

CHAPTER 14

ADOPTION

Definition of adoption

WSC 34, “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 the sons of God.”

—also WCF 12, WLC 74

In biblical theology adoption is an extremely important theme; yet the Westminster Confession is the only confession that gives a full chapter to it (ch. 12).

Adoption: —Is an immediate act
 —Is instantaneous with justification
 —Places us in a relation with God as sons and daughters

Biblical terms for adoption

1. There is only one specific term for adoption used in the Bible: υἱοθεσία *huiiothesia*. This term is found five times, all in Paul’s epistles:

Rom 8:15, the Spirit of adoption, not of servitude

Rom 8:23, adoption of the body (glorification)

Rom 9:4, to Jesus is the adoption and the glory

Gal 4:5, we might receive the adoption

Eph 1:5, predestined us unto adoption unto himself

This term is found often, however, in the papyri; see MM 648.

2. Adoption, however, most often is referred to indirectly, by the use of “child,” “son,” “daughter,” or “Father,” or by the concept of heirs of an inheritance. Examples:

David's sons in the Davidic covenant, 2 Sam 7:14

Israel as God's children, Exod 4:22; Jer 31:9, 20; Hos 1:11

God as Israel's Father, Deut 32:6; Jer 3:4, 14 (husband); Ezek 16 (adopt and marry)

Jesus' reference to "Our Father" in the Lord's Prayer

Thus adoption is related to the covenant, Isa 43:6; cf. 2 Cor 6:16-18, quoting various OT passages.

Isa 43:6, "I will say to the north, 'Give them up!' and to the south, 'Do not hold them back.' Bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the ends of the earth."

2 Cor 6:16-18, "What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: 'I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people.' 'Therefore come out from them and be separate,' says the Lord. 'Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you.' 'I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.'"

Often used in NT, John 1:12; Rom 8:16-17; 1 John 3:1

Sometimes linked to marriage, similar to husband-wife relationship, Hos 1-3; Ezek 16; Jer 3:4, 14; cf. Eph 5:22-32

Benefits of adoption

Here we follow the outline of WCF 12.

Liberty of children of God

[Cf. WCF 20; Rom. 8:15]

Liberty from: —Sin
 —Death
 —Wrath of God
 —Law (Gal. 3:23 - 4:7)

—Other people

Privileges of children of God

- God’s name on us—Jer 14:9; Acts 11:26; 26:28; 1 Pet 4:16; Rev 3:12
- Have spirit of adoption—Rom 8:15
- Have access to God in prayer—Matt 6:9; Rom 5:2; Eph 3:12
- Can call God as “Father” —Matt 6:9; Rom 8:15; Gal 4:6 (“Abba” is Aramaic for “Father”)
- Are pitied—Ps 103:13
- Are protected—Prov 14:26
- Are provided for—Matt 6:30-32; 1 Pet 5:7
- Are chastened as children—Prov 3:11-12; Heb 12:7-10
- Are secure as children, never cast off—Lam 3:31; John 10:27-30; Heb 13:5 (Gk.)
- Are sealed by the Holy Spirit—Eph 4:30
- Are heirs to inherit the promise—Heb 1:14; 10:36; 11:39-40; 1 Pet 1:3-4; 1 John 3:2