

The Doctrine of Adoption

Whereas our Lord Jesus is God's son *by nature*, we are God's sons *by adoption*.

I. Our adoption in Christ was predestined by God the Father before the foundation of the world.

Ephesians 1:3-6; Galatians 3:24-29; 1 Peter 3:7

The phrase translated *adoption as sons* in the New King James Version is actually a translation of a single Greek word: *huiōthesía*. It is a compound word coming from the Greek noun *huiós*, meaning *son*, and the Greek verb *títhēmi*, meaning *to place*. It therefore literally means *placing as a son*.

II. The Father sent the Son to accomplish the redemptive work necessary for our adoption.

Galatians 4:4-5

III. We experience adoption as a present reality by the power and working of the Holy Spirit.

This aspect of adoption may also be called *initial adoption*, versus the *final adoption* that we will consider later.

Romans 8:14-16; Galatians 4:4-7; 1 John 3:1-2

IV. The Holy Spirit not only assures us of our present adoption, but He also serves as the guarantee and seal of our future inheritance.

Ephesians 1:13-14; Ephesians 4:30; 2 Corinthians 1:21-22; 2 Corinthians 5:1-5

The Greek word *sphragízō* means to “seal, secure with a seal; mark with a seal, set apart by a seal; affix to be true, acknowledge, [or] prove” (*UBS Greek Lexicon #5944*, BibleWorks).

The Greek word translated *guarantee* here is *arrabōn*, which is actually a transliteration of a Hebrew word that was used literally as a legal and commercial technical term referring to “an advance transaction that guarantees the validity of a contract or a full purchase price, thus referring to a *down payment*, a *first installment*, or a *pledge*. It is “used figuratively in the NT, of the gift of the Holy Spirit to believers” (*Friberg Greek Lexicon #3642*, BibleWorks).

V. We await the final stage of our adoption in the future resurrection.

This aspect of adoption may also be called *final adoption*, as opposed to the *initial adoption* which we already considered.

Romans 8:18-23

Robert Reymond offers this helpful summary of the doctrine of adoption, as he explains the Westminster Shorter Catechism:

“Adoption is an act of God's free grace, whereby we are received into the number, and have a right to all the privileges of the sons of God” (Shorter Catechism, Question 34). This simple definition reminds us that adoption is (1) the Father's objective determination concerning the believer, determined upon his faith in Christ, (2) bestowed by his free grace (see 1 John 3:1), and (3) the act by which the believer becomes a child of God. Adoption is the highest privilege available to fallen children of Adam, with all its privileges accruing to the one who enjoys the status of being an heir of all the promises of God and of everlasting salvation – access to the Father's throne of grace, his pity, protection, provision, and chastening [see Hebrews 12:3-11], and the seal of his Spirit unto the day of redemption. (*A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith*, p. 762)