

Q34. What is adoption?

A34. **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.**

Scripture References: 1 John 3:1-2; John 1:12; Romans 8:17

DQ1: Whose act is adoption?

DQ2: Why is adoption needed?

DQ3: What comes with adoption?

DQ4: What is the ultimate purpose of adoption?

DQ5: Who were we before adoption?

Notes:

Like justification, adoption is also an act of God's free grace. As we studied, adoption is totally dependent upon the adopting parent. So, it is with God. No one can force adoption upon any parent just as no one can force adoption upon God. Therefore, adoption is an act of God. And, adoption is an act of God's grace because it is a gift, totally undeserved by the adopted children.

Adoption is needed because it represents restoration of the status of the one adopted. In fact, adoption is a radical transformation of the status. Here is the reason why. We tend to be shy about who we were before adoption. Mildly put, we were orphans without proper parents. In reality, we were children of the devil. (John 8:44) No wonder no one likes to talk about our former status. Therefore, adoption by God of the former children of the devil is a radical change. Adoption represents the restoration of the status of "children of God" before the fall of man.

Adoption has some very serious ramifications. Adoption changes the legal status of the adoptee. The change in legal status affects such things as the right to protection, care, inheritance and more, which are only available to the children of the adopting parents. Many benefits of blessings come with God's adoption. These benefits are clearly spiritual and eternal in nature. The rights and privileges of being God's children attach to the adoptee.

The ultimate purpose of adoption is for the adoptees to become the children of God. There is a deeper purpose, however. It is the joy of the Lord. God derives such joy as cannot be expressed in human terms. (Luke 15: 7)

The wonder of adoption can be described as follows: (1) adoption is not a process but a definite event such that it completely occurs in a moment in time; (2) adoption is also permanent and is not reversible such that it can be undone because it is sealed by the blood of Christ; (3) adoption is clearly experienced by the adoptees and cannot be mistaken or confused.

We can be sure of adoption by the promise the Word of God, the application of the Word to us by the Holy Spirit. The Bible testifies to the work of the Holy Spirit. The Bible declares that God adopts the former children of the devil as his own. The Holy Spirit brings about a change of our

status and, indeed, our attitude as signs of our adoption. While adoption is complete in a blink of an eye, our flesh takes more time getting adjusted to the change of our status.

There are a couple of important issues to know and remember. First, the doctrine of adoption defeats the popular claim of “the universal brotherhood of man.” This claim is only half true and, therefore, is no truth at all. It is true that all mankind was created and made in the image of God. So, in this sense, we enjoy “a universal brotherhood.” But, man fell from the status of “God’s children” when Adam and Eve sinned. Therefore, once adoption occurs the status of God’s children is restored unto some leaving behind others in the status of being the children of the devil. Biblically and theologically, there cannot be such a universal brotherhood of man.

Second, our adoption does not make divine. While we become co-heirs with Christ, we remain creatures and people redeemed, i.e., we remain as human beings, while Christ is a deity and remains divine at all times. This is a difference that we must not forget. Adoption, then, is a privilege.

In the final analysis, we celebrate our new status because we were brought into this new status by God’s grace. As we begin to recognize the immensity of this change, we must become thankful.

Westminster Confession of Faith
CHAPTER XII
Of Adoption

1. All those that are justified, God vouchsafeth, in and for his only Son Jesus Christ, to make partakers of the grace of adoption,[a] by which they are taken into the number, and enjoy the liberties and privileges of the children of God,[b] have his name put upon them,[c] receive the spirit of adoption,[d] have access to the throne of grace with boldness,[e] are enabled to cry, Abba, Father,[f] are pitied,[g] protected,[h] provided for,[i] and chastened by him as by a Father:[k] yet never cast off,[l] but sealed to the day of redemption;[m] and inherit the promises,[n] as heirs of everlasting salvation.[o]

[a]. Eph. 1:5; Gal. 4:4-5

[b]. Rom. 8:17; John 1:12

[c]. Num. 6:24-26; Jer. 14:9; Amos 9:12; Acts 15:17; II Cor. 6:18; Rev. 3:12

[d]. Rom. 8:15

[e]. Eph. 3:12; see Heb. 4:16

[f]. Rom. 8:15; see Gal. 4:6; Rom. 8:16

[g]. Ps. 103:13

[h]. Prov. 14:26

[i]. Matt. 6:30, 32, I Pet. 5:7

[k]. Heb. 12:6

[l]. Lam. 3:31-32; see Ps. 89:30-35

[m]. Eph. 4:30

[n]. Heb. 6:12

[o]. I Pet. 1:3-4; Heb. 1:14