

Sunday, November 2, 2014—Grace Life School of Theology—*Grace History Project*—Lesson 150  
Sonship Edification: Biblical Adoption According to Scripture

## Introduction

- In Lesson 148 we discussed the teaching of Sonship Edification (SE) regarding “Biblical Adoption.” The goal of that lesson was to ascertain SE’s teaching on the matter and to demonstrate that its definition of “Biblical Adoption” is central to its curriculum apparatus.
  - “A father adopted his son for the purpose of installing and instilling his wisdom into his son so that the son would labor with his father in all his business.” (McDaniel, Sonship Orientation, Lesson 5, Page 5)
- In Lesson 149 we discussed SE’s appeal to 1<sup>st</sup> Century Greco-Roman Adoption to substantiate its definition of “Biblical Adoption.”
- This morning we want to continue evaluating SE’s teaching regarding “Biblical Adoption.” In order to accomplish this purpose we will consider the final three of the four points identified in Lesson 149:
  - 1<sup>st</sup> Century Greco-Roman adoption
  - Adoption in Romans 8
  - Adoption in Romans 9
  - Adoption in Galatians 4

## Adoption in Romans 8

- At the outset, it is once again important to note that Paul is the only Biblical writer to speak about “adoption” (*huiothesia* the Greek word occurs five times in the New Testament).
  - Romans 8:15—“. . . but ye have received the Spirit of **adoption**. . .”
  - Romans 8:23—“. . . waiting for the **adoption**, *to wit*, the redemption of our body.”
  - Romans 9:4—“. . . Who are Israelites; to whom *pertaineth* the **adoption**. . .”
  - Galatians 4:5—“. . . that we might receive the **adoption** of sons.”
  - Ephesians 1:5—“ Having predestinated us unto the **adoption** of children by Jesus Christ to himself . . .”
- The Greek word *huiothesia* is a compound word, *huio-thesia*:
  - *Huios*—son come of age
  - *Thesia*—a placing, or setting a person or thing in its place
- In his commentary *Romans: Verse by Verse*, William R. Newell states the following regarding the Greek word *huiothesia* rendered “adoption” in the King James Bible.

- In earthly affairs, “adoption” is the term applied to the selection as child and heir of one not born of us; and the execution of legal papers making such child our own, inheriting legal rights, etc. . . . But the word *huios* means, a child come of age; no longer “as a servant” (Galatians 4:7). And *huiiothesia* means God’s recognizing them in that position! This will be consummated fully at the coming of Christ, when our bodies, redeemed, and fashioned anew, shall be conformed to Christ’s glorious body. Meanwhile, because we are already adult sons (*huiioi*), God has given us a spirit of adult-sonship! No Jew called God “Father,” or “Abba”; but “Jehovah.” (Indeed) fearfulness, even prevented, generally, the use by the Jews of God’s memorial-name—Jehovah—for that nation: they called Him *Adonai*—“Lord.” (Newell, 217-218)
- “This word *tekna* means “born-ones,” offspring (“children of God” in Romans 8:16). The several other Greek words for child are used accurately in Scripture: *brephos*,—an unborn child or a newborn child (Luke 1:44 and 2:12 and 16); *nēpios*, babes or small children—children not come of age . . . *huios*, which is the word of sonship, of adult understanding: Paul contrasts this word, with *nēpios* in both Galatians 4:6, and I Corinthians 13:11, as adulthood over against childhood, or infancy.” (Newell, 219)
- A careful reading of Romans 8 reveals that believers have received the “Spirit of adoption” in Romans 8:15 as we wait for the “adoption, *to wit*, the redemption of our body” in Romans 8:23.
- Romans 8:23—defines “adoption” in this context as the “redemption of our body.” In verses 23-25, believers are plainly instructed to wait for the redemption of our bodies, i.e., our adoption. Is this a fools hope, or a well-founded one? It is well-founded because we already have as a present possession the “Spirit of adoption” in verse 15. Thus, in the context of Romans 8, the “Spirit of Adoption” in verse 15 is the down payment, or guarantee, of our future full adoption, i.e., when our bodies are redeemed from the “bondage of corruption” in verse 21.
- Ephesians 1:5—we have predestined unto the “adoption of children by Jesus Christ.”
- Ephesians 1:13—every believer upon belief in the gospel was “sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise.”
- Ephesians 1:14—the Holy Spirit with which you were sealed in verse 13 is the “earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession.” Every believer possesses the redemption of their inner man from the penalty of sin. Therefore, believers already are God’s “purchased possession,” in the sense that they are spiritually redeemed (v. 7) and sealed with “that Holy Spirit of promise.” But the Holy Spirit is the earnest, or down payment on our future physical redemption, i.e., adoption or redemption of our body.
- So in Romans 8:15 we are given the “Spirit of adoption” while we wait for our actual “adoption, *to wit*, the redemption of our body” in Romans 8:23. The “Spirit of adoption” in verse 15 is the earnest, down payment, or guarantee securing our actual future “adoption” in verse 23.

- Romans 8:15—it is the “Spirit of adoption” within the believer that utters the cry of “Abba Father.” The verb translated “we cry” in verse 15 is a present indicative statement which means that the Spirit was already actively crying “Abba Father” on behalf of the Roman saints before Paul even penned the epistle. In short, this is not something we are to cry on account of being “suitably impressed” with our adoption status as SE has asserted, rather it is something the Spirit cried on behalf of the Romans irrespective of their knowledge of it.

### **Adoption in Romans 9, Part 1**

- Romans 9:4—this is the first time we encounter the term “adoption” applied to Israel in Scripture. At first blush this is somewhat strange given that the term “adoption” does not appear in the Old Testament, the Gospels, or early Acts. Please recall that “adoption” is a strictly Pauline idea. However, here in Romans 9 Paul applies the term to Israel as her one key distinguishing characteristic.
- P.H. Davids stated the following regarding this phenomena in his entry on “Adoption” in the *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* edited by Walter A. Elwell. Davids states the following regarding “adoption:”
  - “The term *adoption* does not appear in the OT. There were not provisions for adoption in Israelite law, and the examples that do occur come from outside the Israelite culture (Eliezer, Genesis. 15:1-4; Moses, Exodus 2:10; Genubath, I Kings 11:20; Esther, Esther 2:7, 15). For Israelites, polygamy and levirate marriage were the more common solution to infertility. Yet adoption was not unknown in their literature (cf. Proverbs. 17:2; 19:10; 29:21, which may all refer to adoption of slaves), and it may have been the means by which children, fathered by a master and a slave mother, inherited property (Genesis 16:1-4; 21:1-10; 30:1-13). Outside of Israel, adoption was common enough to be regulated in the law codes of Babylon (e.g., the Code of Hammurabi #185-86), Nuzi and Ugarit. Not infrequently, these refer to the adoption of a slave as an heir.” (Elwell, 25)
- Given that Romans 8 identifies “adoption” as the “redemption of the body”, it would seem strange to think about “adoption” in Romans 9:4 in an altogether different manner than what was described in the previous chapter. That being said, I would like to consider Paul’s teaching on “adoption” in Galatians 4 before commenting further on Romans 9.

### **Adoption in Galatians 4**

- Galatians 4:1-2—Paul says that an heir, even though he be lord of all, is no different from a servant when he is a child (*nēpios* i.e., an infant, little child, a minor, or one who is not of age). As a child, he is under “tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father.”

- Galatians 4:3—“Even so we, when we were children (*nēpios*);” the verb rendered “we were” is in the imperfect tense and is thereby referring to a continuous or linear action in past time. The same is true for the second “were” in the verse. So whomever Paul is referring to in verse 3 in past time was in a continuous state of childhood and in a state of bondage under the elements of the world.
- Galatians 4:4—the word “but” introduces a contrast to the situation outlined in the previous verse. When the “fullness of the time was come,” i.e., when the time was correct in the outworking of God’s plan, He sent forth his Son “made of a woman (virgin birth), made under the law” (Matt. 5:17; Luke 2:21-27).
- Galatians 4:5—why was the Son “made under the law” in verse 4 – so that he might “redeem them that were under the law” in verse 5. These are some people who were under bondage to “the elements of the world” in verse 3.
- The people that Paul is speaking of in Galatians 4:3-5 have a history of being under the law. According to the Biblical record, who had a history of being under the law? Israel. Who did Christ come to redeem in his earthly ministry according to everything that had been revealed up to that point? Israel. Who did the law pertain to?
  - Romans 9:4—“Who are Israelites; to whom *pertaineth* the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, **and the giving of the law**, and the service *of God*, and the promises;”
- Back in 2009 and 2010 when I was teaching through the book of Galatians in the Sunday school hour, before I knew anything about SE, I said that noting the “we” sections in the book of Galatians was a key to understanding the book.
  - Galatians 2:15—“This is an extremely dispensational verse that needs to be understood. If you look at the verse, the use of the word “we” will determine who Paul is talking about throughout the rest of the passage. Paul clearly identifies the “we” as those who are Jews by nature. Consequently, throughout the rest of the chapter, when Paul uses the pronoun “we” he is including himself with Israel. As a result, it is clear that there are two different groups of people in verse 15, those who were Jews by nature and those who were sinners of the gentiles.” (Ross, Galatians Study Chapter 2 Verses 15-18)
  - Galatians 4:3—““Even So”—this phrase connects this verse with the illustration of verses one and two. Also notice once again that Paul uses the word “we.” Remember that when Paul uses the word “we” in this epistle, he is referring to Israel. (Ross, Galatians Study Chapter 4 Verses 1-7)
  - Galatians 4:5—“notice again the use of the word “we.” It was through the work of Christ that Israel was going to receive the adoption of sons.” (Ross, Galatians Study Chapter 4 Verses 1-7)

- Galatians 4:5—Jesus Christ was “made of woman, made under the law” in verse 4 so that in verse 5 he could redeem Israel out from underneath the law so that “we (i.e., Israel) might receive the adoption of sons.” The Greek verb translated “might receive” is in the subjunctive mood, i.e., the mood of possibility and potentiality. The action described may or may not occur, depending upon circumstances.
  - Acts 3:20—the verb translated “shall send” is also in the subjunctive mood. Whether or not God the Father would send Jesus Christ back to set up the kingdom was contingent upon Israel’s repentance in verse 19.
- Israel was offered her redemption from the law, i.e., her “adoption” during the early Acts period but refused it.
- Galatians 4:6—note the shift from “we” to “ye.” The verb translated “ye are” is in the present tense and means to state that fact that all the believers in the churches of Galatia have already received the “adoption of sons” that Israel nationally is still waiting for.
  - Romans 8:14-15
  - Ephesians 1:5, 11
- It is on account of the FACT that members of the body of Christ already “are sons” (*huios*) that God “hath sent forth (past tense) the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying (present tense), Abba, Father.” Notice once again, that it is not us that cries Abba Father, but the Spirit within us that utters forth this cry on a continuous basis.
  - Please note that the “Spirit of his Son” was sent into the heart of every son. This fact coupled with Rom. 8:15 and Eph. 1:13-14 makes it difficult to see how believers would not be indwelt with the Holy Spirit as the proponents of SE have claimed. If the Holy Spirit has been sent into our hearts to cry Abba Father, how could believers not be indwelt with/by the Spirit of God?
- Biblical adoption has nothing to do with a father adopting “his son for the purpose of installing and instilling his wisdom into his son so that the son would labor with his father in all his business.” All believers today in the dispensation of grace are adopted in the sense that:
  - We are all sons of God by faith in Christ Jesus.
  - We have been given the Spirit of adoption that cries Abba Father on our behalf and serves as the down payment that secures our future physical redemption.
  - We are not under the tutor and governor principle of the law because we are not children (*nēpios*) but sons (*huios*).
  - We wait patiently for the completion of our “adoption, *to wit*, the redemption of our body.”

### Adoption in Romans 9, Part 1

- Romans 9:4--now that we have studied “adoption” in Galatians 4, I think we are in a better place to understand how the “adoption” pertains to Israel.
- Regarding Israel’s “adoption” P.H. Davids writes the following in the *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*:
  - “For Israel as a whole, there was a consciousness of having been chosen by God as his child (Isaiah 1:2; Jeremiah 3:19; Hosea 1:1). Since Israel had no myth of descent from the gods as the surrounding cultures did, adoption was the obvious category into which this act as well as the deliverance from slavery in Egypt would fit, as Paul indicates in Romans 9:4. Likewise the kings succeeding David were God’s “sons” (II Samuel 7:14; I Chronicles 28:6; Psalms 89:26-27). Psalms 2:7, for example, uses “You are my son,” which is probably the adoption formula used in the enthronement ceremony of each successive Davidic ruler. Together these ideas laid the basis for later NT usage of adoption imagery.” (Elwell, 25)
- According to Galatians 4, God intended to adopt Israel (“we”) and therefore, sent Christ, made of a woman, made under the law so that he could redeem them that were under the law and give them the adoption of sons. So God moves on Israel’s behalf by sending Christ under the conditions set forth in Galatians 4:4 for the purpose of accomplishing their redemption from the law in verse 5 so that they “might receive the adoption of sons.”
- What stood between Israel and their “adoption?” The law. Israel was under the law because she agreed of her own accord to keep it.
  - Exodus 19:1-8
- Consequently, God has to act on Israel’s behalf in Galatians 4:4 in order to accomplish her adoption.
- Exodus 4:22—this does not signify that Israel was a full grown son while in Egypt. It was in Egypt that the nation had been born. If this were so, God would not have sought to place the nation under the law following the Exodus.
  - Hosea 11:1
  - Jeremiah 31:32
- Until Israel came to the place where she could be given full sonship, God placed the nation under the tutors and governors of the law and its requirements. Israel, left to herself, would never have reached the place of adoption. Thank God that adoption does not depend primarily upon the son’s attainments, but upon the father’s will.

- Romans 11:7—Israel had become a rebellious son and even to this present time remains out of God’s favor. Consequently, Israel has yet to receive her adoption.

### **Concluding Remarks on Biblical Adoption**

- Once again, Biblical adoption has nothing to do with a father adopting “his son for the purpose of installing and instilling his wisdom into his son so that the son would labor with his father in all his business.” All believers today in the dispensation of grace are adopted in the sense that:
  - We are all sons of God by faith in Christ Jesus.
  - We have been given the Spirit of adoption that cries Abba Father on our behalf and serves as the down payment that secures our future physical redemption.
  - We are not under the tutor and governor principle of the law because we are not children (*nēpios*) but sons (*huios*).
  - We wait patiently for the completion of our “adoption, *to wit*, the redemption of our body.”
- Adoption . . . is not entirely a past event. The legal declaration may have been made and the Spirit may have been given as a down payment, but the consummation of the adoption awaits the future, for adoption includes “the redemption of the body” (Romans. 8:23). Thus, adoption is something hoped for as well as something already possessed. (P.H. Davids in Elwell, 25-26)
- Adoption then, is deliverance from the past (similar to regeneration and justification), a status and way of life in the present (walking by the Spirit, sanctification, not under tutors and governors), and a hope for the future (resurrection, the redemption of our body).
- Adoption describes the process of becoming a child/son of God and receiving an inheritance from God as one of his sons (Romans 8:17; Colossians 3:24).

### **Works Cited**

Elwell, Walter E. *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 2002.

Newell, William R. *Romans: Verse by Verse*. Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1938.