

The Relationship Between Adoption and Regeneration

Because God works within a legal framework, is there a sequence of events between adoption and when a Believer receives the Holy Spirit?

1. Carefully observe these two passages. Do you understand all of the terms? Do you observe a sequence between adoption and regeneration?

But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship. Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father." So you are no longer a slave, but God's child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir. (Gal 4:4-7, NIV)

And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory. (Eph 1:13-14, NIV)

2. In the process of initial salvation, God and a person is involved with a variety of steps to salvation. Arrange the sequence of events that takes place that God does and what a person does to become a Believer. Work this out with your friends!

What God does before and after one comes to faith:

Regenerate, Call, Adopt, Elect, Justify, Draw

What a person does to become a Believer:

Faith, Repent, Confess

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Teacher Notes

Because God works within a legal framework, is there a sequence of events between adoption and when a Believer receives the Holy Spirit?

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Ask the student: do you understand all of the words used in this passage? What does "law" mean? What is "slave" all about? Help the student use a Bible dictionary if necessary.

Law: refers to the Mosaic Law / Covenant. While God was no longer bound to the covenant, the Law still taught the nation of Israel what sin was and how to atone for it to be holy. The phrase "born under the law" referred to the ongoing presence of the Law and "to redeem those under the law" referred to how to atone / pay the price of sin.

Slave: refers to a person who is unwittingly deceived and obeys the lusts of his heart. Because it is Satan who encourages this disobedience of God's word, a person without God is seen as doing the work of Satan like a slave.

Ask the student: what sequence do you observe of regeneration and adoption? What happens first? What is the significance?

1. Adoption – this establishes the legal basis of being a child of God.

2. Regeneration – being "born again" changes the origin of birth and establishes a natural relationship to God. This holy relationship entitles the Believer to an inheritance. Occurring at this time as well is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, which seals the Believer as a child of God, and serves as a deposit guaranteeing the Believer's inheritance. Regeneration validates the Believer's legal adoption by God.

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The primary purpose of this exercise is to help the student understand what all these terms mean and how they are all related.

What are God's divine actions before one comes to faith?

Elect: God chooses to be God to Abraham's descendants as promised in the Abrahamic Covenant. Here you see God's choice has taken place before Abraham's descendants have been born.

Draw: attracts a person to the goodness of God.

Call: invites a person to be of God's "treasured possession" (Ex 19:5).

Justify: declaring a person "righteous," the legal evaluation of that person's view of salvation "proves right" and acquits him of the penalty of sin.

What does a person do to become a Believer?

Confess: recognize and seek forgiveness of one's sins.

Repent: make a decision to change and become a better person.

Faith: a) believe that God is alive and really exists, and b) place a trust in God's word that engenders an obedience to it.

What are God's divine actions after one comes to faith?

Adopt: establishing the legal basis of being a child of God.

Regenerate: changing the origin of birth and establishing a natural relationship to God so that the Believer is entitled to an inheritance. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit seals the Believer as a child of God, and serves as a deposit guaranteeing the Believer's inheritance.

Be prepared to assist anyone who would like to be a child of God.