

# ADOPTION and SONSHIP

## The Father's Purpose for Us



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It was always the Father's purpose to **ABIDE** with us (Genesis 3:8) and for us to dwell (*tabernacle*) with Him (Ephesians 2:22) as a spiritual **FAMILY**. This idea is what's behind Jesus' rather cryptic saying in Mark 3:31-35.

**"Then His mother and brothers came, and standing outside they called for Him. And the crowd sitting near Him said, Your mother and your brothers are outside seeking you.**

**And He answered them saying, Who is my mother or my brothers? And looking around at those sitting with Him in a circle, He said, Behold, my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of God, that one is my brother, and my sister, and my mother."** (Notice the catch phrase here!).

Also, Paul picks up on this: **"For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom every family in heaven and on earth is named"** (Ephesians 3:15).

The purpose of God to DWELL with humanity is why His presence descended to ❶ Moses' Tabernacle tent, ❷ then into Solomon's Temple, onto the ❸ Incarnation of Jesus, ❹ the indwelling of the Holy Spirit within us, and Jesus going away ❺ to prepare a place for us to dwell in the heavenlies.

He yearns to **BE WITH US** (*Emmanuel* = God with us): **"Where I am you will also be"** (John 14:3 and 17:24).

It's even been suggested by some that Jesus was born on or near the actual Feast of Tabernacles (*Festival of Dwelling*) which occurs in September-October each year. If that was so, what a wonderful prophetic truth – born at the Feast of Dwelling!

His miraculous conception may then well have been around December, with His birth nine months later about September/October. It's tradition (not Scripture) that places "Christmas" in December, so to see why December couldn't have been the nativity, see [here](#).

Whatever the date actually was, the Purpose has never changed; the only interruption was the Fall in the Garden. But the Father in His infinite wisdom had a Plan which He graciously inserted into His eternal Purpose. He would share Himself with us through HIS SON.

Since the Fall, His eternal purpose remained the same, to bring into existence a divine FAMILY. The saving plan to have the Cross of Redemption incorporated into the purpose was God's way to bring this about. We were not forgotten.

**When the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, having come into being out of a woman, having come under Law, that He might redeem the ones under Law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because you are sons, God sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba! Father!** (Galatians 4:4-6)

In verse 5 Paul refers to "***the adoption of sons***" (NOT "*children*" as some modern versions translate it), from the Greek word *huiiothesia*, "sonship."

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So, let's unravel a couple of things first to set a foundation for an exciting insight.

**We are all "children of God"**. This modern and very popular notion that "all people are God's children" is a gross misconception. Jesus Christ alone is the eternal and natural Son of God; we however are children adopted by the grace of God. Scripturally speaking, only the redeemed and saved ones are truly "children of God". However, He doesn't want us to remain "children" but to grow up to become "sons" (mature).

Therefore, it's quite wrong doctrinally to say that all people are "God's children" – even though many people believe it. It's as if they want to be acknowledged as "godly" or at least "good" but they don't want the moral obligation that goes with it, and so renounce any need to find salvation in Christ. They want the nice bit, but not the hard bit about sin and repentance.

We're only sons because of Jesus Christ THE son of God, and He was eternally begotten, whereas humankind through Adam (another "son of God" – see Luke 3:38) was created in time. That's a huge and very important difference. Jesus was Eternally begotten; Adam was created within Time. Jesus was Wisdom incarnate; Adam was granted a Moral compass (at least to start with).

So, what about James 3:9 which says we're made in "**the image of God**"? (see also 1 Corinthians 11:7). Well, the overall teaching from Reformed Protestantism explains that the "image of God" has nothing to do with shape or form, but refers to holiness, pure (or full) knowledge and a righteousness imparted by God (see Colossians 3:10; Ephesians 4:24).

Clearly Adam lost that initial image of God, so in a pure sense he was no longer a "son of God". Because he fell, we all fell with him: "**So then, just as sin came into the world through one man and death through sin, in the same way death spread to all men because all sinned**" (Romans 5:12).

Another way of putting it is that God THE Father made Adam in His likeness, and so all of Adam's children were begotten in the likeness of their father too:

**God created Adam, in the likeness of God He made him. Male and female He created them, and He blessed them and called their name "Adam" when He created them. Adam lived 130 years, then fathered a son in his likeness, after his image, and named him Seth (Genesis 5:1-3).**

Well, all of the above is standard orthodox Bible truth, but does need to be reinforced from time to time. But Adam certainly has a lot to answer for!

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The other thing that's important to grasp is how Adoption is linked to Sonship. Scripturally speaking, sonship is a gift from God, not by our being born biologically, but through being born-again spiritually "of God".

**"As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name: which were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:12-13).**

So, the concept of "sonship" goes hand in hand with the idea of "the image of God". It implies and should involve, an intimate communion with our Creator-Father.

In this study we're looking at how the Hebrew mindset understood Adoption and Sonship, not so much the Roman Law idea that Paul uses, let alone the modern concept of adoption. Now while Paul used the Roman Law of adoption as an illustration for his readers, the prophetic nature of Hebrew Adoption cannot be easily ignored. Paul after all was initially a Jew with a Hebrew mindset.

Jewish law didn't have any concept of "adoption" that was akin to Roman or even our modern culture. But a type of adoption was practised in earlier times, as seen in this example when Esther's parents died, and her uncle Mordecai adopted her (Esther 2:7 and 15).

Even Yahweh does this when He "adopts" Israel as His chosen one. In Exodus He spoke metaphorically of Israel as his "firstborn son." God told Moses:

**Then say to Pharaoh, 'This is what the YHWH says: Israel is my firstborn son, and I told you, "Let my son go, so he may worship me." But you refused to let him go; so I will kill your firstborn son.'" (Exodus 4:22-23)**

And in Psalm 98 God says,

**I have found David my servant; with my sacred oil I have anointed him... He will call out to me, 'You are my Father, my God, the Rock my Saviour.' I will also appoint him my firstborn, the most exalted of the kings of the earth. (Psalm 89:20,26-27)**

Scripture shows us that David was actually the youngest brother, not the first-born son, yet God passed by the other brothers and chose him as king. When God said He would appoint David as firstborn, he didn't mean that he would be first in order, but would be foremost in favour, status – and even in accountability.

In Hebrew thought a son had the particular role of being part of his father's character, of almost participating in his father's way of living. The son certainly had to depend on his father, but also to obey him. In this way he would be a reflection of who his father was. For the Hebrew

father his strength was evidenced by having a son (especially a first-born son), and for the son his greatest role in life would be to bear his father's character and values.

The father would be responsible for instructing his son into the family trade or business, which was usually hereditary. It's interesting to note that the first recorded words of Jesus were at 12 years old when his parents found him in the Temple. When Joseph and Miriam (Mary) questioned him he replied, "**Don't you know that I must be about the things of my Father?**" (literal meaning "**at my Father's concerns, affairs**" Luke 2:49). So even though Joseph was still alive at that point, Jesus was already acutely aware of the "business" (affairs) of his heavenly Father!

Now according to John the last recorded words of Jesus on the cross were "**It is finished**" (John 19:30). What was finished? His Father's business and affairs regarding him, meaning the work of redemption via the cross: "**I finished the work that You gave me to do**" (John 17:4). So, according to this mindset a "son" is one who reflects the father's character and values, by first being dependent on him, and second by obedience to his father's purpose – even unto death. It doesn't take too much to see how this was reflected in Jesus' life.

When the son had fulfilled all his father's desires and plans for him, according to Hebrew thought, he was granted the title of "son" and the honour that went with it. A son (usually the first-born) is one who is both designated by the father to be a likeness (in character) of him, and then acknowledged publicly as such. This is the meaning behind Jesus' saying, "**so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven**" (Matthew 5:45).

So, we can say that Jesus as the perfect and mature Son is indeed the very reflection (incarnation) of his Father's will and character. In fact, like any good Hebrew son he points to his father and doesn't seek attention for himself. "**I do not seek my own will but the will of the Father who sent me**" (John 5:30). He is devoted to his father's purpose in life!

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The next idea to address is the difference between our modern understanding of Adoption, and the Scriptural concept. They are quite different. So let's take a brief look at the meaning of the Father-Son relationship in Scripture (this won't cover all the concepts of Hebrew adoption, but it will set us a pattern).

- It doesn't mean "adoption" in the modern sense of the word, where a man might adopt an orphan from another family. When a son reached maturity, his father would formally give him the "sonship." This would be done publicly.
- The son could then act in the name of his father, and any contract he might sign would be legally binding as though his father had signed the contract himself. Hence the importance of the contract "signed" in blood of the New Covenant.
- So biblically speaking "sonship" deals with a position of authority in the family, not like our modern understanding of adoption. For the Hebrews, character was all about the father-son relationship and the acknowledgment of this in front of witnesses. It was an inward thing to be expressed outwardly.

In Biblical days there were **THREE ceremonies dealing with sonship**. This is important to understand in terms of our spiritual growth as believers. Each step occurs at a set time that's quite important prophetically.

1. **The first ceremony** took place shortly after the birth of the son when he was 8 days old, the circumcision ceremony (**Luke 2:21**).

2. **The second ceremony** was performed when the son reached the age of about 12 years (**Luke 2:42**). That was the second level of sonship, when the father began to seriously teach his son wisdom and the family business or trade.
3. **The third ceremony** was FULL sonship, done publicly when the son was about 30 years old (**Luke 3:23**), as long as the son had proven himself to be obedient ("**You are my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased**" Luke 3:22). This ceremony gave the son full authority to make decisions in place of his father, for he possessed the mind of the father. He thought like his father. His values were the same as his father's. Ideally, he was a replication of his father, and the father knew that he could now trust his son to act in his stead. Note that Joseph was 30 when he was made ruler in Egypt (**Genesis 41:46**), and the priests began to minister when they turned 30 (**Numbers 4:3**). David started to reign when he was 30 (**2 Samuel 5:4**). So in Scripture the number 30 symbolically stands for "maturity and sonship" (see my free [eBook](#)).

It's easy to see how this operated in Jesus' life. He was the PATTERN Son for us to follow. We are to imitate Him (**1 Corinthians 11:1**).

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Adoption and Sonship are a glorious truth, often neglected in much preaching. Paul explains that our Father "**chose us in** (Jesus Christ) **before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. In LOVE He predestined us to ADOPTION AS SONS through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed** (lit. *graced*) **on us in the Beloved** (lit. *Son of His love*)" (Ephesians 1:4-6).

This passage declares that our adoption was purposed by our Father from eternity past, was made possible in time by His beloved Son, and is now being made real by the Holy Spirit. A very ordered and three-fold sequence of Father, Son and Spirit tied neatly to the Past, Present and Future. How I love the sequences of God!

We are on our way to FULL sonship, to dwell (tabernacle) with the Godhead forever. This is the reason the final Feast of the Lord is the **Feast of Tabernacles** (meaning "to dwell, to abide") because it symbolizes our arrival at Home where we'll dwell eternally in the presence of the Father, Son and Spirit - just like it was envisioned before the Fall. Nothing has changed!

**The reason for all this is to learn now  
how to dwell with God and one another as a Family!**

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