

ADOPTION

I. Biblical usages of "adoption"

- A. Greek word, *huiosthesia*. From *huis* = "son," and *tithemi* = "to put or place"
- B. New Testament references:
 - Rom. 8:15 - "you have received a spirit of *adoption as sons* by which we cry out, 'Abba! Father!'"
 - Rom. 8:23 - "we groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for *adoption as sons*, the redemption of the body."
 - Rom. 9:4 - "Israelites, to whom belongs the *adoption as sons* and the glory and the covenants..."
 - Gal. 4:5 - "redeem those under the Law, that we might receive the *adoption as sons*. And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!'"
 - Eph. 1:5 - "He predestined us to *adoption as sons* through Jesus Christ to Himself."

II. Physical adoption.

- A. Hebrew culture.
 - 1. No mention of adoption in Old Testament Law.
 - 2. Possible occasions of such. All outside of Palestine.
 - a. Moses - Exod. 2:10; Acts 7:21; Heb. 11:24
 - b. Genubath - I Kings 11:20
 - c. Esther - Esther 2:7,15
 - d. cf. II Sam. 7:14; Ezra 10:44
- B. Roman culture.
 - 1. Usually a man without natural offspring would adopt male as son. Seldom an infant.
 - 2. Young men sometimes adopted out of slavery; redeemed from such into privilege of son.
 - 3. Natural father sometimes "sold" a son to adoptive father.
 - 4. Paternal authority under Roman law was often severe.
 - 5. Adopted son became legal son with all legal rights and responsibilities.
 - 6. Some allege Roman adoption irrevocable. Use as basis for "once saved, always saved"
 - 7. Some allege Roman adoption was rite of manhood for placement as "adult son."
- C. Modern Western culture.
 - 1. Means of having children other than by natural generation. Usually at infancy. Alternative to abortion.
 - 2. Increasing objection to such in U.S.A.
 - a. Alleged psychological effects of "rejection."
 - b. Alleged harm of cross-racial adoption; "cultural genocide;" "no parents, better than white parents."
 - c. Under attack by pro-abortionists. "If baby can't grow up in care of natural mother, better off dead." "If put child up for adoption, never know if being mistreated, abused; always fearful, wondering, worried, anxious."
 - d. Christian objections. "Sins of birth parents will pop out in child." "If God does not give you natural children, then not meant to have any."

III. Figurative adoption.

A. Pauline metaphor.

1. Metaphor of filial relationship with God - Rom. 9:4
2. Metaphor of spiritual relationship - Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:5; Eph. 1:5
3. Metaphor of consummated and glorified relationship with God - Rom. 9:23
4. Not to be pressed as allegory.

B. Theological interpretations.

1. Filial and familial relationship of Christians with God. "The action of God by which people are brought into filial relationship with Him and conferred with privileges thereof" (ISBE). Not in conflict with birth metaphor of regeneration, but simply connotes additional idea of kinship relationship. New relationship with God as Father; the apex of privilege as part of God's family.
2. Some reject former interpretation and interpret "adoption" only of future relationship with God occurring at the "rapture" or in heaven. Point to early questionable Roman practice of natural father "setting a goal" for his son, who then could reach that goal at age 14, 18 or 21 and be "placed as an adult son" into manhood. They emphasize that "adoption" is not the "making of a son," but the "placing of a son." God, the Father's, "longed-for goal" for Christians is that we be "conformed to the image of His Son" (Rom. 8:29). Presently Christians are alleged to have only the "first-fruits" of the "Spirit of adoption," being but the down-payment for a future adoption yet to be received when we have final "placement" with God. This interpretation lacks documentary background and Biblical support. The pre-millennial eschatological "grid" creates necessity for this interpretation.