
Adoption

The word adoption in the New Testament is translated from the Greek word **huiothesia**, which means "the placing of an adult son" and refers to the formal act of recognizing the maturity of an adult son. The word is found in five New Testament passages: Rom. 8:15,23; 9:4; Gal. 4:5; Eph. 1:5.

The new-born baby is **brephos**, as in "the babe (**brephos**), lying in a manger...". The word sometimes refers to the fetus, as in "...the babe (**brephos**) leapt in her womb...". The believer is also called **teknon**, a child which is growing up but which is still under parental care. Hence John 1:12, "...to them gave He power to become the sons (**teknon**) of God." But the believer is also in union with Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is called **huios**, "an adult son". So, in union with Him, we are said to be adult sons also, although we may be **brephos** or **teknon** by experience.

To the people living in the predominantly Greek and Roman culture of the 1st Century A.D., the word **huiothesia** would bring to mind the ceremony of *toga virilis*, in which a 14-year-old boy went through an investiture ceremony with the adult male members of his family. At this ceremony, speeches of challenge to the youth would be made, and offerings would be made to the gods. Then, the boy would stand in the center of the group and take off the child's garment that he wore. A new adult man's robe, or *toga*, would be placed on him. This was the *toga virilis*, the "robe of a man".

At this time, the 14-year-old was given adult privileges and responsibilities. He could conduct business in his own name, could buy and sell property, could marry, could vote in the Assembly, and in many other ways could carry on as an adult citizen. Of course, he was not mature enough or wise enough to exercise all of the privileges he had; and he was not experienced enough to live up to all of the responsibilities. But the seriousness of his position as a citizen was impressed on him; and if he was intelligent and hard working,

he would grow up to be an adult having integrity and character.

Application

The spiritual use of the word "adoption" signifies the placing of a newborn child, in the spiritual sense, into the position of privilege and responsibility attached to an adult son. The question arises as to why a naturally born child needs to be adopted. Are we not, after all, "born again"? It is here that the true meaning of "adoption" comes in; because in the New Testament, "adoption" refers to a positional advance. The new believer is advanced positionally to his majority, even though at the time of salvation he is spiritually immature, a "babe in Christ".

Because spiritual adoption takes place at the moment of salvation, there is really no period of childhood experience recognized for believers. The Christian has been placed into the privilege, liberty, and duty of a full-grown adult. Spiritual adoption imposes the same way of life on all children of God. This requirement is reasonable because the Christian life is to be lived in the sustaining and upholding power of the Holy Spirit. And this provision is available as much for one person as for another.

Grace Notes is a ministry of Austin Bible Church, Austin, Texas.

For an index of topics, or information about regular Bible studies, write to:

Warren Doud

Grace Notes

1705 Aggie Lane

Austin, Texas 78757

E-Mail: wdoud@gracenotes.info

URL: <http://www.gracenotes.info>

There is no charge for Grace Notes materials. The work is supported by Christians who pray for the ministry and share in the expenses.
