



Bible Student's Notebook™

The Herald of His Grace

Presenting every man perfect in Christ Jesus. Colossians 1:28

Volume 31
Issue 770

Adoption

by — Charles H. Welch (1880-1967)

“**A**doption” is the translation of the Greek *huiiothesia*, a word composed of *huios* “a son” and *thesis* “to place, or constitute.” The word is used only by Paul in the New Testament and occurs five times as follows:



Ye have received the spirit of adoption (Romans 8:15).

Waiting for the adoption (Romans 8:23).

To whom pertaineth the adoption (Romans 9:4).

That we might receive the adoption of sons (Galatians 4:5).

Unto the adoption of children (Ephesians 1:5).

To appreciate the full significance of the apostle’s figures in Galatians 3 and 4 they must be viewed in the light of the *law of adoption* – and more particularly, the Greek law of adoption. At the same time it must be remembered that Paul also uses the term in Romans, so that we must also bear in mind the Roman law on the subject.

There is no equivalent *law of adoption* in England. In Roman law, adoption was a very serious undertaking.

The adopted son became a member of the family, just as if he had been born of the blood of the adopter; and he was invested with all the privileges of a *filius familias*. As a matter of fact it was by

this means that the succession amongst the Caesars was continued. It never descended from father to son. What with poison, divorce, luxury and profligacy, the surviving members of a family were few, the descent suffered constant interruption, and whole families disappeared ... In no case amongst the Caesars did the throne pass from father to son ... Augustus was the great nephew of Julius Caesar, and was adopted from the Octavian into the Julian *gens*.¹ Tiberius was no relation at all to his predecessor: he was merely the son of Augustus’s wife, Livia, by Tiberius Claudius Nero. Here we have the introduction of another family – the Claudii ... Nero was the great nephew of his predecessor Claudius, who had adopted him in the year A.D. 50 (*Septimus Buss*).

Adoption was of two kinds: adoption proper, and adrogation.²

1. [Editor:] “A patrilineal clan of ancient Rome composed of several families of the same name claiming a common ancestor.” – American Heritage Dictionary
 “In ancient Rome, any of a group of aristocratic families, having a common name and claiming descent from a common ancestor in the male line.” – Collins Dictionary
 “A Roman family in the widest sense of the word, descended on the male line from a common ancestor, and therefore bearing a common name.” – Harper’s Dictionary of Classical Literature
2. “A species of adoption in ancient Rome, by which a person, capable of choosing for himself, was admitted into the relation of a son. So called from the questions put to the parties.” – American Dictionary of the English Language, Noah Webster (1828).

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ADOPTION PROPER

It must be remembered that the father in Roman law had absolute control over his family, possessing the same rights over his children as over his slaves. By this *patria potestas* the son was deprived of the right to own property, and the father could inflict any punishment he thought fit, even to the extent of the death penalty. He could also sell his son into bondage. According to the law of the XII Tables, however, a father forfeited his *potestas* if he sold his son three times. For this reason, in the case of adoption, a legal ceremony took place in which the father went through the process of selling his son three times, and the son passed over completely to the *potestas* of the adopter. In later times the cumbersome ceremony was substituted by a simple declaration before the *Praetor* or Governor.

ADROGATION

When the person to be adopted was his own master, he was adopted by the form called *adrogation*. The law demanded that the adopter should be at least eighteen years older than the adopted:

Adoption imitates nature, and it seems unnatural that a son should be older than his father (Justinian).

Adoption was called in law a *capitas diminutio*, which so far annihilated the pre-existing personality who underwent it, that during many centuries it operated as an extinction of debts (W.E. Ball).

The effect of adoption was fourfold:

- (1) A CHANGE OF FAMILY. The adopted person was transferred from one *gens* to another.
- (2) A CHANGE OF NAME. The adopted person acquired a new name: for he assumed the name of his adopter, and modified his own by the termination *ianus*. Thus when Caius Octavius of the Octavian *gens* was adopted by Julius Caesar, he became Caius Julius Caesar Octavianus.
- (3) A CHANGE OF HOME, and
- (4) NEW RESPONSIBILITIES AND PRIVILEGES. While the adopted person suffered many "losses," these were more than counterbalanced by his "gains," for he received a new *capacity to inherit*.

Bible Student's Notebook™

Paul Our Guide – Christ Our Goal

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Scripture education in a weekly format!

This free electronic publication is dedicated to:

- the absolute sovereignty and deity of God (Romans 11:36);
- the proclamation of the riches of God's abundant, exceeding grace (Romans 5:20; 11:6; Ephesians 1:7);
- the affirmation that God will save all through the death, burial and resurrection of Christ (I Timothy 2:3, 4; 4:10; Titus 2:11);
- the "preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret in ages past" (Romans 16:25);
- true freedom and liberty apart from law (Galatians 5:1);
- the organic nature of the Body of Christ (Ephesians 3:1-3);
- the Secret Administration, being the operational revelation for today (Ephesians 3:9);
- the unprophesied, Celestial hope and calling of the Body of Christ (Colossians 3:4);
- the distinct message and ministry of Paul, the apostle to the nations (Ephesians 3:1-3);
- the importance of receiving all whom Christ has received (Romans 14-15);
- the recovery of rich Biblical truth that has too long remained hidden under the veils of traditionalism, prejudice, misunderstanding and fear (Mark 7:7, 13);
- the completeness of the believer in Christ (Colossians 2:10), with:
 - total freedom from sins (Colossians 1:14);

- union in His death, burial and resurrection (Romans 6);
- adult sonship position (Galatians 4).

This publication is the product of humble efforts of ordinary men intended to stimulate the earnest study of Scripture. We do not claim infallibility for the contents of this publication, thus they are not meant to imply finality on any subject discussed, or that further research would not add further light from the Word of God. God's storehouse of truth is inexhaustible, so draw on its wealth by prayerful study. Our readers are asked to be as the Bereans and search the Scriptures (Acts 17:10-11; I Thessalonians 5:21).

This publication is not connected with any "church," "denomination," "movement," "organization," "mission," "creed," "meeting," "school," "conference" or "fellowship."

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For definitions of abbreviations/acronyms, see index after the order form.

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In the case of the adopter dying intestate, the adopted son acquired the right of succession.

Paul alludes to the *patria potestas*, the absolute power of the father in the family, in the fourth chapter of Galatians where he speaks of “*the child differing nothing from a slave*” and goes on to say “*Thou art no longer a slave, but a son*” (Galatians 4:7). Paul also alludes to *tutelage* in Galatians 3 and 4, where we have such phrases as “*kept in ward*,” “*tutor to bring us to Christ*,” “*under guardians and stewards*,” and “*children held in bondage*” (Galatians 3:23-4:3).

So far as the ceremony was concerned, the difference between transferring of a son into slavery and his becoming a member of the family was very slight. In the one case the adopter said, “I claim this man as my slave”; in the other, “I claim this man as my son.” The *form* was almost the same; it was the *spirit* that differed.

If the adopter died and the adopted son claimed the inheritance, the latter had to testify to the fact that he was the adopted heir. Furthermore,

the law requires corroborative evidence. One of the seven witnesses is called. “I was present,” he says, “at the ceremony. It was I who held the scales and struck them with the ingot of brass. It was an adoption. I heard the words of the vindication, and I say this person was claimed by the deceased, not as a slave, but as a son” (W.E. Ball).

Bearing all of these facts in mind, can we not feel something of the thrill with which the Roman Christian would read the words of Romans:

Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, “Abba, Father.” The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs (Romans 8:15-17).

Closely associated with the law of adoption was that of the Roman will. The *Praetorian* will was put into writing, and fastened with the *seals* of seven witnesses (cf. Revelation 5-6). There is probably a reference to this type of will in Ephesians:

In Whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory (1:13-14).


W.E. Ball translates the latter part of the passage:

Until the ransoming accomplished by the act of taking possession (of the inheritance).

When a slave was appointed heir, although expressly emancipated by the will which gave him the inheritance, his freedom commenced not upon the making of the will, nor even immediately upon the death of the testator, but from the moment when he took certain legal steps, which were described as “entering upon the inheritance.” This is “*the ransoming accomplished by act of taking possession*.” In the last words of the passage, “*to the praise of His glory*,” there is an allusion to a well-known Roman custom. The emancipated slaves who attended the funeral of their emancipator were the praise of his glory. Testamentary emancipation was so fashionable a form of posthumous ostentation, the desire to be followed to the grave by a crowd of freedmen wearing the “cap of liberty” was so strong, that very shortly before the time when St. Paul wrote, the legislature had expressly limited the number of slaves that an owner might manumit³ by will (W.E. Ball).

No modern writer has greater firsthand knowledge of this term than Sir William Ramsay, and in order to

3. [Editor:] “Free from slavery or bondage; emancipate.” – thefreedictionary.com



The Concordant Commentary on the New Testament
 by — A.E. Knoch (1874-1965)
 407 pp., HB
See order form.

First published more than 60 years ago, this work is more valuable than a seminary education! A must-have for every student of Scripture!

acquaint ourselves with its usage in Galatia, we will first of all quote from Sir William's *A Historical Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians*.

The idea that they who follow the principle of faith are sons of Abraham, whatever family they belong to by nature, would certainly be understood by the Galatians as referring to the legal process called adoption, *huiiothesia*.

Adoption was a kind of embryo will; the adopted son became the owner of the property, and the property could pass to a person that was naturally outside the family only through his being adopted. The adoption was a sort of will-making; and this ancient form of will was irrevocable and public. The terms "son" and "heir" are interchangeable.

An illustration from the ordinary fact of society, as it existed in the Galatian cities, is here stated: "I speak after the manner of men." The will (*diateke*) of a human being is irrevocable when once duly executed. But, if Paul is speaking about a will, how can he say, after it is once made, it is irrevocable?

Such irrevocability was a characteristic feature of Greek law, according to which an heir outside the family must be adopted into the family, and the adoption was the will-making. The testator, after adopting his heir, could not subsequently take away from him his share of the inheritance or impose new conditions on his succession. The Roman-Syrian Law Book will illustrate this passage of the Epistle. It actually lays down the principle that a man can never put away an adopted son – and that he cannot put away a real son without good ground. It is remarkable that the adopted son should have a stronger position than the son by birth, yet it is so. The expression in Galatians 3:15, "*When it hath been confirmed*" must also be observed. Every will had to be passed through the Record Office of the city. It was not regarded in the Greek law as a purely private document. It must be deposited in the Record Office.

Here it will be seen that one may be "adopted," or made the heir, without being at the same time a true child, but in the case of the Scriptural usage of adop-

tion there is no idea that the believer is only an "adopted" child for the testimony of the Word is explicit on the point, making it clear that adoption is something added:

The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God (Romans 8:16).

The argument of Galatians 4:1-7 proceeds upon the supposition that there is a difference between a "child" (4:1-2), and one who has received the "adoption" (4:5).

If a son, then an heir of God through Christ (4:7).

That "adoption" is related to "inheritance" we can see by examining the first chapter of Ephesians. There we find the word "predestinate" used twice, once in :5, where it is "unto adoption," and again in :11, where it refers to "inheritance." Let us now observe the way in which this important word is used in connection with three different companies of the redeemed.

In Romans 9 the apostle enumerates the distinctive and exclusive privileges of Israel "according to the flesh," "who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption" (9:4). The structure of the passage relates "adoption" with "promises" and the whole is important enough to claim our attention before passing on. Accordingly we set out the structure.

- A According to the flesh, brethren.
 - B Who are Israelites.
 - C To whom pertaineth the ADOPTION.
 - D And the glory.
 - E And the covenants.
 - E And the giving of the law.
 - D And the service of God.
 - C And the PROMISES.
 - B Whose are the fathers.
 - A As concerning the flesh, Christ came.

No one with any understanding can interpret the words "Israel" and "according to the flesh" as of the Church, or of that company where there is "neither Jew nor Greek" (Galatians 3:28).

When Israel was about to be brought out of Egypt,

God called the nation His “firstborn” saying, “Israel is My son, even My firstborn” (Exodus 4:22).

Attached to this position is a citizenship, the city being Jerusalem, which is destined to be the center of the Earth when the Kingdom is set up (Isaiah 2:3; Zechariah 14:16-17). It is obvious that if one nation is to be granted pre-eminence, the others must be subservient, and one of the accompaniments of the privilege of adoption, which we find true of each sphere, is the grant of pre-eminence over other companies in the same sphere.

The nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted (Isaiah 60:12).

Strangers shall stand and feed your flocks, and the sons of the alien shall be your plowmen and your vinedressers. But ye shall be named the Priests of the LORD: men shall call you the Ministers of our God (Isaiah 61:5-6).

We shall find that the following features are inseparable from adoption as used in the Scriptures:

- (1) The appointing of the heir.
- (2) The dignity of the first-born.
- (3) The close association of citizenship.
- (4) Some special pre-eminence over other companies in the same sphere.

In marked contrast with Romans 9, where “the adoption” is the exclusive prerogative of “Israel according to the flesh,” we have “the adoption” of Galatians 4, which pertains to the seed of Abraham who are not

considered “after the flesh” (:23), who are associated with “Jerusalem which is above” (:26), and which is composed of both Jew and Greek and consequently heirs according to the promise. *Yet further*, those to whom pertains the adoption according to the teaching of Ephesians have no relationship with Israel *at all* – they have no connection with the promises made to the fathers, they were aliens and strangers, without hope, and without God. These were chosen before the foundation of the world, and in Christ they are raised and seated far above all principality and power. Consequently the logical result of admitting the contextual teaching of Paul’s epistles regarding “adoption” is to admit three distinct spheres of blessing.

A man can have only three first-born sons, if he has had three families. This application to the teaching concerning adoption will be found to be an irrefutable proof of the existence of *three spheres of blessing*. **BSN**

— *Alphabetical Analysis*, Volume 1, Pages 44-50

(abridged & edited)

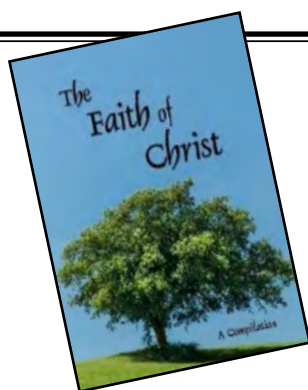
[**Editor:** Be sure to read the important work: *The Three Spheres of Glory*⁴].

TOPICS:

Major: Sonship

Minor: Celestials; Spheres, Three

4. *The Three Spheres of Glory (A Compilation)* (#2817). Very few know and understand the three spheres of age-abiding (or eonian) glory that belong to the three distinct classes of saints. For the first time this crucial compilation brings together five groundbreaking works from 3 valued authors of the past: Dr. E.W. Bullinger (1837-1913); Henry William Fry (1848-1939); Charles H. Welch (1880-1967). See order form, or visit our [Compilation](#) page.



52 pp., PB

See order form.

The Faith of Christ (A Compilation)

Here is a subject worthy of our careful consideration. It is crucial to our spiritual well-being, since it is vitally joined to our redemption and deliverance which are to be found in the Lord Jesus Christ. “*The faith of Jesus Christ*” is unwittingly denied by sincere and well-meaning believers. After having been well-grounded in this subject as it is revealed in His Word and reflected in this study, may we no longer be found in that rapidly growing company of believers who are unenlightened because they are uninstructed. Authors include:

E.H. Clayton (1887-1972), A.E. Knoch (1874-1965), Adlai Loudy (1893-1984), and Frank Neil Pohorlak (1907-1988).

The Adoption

by — Tom L. Ballinger

Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will (Ephesians 1:5).

The calling of Israel received an adoption. In Romans 9:3-4, we read,

... for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh: Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption ...

This adoption took place in Egypt and was made known in Exodus 4:22.

The calling of the Church of God (Acts 2-28) also experienced an adoption. Galatians 4 says that Christ came

to redeem them that were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption of sons (:5).

The adoption found in Galatians 4 is to be compared with the one in Romans 8:15, for the two refer to the same transaction.

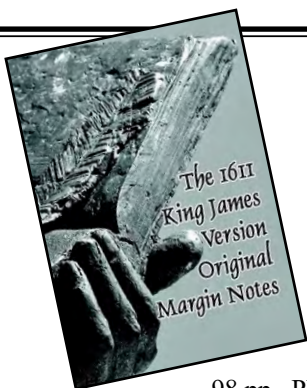
Now, we learn that members of the Church over which Christ Jesus is the Head were not only "chosen in Christ before the foundation [disruption] of the world" but were, also, "predestinated unto the adoption." The three redeemed groups who were objects of His Adoption were:

- Israel – the Wilderness Church
- The Church of God
- The Church, which is His Body

Since members of the Ecclesia, which is His Body, are said to have received the adoption, God reckons them as His issue in the first degree. We are counted as the immediate progeny of the Father with the rights and privileges as a son and heir.

Our concern, as students of the Word, is what meaning should we glean from the fact that we have received "the adoption"? By comparing Scripture with Scripture, we learn that with the adoption comes the privilege of sonship. In Exodus 4:22, we note that Israel's adoption is mentioned when the LORD told Moses to say to Pharaoh, "Israel is my son." Compare Romans 9:4, and we learn that adoption pertains to "sonship." Adoption carries with it the further idea of not just being a son but being "the firstborn."

And thou [Moses] shalt say unto Pharaoh, "Thus saith the LORD, Israel is My son, even My firstborn: and I say unto thee, Let My son go, that he may serve Me: and if thou refuse to let him go, behold, I will slay thy son, even thy firstborn" (Exodus 4:22-23).



98 pp., PB
See order form.

The 1611 King James Version Original Margin Notes

Despite King James' efforts to control the translators who worked on the version that bears his name, they incorporated marginal notes that in some instances were quite telling, stating in their preface:

... Doth not a margin do well to admonish the reader to seek further, and not to conclude or dogmatize upon this or that peremptorily? ... They that are wise, had rather have their judgments at libery in differences of readings, then to be captivated to one, when it may be the other.

The privilege and birthright of the firstborn son in pages of Holy Writ are well known to the student. This should teach us that Ephesians 1:5 carries with it the fact that, having received the adoption, we enter into the privileges and birthright of firstborn sons. This is our entitlement to an inheritance when the Pre-Millennial Kingdom of God becomes manifest.

In Whom [Christ] also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him Who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will (Ephesians 1:11).

The reality of “adoption” will become realized with our resurrection or change, as in Romans 8, with reference to the Acts Period Government of God:

For we know that the whole creation 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, to wit, the redemption of our body (:22-23).

In Ephesians 1:13-14 we read,

*... ye are sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance **until the redemption of the purchased possession** ...*

This redemption refers to members of the Ecclesia, of the One Body; whereas, Romans 8:23 refers to the Church of God (Acts 2-28).

We repeat ourselves in order to emphasize the four-

dational principles of our Calling: we were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, and predestinated unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself. Our adoption relates to becoming an heir of God with the rights and privileges of firstborn sons. The sonship is to be realized when Christ Jesus “*shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned unto His Body of Glory*” (Philippians 3:21). This will be the culmination of our Blessed Hope (Titus 2:13). We will assume our specific stations of duty and embark on the serious business as Officials who are to take care of His business.

Redeemed Israel will enjoy the firstborn rights in resurrection in Palestine, and the Church of God will be ushered in as rulers in the Pre-Millennial Government of Israel. So shall the Church, over which Christ is the Head, administer the affairs of the Lord Jesus Christ’s Universal Government.

Thus, adoption entails (1) the giving of the honor of the Firstborn – the heir, (2) the actual realization of which is in resurrection or change, and (3) it relates to a place of Citizenship.

Those who are membered into the Ecclesia, which is His Body, were predestinated to receive the adoption, “*according to the good pleasure of His will*” (Ephesians 1:5). **BSN**

(abridged & edited)

TOPICS:

Major: Adoption; Inheritance; Sonship

Minor: Predestination; Pre-Millennial Kingdom



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(An extended opportunity for casual fellowship will be available after the meeting.)

Further information:

Study Shelf 814-701-0063

Teachers:

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You are loved and appreciated. – GA

We very much appreciate your ministry, and make it a point to watch at least one of your [videos](#) each week. Thank you for making them available! – CO

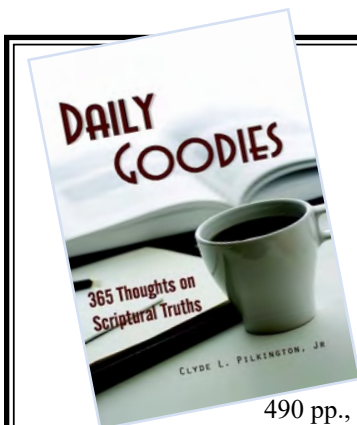
You are an encouragement, Clyde. Your ministry is blessing so many. [A local man] has a prison ministry. He also houses up to 60 parolees. He has a thrift shop close by and has a Sunday service there. [My husband] began talking with him about five years ago, taking your [Daily Email Goodies](#) and [Bible Student's Notebooks](#) to him every week. He has embraced the salvation of all and is gently introducing it to his folks. Some have left, as [my husband] warned him would happen, but new folks have come to hear what he is saying. He also has a lady friend who travels and ministers to veterans. He shared this info with her and she just embraced it enthusiastically, which was a great encouragement for him. It is amazing how Paul's evangel spreads and spreads.

We just finished [Essex's book on Ephesians](#). ... We

have a new lady who has been coming for a year. So we've been reviewing things and it's always surprising how much more we get going through information we had already studied. Thank you for your love and work. We love you. – ID

Charles Welch is correct. ["In the epistles after Acts 28, we have all that is necessary for our guidance, comfort and teaching."] Quotes from the Old Testament and the first four Gospels and Acts do not apply to people today. All Scripture is for our knowledge, but only the Scriptures written after Acts 28 apply to people today. If these concepts were emphasized, all of the confusion and denominations would be eliminated that exists today in the beliefs of people.

One of the causes of the confusions that exist today is that people attend different seminaries and have to pass their particular tests to obtain their so called "credentials." They teach what they learned in their seminaries instead of doing independent research on the language of the original writings. There are over 200 different translations of the original writings today. If people try to teach from translations that contain many errors, such as the *King James Version*, they are confused and confuse their students. However, all things that happen are under the direct control of our Father, and conform to His intentions. Our Father created good and evil to carry out His plan for His creation. – NV **BSN**



Daily Goodies

365 Thoughts on Scriptural Truths

by – Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

This is a great resource for personal and family study, as well as a valuable reference volume covering many varied biblical themes. This is a collection of choice selections from the author's *Daily E-mail Goodies*. These free daily e-mails began being issued in 2003 and contain studies on scriptural themes. In addition to personal use, it is great for teaching material, or family reading times.

490 pp., PB

See order form.

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