielded a crop a hundred fold.' Luke 8:5-9 (Mark 4:3-8 and Matthew 13:3-8 both give more detail – the seed on good ground, some yielding 30 fold some 60 fold some 100 fold.)

The parable is about those who hear the word of God.

The wayside – the word is not understood, trampled under foot and whisked away by the enemy. Surely and obviously this refers to those who don't believe.

The rock, stony places – the word is received with joy. But here the word develops no root due to lack of moisture. Received, that is taken hold of, with joy means these are born again, but persecution and tribulation cause these believers to stumble and fall away – no yield.

Among thorns – the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches and the pleasures of life choke the word and he becomes unfruitful. No crop.

The good ground – is where there is understanding, acceptance, a noble heart and fruit bearing with patience.

The parable explains what we observe around us and in our churches – some are amongst us for ‘religion itself’ not because they believe in the saving work of Jesus – not born again – on the wayside; some come for a while, experience troubles and soon depart – on the rocks; some are choked by cares of this world and the deceit of riches bringing no fruit to maturity – amongst the weeds and thorns; some bear fruit – these, we see their love for Jesus, their love for the brethren and we see them, to some degree, doing the works that Jesus did and operating the gifts of the Spirit – good ground.

Whilst every believer will receive the eventual adoption of their body, on entering into glory, as we will see, not every believer receives adoption (placing in position with power) whilst in the physical body on earth – some remain in stages of childhood.

‘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 should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to the adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will.’ Ephesians 1:3-5

Here the adoption as sons - not the becoming a son for that was at new birth – the placing of sons is position for fruitfulness. All sons have this potential.

Chapter 7

Creation is eagerly waiting

It seems that even in the early days of Christianity there were those who did not progress:

'For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. (nepios - infant too young to speak)' Hebrews 5:12-13

In Romans 8 Paul sets out what it means to be a son of God:

*'Therefore, brethren, we are debtors – not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the spirit you put to death the deeds of the body you will live. **For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons (huios) of God.** For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out 'Abba, Father' The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children (teknon) of God. And if children (teknon) then heirs – heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.'*
8:12-17

Paul's Emphasis – we are *teknon* children of God by rebirth making us co-heirs with Christ. The relationship with the Father sons is seen in those who are led by the Spirit.

Then he goes on:

'For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly awaits for the revealing of the sons (huios – led by the Spirit) of God. 18-19

Creation is eagerly awaiting the revealing of the sons (huios – led by the Spirit) of God because it has 'been subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; because creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children (teknon) of God.' 8:20-21

Our journey through our Christian lives started as babes (*nepios*) – we needed to feed on the pure milk of the word - the apostle Peter put it like this – *'as newborn babes desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby.'* 1 Peter 2:2

As we saw in Hebrews growth was and is the expectation – but not being evidenced by them. When we feed on the word, we grow thereby, from helpless babes into mature sons.

In the context of everyday life

We are not expected be loudly banging the drum, shouting out Jesus at every step. Rather we are called to a quiet and sober lifestyle. Demonstrating Jesus by our character and our actions as led by the Spirit. Operating gifts of the Spirit as we go about daily life.

The scripture has it ; *'We urge you brethren, that you increase more and more; that you aspire to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you, that you may walk properly toward those who are outside and that you may lack nothing.'*

1 Thessalonians 4:11-12

'See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is.' Ephesians 5:15-16

As we go about our everyday lives, walking in love and light, listen to the Spirit. Expect the Spirit to guide and to speak here in the secular world. When we have received the adoption (the placing in position as a *huioi*) we can expect to do the same works as Jesus. He did His works in a legalistic and secular world.

We started out as babes in Christ. The Spirit kept changing us from glory to glory and by feeding on the pure milk of the word we grew – that is how it should be. But the parable of the sower shows us that not all who come to believe grow to be fruitful.

Then the question, 'Have we received the Spirit and power, usually evidenced by speaking in tongues? Are we being led by the Spirit by hearing His voice and discerning His wisdom and guidance? Are we experiencing and operating in any of the gifts of the Spirit laid out for us in 1 Corinthians 12?

We are still on the journey for there is the eventual adoption of new bodies to come – which every born again believer will experience and enjoy.

Meanwhile we can eagerly desire to become more like Jesus in character and by doing the greater works He spoke of. Our understanding of truth - that is doctrine is essential in this respect.

Some are taught that at new birth we receive everything of the Spirit – there is no further blessing. This is inadequate. At new birth our human spirit is brought back to life and the Holy Spirit takes up residence guaranteeing our inheritance.

Some are taught that on water baptism we receive everything else the Spirit gives. This is also wrong. Water baptism is declaration of our new position as believers in Christ.

These two errors hold back many, many believers from receiving the gift of the Father – the receiving of the Holy Spirit in power (Luke 24:39) Though there are some, a few, who do receive the baptism with power at rebirth or at baptism.

When Peter and John came to Samaria they found believers who had been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. The Holy Spirit had not come upon them. When Peter and John prayed and laid hands on them they received the Holy Spirit – in such a demonstrative way that Simon the sorcerer sought this power for himself.

Today many expect no power and exhibit no power often due to the wrong teaching.

Creation eagerly awaits! Creation wants to see the *huios* of God, led by the Spirit, doing the works God prepared beforehand for us. Thus glorifying God as His power is seen in the operation of the gifts of the Spirit and the working of miracles.

It is a journey. Wherever you are on the journey lets seek more and more from the Lord.

Chapter 8

The final stage of adoption – transfer to heaven

Even so we will find a growing awareness that there is much more to come.

‘Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.’

Romans 8:23

Here the placing in position as sons is making us fit for heaven, and is for all born again believers regardless of what they have or haven't done on their journey so far. It is the redemption of us as purchased possessions as stated in Ephesians 1:13-14:

‘In Him also you trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in who also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.’

This climax is yet to come when – *‘in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal, must put on immortality.’*

1 Corinthians 15:52-3

Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom – the final adoption will come. Creation will be released from its bondage to corruption - there will be a new heaven and new earth.

And, 'The earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.' Habakkuk 2:14

The stages towards this eventual adoption

- 1) At re birth we become children born of God – our journey begins. The process of being changed from glory to glory by the indwelling Spirit begins.
- 2) At the receiving of power at the baptism of the Spirit. This gift of the Father puts us into position as sons to do the works He has prepared for us.
- 3) On death or rapture – the new body ready for heaven itself.

We are children of God at every stage. The Spirit of adoption working in us changes our placing within the family as we journey towards our final destiny.

This type of study asks for self assessment. A son (*huios*) lives in close relationship with his Father through the Spirit – he is not living for himself but for his Lord and Saviour who has purchased him/her by blood sacrifice.

Is my relationship with the Lord such that I find myself crying out 'Abba, Father'

Have I received the gift of the Father – the baptism with the Spirit with power?

Do I now live by the Spirit and show the fruit thereof.

Do any of the gifts of the Spirit function in my everyday life? 1 Corinthians 12

Do I know and function in the things the Lord requires of me. We call this our calling.

Do any of the signs of casting out demons, speaking in tongues, taking up serpents, being unaffected by poisons and laying hands on the sick and seeing them recover follow you in everyday life? Mark 16:17-18

If you are like me it will be, a 'yes' and 'no' answer – yes to some limited extent and no, not as fully as I read in scripture. So - 'I want and need more Lord, I want my life to glorify You.'

If No, not at all – then seek the Lord for the gift of the Father, the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and receive power from on high. Receive the placing into position as a *huios* led by the Spirit.

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