

GRACE BIBLE CHURCH
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The Tree of Life is a weekly teaching summary.
The Tree of Life from the week ending 05/28/06
What it means to be initiated into the secret of the mystery. Part 31.

In Joh 14:15-20, the night before our Lord's death, He said *"If you love Me, you will keep My commandments. "And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; {that is} the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not behold Him or know Him, {but} you know Him because He abides with you, and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you [the Rapture of the Church], After a little while the world will behold Me no more; but you {will} behold Me; because I live, you shall live also. In that day you shall know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you."*

The phrase *in that day* means beginning on the day of Pentecost, there are 3 things that they are going to learn, and this is the structure of our relationship with God. The first is that the Lord is *in the Father*, when Jesus says He is in the Father, we go back to His oneness and equality with the essence of the Father. Then we have the phrase, *and you in Me*, for the first time in all history, Jesus Christ is in God, and you are in Christ. This is a reference to your position in Christ and therefore, the doctrine of positional truth, a mystery doctrine of the Church-age. Through the baptism of the Spirit you are in union with Christ, and nothing can ever change that. Christianity is not a religion, it is a relationship, and the basis of that relationship is that Christ is God, and we are in Christ. Therefore, we began this passage with the importance of understanding one the most important mystery doctrines of the Church-age, the doctrine of the baptism of the Spirit and our positional truth. We also noted under this mystery doctrine, **The Doctrine of the Royal Ambassadorship**. We have just completed the Doctrine of the Angelic Conflict. The mystery doctrine of the Church unveils the characteristics unique to the Christian way of life. Mystery doctrine actually tells the believer what he must do now that he is a Christian. Where there is ignorance concerning mystery doctrine there is ignorance concerning how to live the Christian life. Mystery doctrine reveals the divine assets that God has given to each Church-age believer and His directions for using those assets. God has magnificently provided everything for us and has thoroughly instructed us so that we can as Eph 4:1 says *Walk in a manner worthy of our calling*. Another result of the mystery doctrine of Church-age which all believers should be initiated into is the principle of adoption. The biblical connotation of adoption, which is based on the Roman aristocratic function of adoption in the time when the N. T. was written, is not the same as our twentieth century practice. In Scripture adoption means to be recognized by God as an adult son positionally at salvation, and an adult son experientially at maturity. The Latin word *adoptia*, from which we get our English word *adoption* from is the exact equivalent of the Greek word *huiiothesia*, meaning to adopt as an adult son.

The Romans, as a people, lasted for a thousands years, and one reason they lasted so long is because they had very strict ideas about being parents. They were thinking parents who

had very strict discipline in the home so that Romans grew under very strict discipline. If their own kids did not respond to this authority, they would look for someone else in society who was old enough to respond to authority and they would adopt them Roman style so that the family name would continue with aristocracy. By the time the boy was 14, he was an adult in Roman society, and if he was a weak individual, another person would be adopted and would take over the family business and become the heir. So adoption meant to pass the family fortune and the family opportunities down to that person who was qualified to be a legitimate mature heir of the family inheritance. Adoption meant greater opportunity. Anyone who was adopted was the heir of the family fortune, the family business, the seat in the Senate.

So adoption was a way of recognizing superiority and selectivity in the Roman society. In the spiritual realm, imputations at salvation are made as part of the ceremony of recognizing that we now have a plan and purpose in life, therefore, all believers become adopted as sons at salvation. Being in union with Christ, we are joint-heirs with Christ, and are therefore adopted at the moment of salvation Gal 3:26, *For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.*

The Greek word *huiothesia* means to place a son in the home who would carry on a family business, the family estate, therefore, it meant recognition as an adult son. Adoption was designed to train a child in the recognition of authority, and was a system of selectivity for heirship, in which a capable person would succeed another capable person. Therefore, to place an adult son in the home was a Roman custom for aristocracy. It conferred adulthood on a natural child or on a child adopted as the heir.

Paul writes in Gal 4:1-7, *Now I say, as long as the heir is a child, he does not differ at all from a slave although he is owner of everything, but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by the father. So also we, while we were children, were held in bondage under the elemental things of the world. But when the fulness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, in order that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God.*

Roman aristocrats would adopt whomever they considered most worthy to carry on the family name and wealth. Therefore, the family fortune and opportunities were passed down through that adopted person, and, if you adopted your own son, it was the highest honor you could confer on him. Adoption was the ceremony of proclaiming the heir to the estate, and was brought about as a means of introducing a stronger society in early Rome. It was a way of recognizing superiority in Roman society, and this Roman law of adoption was never changed. The actual ceremony was called *adrogatio*, and the law could not be reversed, so that as long as you were alive, you were the heir.

Adoption then, meant selection to special privilege, and in the spiritual realm refers to our equal privilege and equal opportunity under predestination. It also meant rank and aristocracy not necessarily based on physical birth, the lowest person in Roman society, if he had ability, could be adopted, and therefore have the greatest of opportunities.

Opportunity means willing to start at the bottom, to sacrifice, to work hard. Once you understand and respect authority, all you need is the opportunity, but opportunity means starting at the bottom.

Adoption is defined as the fulfillment of the Father's plan to appoint a legal adult son, believers at the point of salvation become legally adopted sons of God. Adoption is the ceremony of opportunity; it is also the ceremony of aristocracy. Paul also uses the word adoption in Eph 1:5 to show that God the Father selected each believer personally at the moment of salvation and adopted him. You are the legitimate heir of God the Father, Eph 1:5, *He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will.* Paul goes on to point out in Romans that we are *joint-heirs with the Son of God* because we have been adopted. Rom 8:15-17, *For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!" The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him.*

Adoption emphasizes God's ability and your motivation rather than your ability and the resultant arrogance which normally follows. However you have failed, whatever your handicaps from birth, environment, or bad decisions from a position of weakness; all of that was set aside when you were adopted at salvation. However, your motivation is emphasized because if your volition is negative, you will never enjoy the benefits of your adoption. Everyone who believes in Christ in this dispensation is automatically adopted as the heir of God. Through the baptism of the Holy Spirit, not only are you adopted into God's royal family, but you are a royal heir of God. So Paul uses the word to remind us we are spiritual aristocracy, the Royal Family of God, and to remind us that what we were before is no issue in the spiritual life. We are in the plan of God and we are different from other believers of other dispensations.

Adoption anticipates great blessing and responsibility from the integrity of God. This is why we are to advance to maturity, receive blessings, and glorify God in time and eternity. Adoption connotes responsibility, purpose, authority, and a planned life, it means being given the rights, power, and authority of someone who is truly great and has all the power.

During the Roman ceremony of adoption (*adrogatio*), the entire family was assembled, including everyone who might have been the heir (no females). The father had ready on a table a beautiful white linen robe with a purple border called the *toga virilus*, the robe of manhood, and a signet ring. The father would recognize the heir, using his new name, and declaring him to be his new heir. He would then give you the *toga virilus* and put the signet ring of heirship on the heir's finger. The signet ring meant that he could draw from his father's bank anytime he needed to and there was no problem because by now at age 14, this man was a totally responsible person, and these two gifts sealed your heirship; it was final. The first thing that the adult son would do was to go in the military to learn how to handle freedom.

Since the Scripture uses adoption to explain how great our Church-age assets are, the actual ceremony of adoption provides analogies to what the Church-age believer receives at salvation. First, the Holy Spirit entered you into union with Christ. Then God the Father gave you the signet ring which represents your portfolio of invisible assets, now you are in union with Christ, Royal Family of God, permanent and eternal aristocracy. So we can see why Christians in the first or second century learned that they were adopted by God the Father, this meant a great deal and was extremely significant to them. Also

astonishing to this early Church-age believer was that both male and female believers were adopted by God, for in the Roman custom only men could be adopted as heirs. Secondly, the believer is given his very own toga virilus, which is the robe of righteousness, Isa 61:10, *For He has clothed me with garments of salvation, He has wrapped me with a robe of righteousness.*

Luk 15:11, *And He said, "A certain man had two sons;* Notice that they are both sons when it started and both will be his sons when this passage finishes. The man in this parable represents God the Father and the sons represent believers, therefore, this is not a gospel message, this is a doctrinal message for born-again believers. Luk 15:12, *and the younger of them* [this is the prodigal son, by the way prodigal means to waste your life away], *so he said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the estate that falls to me.'* [he thought there was something that he was missing and that his life was just fading away and that there was so much to know] *And he divided his wealth between them.* Both received a share of the estate, and each one had enough so that he was independently wealthy, and that represents the doctrine of logistical grace applied to your life. The prodigal son did what most people have done throughout history, he accepted the blessings of the Father (as all men do who live on God's earth), while at the same time he turned his back upon his Father (as men do when they reject and abandon fellowship with God). Notice that the Father made no attempt to stop him, this brings out the principle that God does not violate our free will nor does He force us to remain in fellowship with Him. Luk 15:13, *And not many days later, the younger son gathered everything together and went on a journey into a distant country,* [this is analogous to life in the cosmic system] *and there he squandered his estate with loose living.* So, it didn't take long for the young son to pack up and leave his Father, and notice that it was the son who moved away from the Father **not** the Father moving away from the son. We move away from our personal sense of destiny when we live a life of sin, we draw away from God, He does not draw away from us. That's why Jam 4:8 says, *Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners* [rebound]; *and purify your hearts* [perceive doctrine], *you double-minded.*

So in Luk 15:14, *Now when he had spent everything* [he's not investing, he's just spending], *a severe famine occurred in that country, and he began to be in need.* This was a part of divine discipline which God brings on every one of His children who go astray from their personal sense of destiny. Having forsaken his Father and his personal sense of destiny, he can now find nothing but poverty, misery, and want. The human soul is empty if God does not fill it (Ecc 3:11). The famine represents the fact that there's a famine in every heart which is not being nourished by the word of God or not have the desire for that which is eternal fulfilled as a part of your personal sense of destiny. There is always a famine in the heart when a person moves away from God. Luk 15:15, *And he went and **attached himself** to one of the citizens of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.* He did get a job, feeding pigs on a farm. In this state, he attached himself, which is the Greek verb *kollao* meaning to glue or to closely unite himself to a citizen of that foreign country which represents the devil's children instead of God's. This reveals the misery of becoming a slave to the devil and his cosmic system. The further a believer goes from God, the nearer he comes to being a slave to the devil, and there is no master so cruel as the devil. There's no burden so heavy as that of bondage to the old sin nature. No slavery so nasty as slavery to the old sin nature and the carnal, shameful,

passions of the flesh. Times of distress often lead to self-examination and are used by God to bring about changes or repentance in people's lives. However, this young man still held on to the belief that he could maintain his self-sufficiency. This parable describes the depths to which the prodigal son had sunk. His emptiness was shown by the job that he had to take, tending pigs. Pigs were considered to be unclean animals and expressly forbidden in the Mosaic law (Lev 11:7; Deu 14:8). Luk 15:16, *And he was longing to fill his stomach with the pods or the slop that the pigs were eating, and no one was giving {anything} to him.* He's starving while he's working because pay day only comes after the pigs are marketed. This is a picture of what happens when a believer goes back to the lifestyle that God has rescued him from. This shows the humiliation the young man was now enduring. Eventually, even that food was unavailable for the prodigal, so that the detestable pigs were now eating better than the prodigal. The freedom that he dreamed of and the reality that struck, were not anything like one another.

Think of the father, not one sun has set without that father praying deeply for the safety and the return of that boy. So we read in Luk 15:17, *But when he came to his senses, he said [or thought to himself], How many of my Father's hired men have more than enough bread, but I am dying here with hunger starving to death!* So this man finally became honest with himself and looked at his life from a biblical perspective. To recognize the sins in your own life, to stop rationalizing or justifying them, to stop blaming others for them, and to come to a point where you acknowledge them and recognize that it is wrong and contrary to the word of God. Remember, this is not a parable about what happens to a believer when he sins, this is a parable about what happens to a believer when he changes his lifestyle. Luk 15:18-20, *I will get up and go to my Father, and will say to him, [and here's the rebound] Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me as one of your hired men. And he got up and came to his Father. But while **he was still a long way off** his Father saw him, and felt compassion {for him,} and ran and embraced him, and kissed him.* Notice his Father is a wonderful person and this is a magnificent way of expressing God the Father. His Father saw him while he was **a long way off**. It almost appears as if his Father had been looking for him. This is picture of Isa 65:24, *"It will also come to pass that before they call, I will answer;"* Or as David said in Psa 56:8, *"Thou hast taken account of my wanderings; Put my tears in Thy bottle; Are they not in Thy book?"* God knows every heartache and every difficulty we will ever face. Whether it's our fault or someone else's fault is not the issue with God. With God, our Father, the issue is coming back home. The Father was filled with compassion and his Father **ran** to him. Luk 15:21-22, *And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight [there's rebound]; I am no longer worthy to be called your son. "make me as one of your hired men. But the Father said to his slaves, Quickly bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet.* This is a picture of what happens in rebound, and forgiveness of guilt and restoration to fellowship with God. The best robe was symbol of honor and respect and it represents restoration to full experiential righteousness. Luk 15:23, *and bring the fattened calf, kill it, and let us eat [have a feast or a party] and be merry [celebrate].* Rather than punishing the son for his sins, the father has a party, and everybody in the community is invited to this party or celebration of the forgiveness of sins.