

Sermons

The Household of God, the Church

🕒 April 24, 2016

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Please Note: *Due to problems with the recorder, this audio lesson is incomplete.*

Intro: The Bible describes God's people with various metaphors. These "pictures" or perspectives of the church provide a comprehensive look at the relationships of God's people to the world, to each other, and to God Himself.

Some of these pictures of the church are powerful analogies taken from the common human experience:

1) **The church is the Bride of Christ.** This picture emphasizes Christ's sacrificial love for us, the expected purity of our lives and our willing submission to His will. **Rev 21:2-3** – *2 Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God.*

2) For the last few weeks we have discussed the church as the **body of Christ**. We all have physical bodies and we can

understand the relationship that the members of our body have with our head. This picture emphasizes Christ's headship (authority) and our dependence on Him for our spiritual growth. **1 Cor 12:27** – *27 Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.* **Eph 1:22-23** – *22 And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, 23 which is His body,*

There is another important and related picture of Christ and His church in Ephesians.

I. The Church is the Household of God. Eph 2:19-22*Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and **members of the household of God**, 20 having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, 21 in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, 22 in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.*

A. The term translated "**household**" denotes those belonging to a **house**. **Vine's Dictionary** says the word here means "kindred" or those belonging to the same house. In **Acts 16:15** it is used to describe those of Lydia's household or family who were baptized. **It most often describes people who are part of a family.**

B. Matthew 12:46-50 – *46 While He was still talking to the multitudes, behold, His mother and brothers stood outside, seeking to speak with Him. 47 Then one said to Him, "Look, Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside, seeking to speak with You." 48 But He answered and said to the one who told Him, "Who is My mother and who are My brothers?" 49 And He stretched out His hand toward His disciples and said, "Here are My mother and My brothers! 50 For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother."*

1. Indeed, both Jesus and His apostles often used the “family” motif in speaking of the church.

a. Jesus would speak of... God as His Father, His followers as family relatives, and teach His disciples to address God as our “Father”;

b. The apostles referred to the church as

1) a “brotherhood” – **1 Peter 2:17** – *Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king.*

2) as the “house (family) of God” – **1 Timothy 3:15**–*but if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.*

C. Here in **Ephesians 2:19** it denotes the “company of the redeemed.” God has a family. The church is the family or household of God on a universal level. This picture appears again in **Ephesians 3:14-15** *For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, 15 from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,* This later description views the people of God from a universal perspective; those in heaven & those still living on earth. They are all one family.

Consider Adam Clarke’s remarks:

Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ on earth, the spirits of just men made perfect in a separate state, and all the holy angels in heaven, make but one family, of which God is the Father and Head. Paul does not say, of whom the families, as if each order

formed a distinct household; but he says family, because they are all one, and of one. And all this family is named-derives its origin and being, from God, as children derive their name from him who is the father of the family: holy persons in heaven and earth derive their being and their holiness from God, and therefore his name is called upon them. Christ gives the name of Christians to all the real members of his church upon earth; and to all the spirits of just men (saved since his advent, and through his blood) in heaven. They are all the sons and daughters of God Almighty.
(from Adam Clarke's Commentary)

II. **How does one get into the family of God?** How did you become a part of your family? Most of us were physically born into our family – for better or for worse. But a smaller percentage came into their family through choice. They were adopted.

A. **Not by natural birth:** The people of Israel in the O.T. were also referred to as God's children. They were the recipients of God's favor and this unique relationship through the promise made to Abraham, and traced their lineage as evidence that they were the children of God. But even during this time God accepted and rejected people on the basis of faith and submissiveness to the will of the Father. John the Baptist told the Pharisees...
"Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, 9 and do not think to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones. 10 And even now

the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.” (Matt 3:8-10)

• **John 1:12-13** – *12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: 13 who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. God has children, but He has no grandchildren. We not related through physical birth. In explaining God’s choice to bring both the Gentiles and the Jews into the Kingdom through faith Paul said, **Rom 9:8**– *That is, those who are the children of the flesh [Jews], these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted as the seed.**

B. We are adopted. Made possible through Christ. – **Gal 3:26-29** *For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. 27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.* This is a powerful image of our relationship to God.

1. The Father has paid the price to redeem us from a life of slavery and make us true sons.

Adoption was not much practiced among the Jews but was common in the Greek and Roman world. At times the ones who were adopted were former slaves who had served the family well. They were given full rights. **Galatians 4:4-74** *But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, 5 to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. 6 And because you are*

*sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, "Abba, Father!" 7 Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ. Again, we read in **Ephesians 1:5**, "He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will."*

2. Adoption is a powerful picture of love. To be adopted means that we were chosen by God. God made a plan by which He would select us. Before the foundations of the world we were chosen and elected by God. Before the foundations of the world, God was planning for our adoption and preparing to pay the price of His Son to ensure the adoption. There is no doctrine of unconditional election and predestination in view. God is trying to simply tell us that He made plans to adopt us.

a. Implied in this choosing is the fact that we are not unwanted. You are wanted by God and God has done all He can to make you His child. Adoption shows the love of the parent, as we see the love of the Father toward us.

b. God's children are now free. **Romans 8:14-17** – *For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. 15 For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father." 16 The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 and if children, then heirs — heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.* The NIV reads... *For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but*

you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father."

c. As sons, we do not need to fear a lifestyle of slavery. God has paid the price for our release (we are redeemed). Why would we choose to return to the slavery of sin? Yet this is exactly what we do when we reject our Father by living a life of sin and choosing to live according to the flesh and not be led by the Spirit of God.

d. Notice the intimacy created. We cry "Abba, Father."

3. God's Children are Acknowledged As Heirs

(vs.16-17) God is willing to testify through His Spirit that we are His children. The Hebrew writer says that Jesus is not ashamed to call us his brothers if we are willing to suffer as He suffered (Heb. 2:11) If you could receive anyone's inheritance, whose would you choose? What is our inheritance with Jesus? God tells us many of the things that we are heirs to as His children.

a. We are heirs of eternal life (Titus 3:7),

b. heirs of salvation (Hebrews 1:14),

c. heirs of the promises made to Abraham (Galatians 3:29),

d. heirs of glory (Colossians 1:12),

e. heirs of righteousness (Hebrews 11:7),

f. and heirs of the grace of life (1 Peter 3:7).

4. God's Children have Access to their Father –

One of the greatest aspects of being sons of God is that we have access to God. We have our part with

Him. It is not only the blessings that God offers, but also that God Himself is part of our inheritance. The scriptures speak of this idea.

a. *"Whom have I in heaven but You? And there is none upon earth that I desire besides You. My flesh and my heart fail; But God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever"* (**Psalm 73:25-26**). Jeremiah says, *"I say to myself, 'The Lord is my portion; therefore, I will wait for Him'"* (Lam. 3:24).

b. This was the nature of what God had promised to the twelve tribes of Israel. While eleven of the tribe received portions of land, the Levites did not. Joshua 13:33 reminds us, *"But to the tribe of Levi, Moses had given no inheritance; the LORD, the God of Israel, is their inheritance, as he promised them."* God was such a primary part of their life that God is said to be their inheritance. He would provide for their future. As we look forward to a heavenly home and ruling with Christ, we recognize that the greatest blessing is having God Himself and unlimited access to Him.

C. Notice that in Galatians 3:26-27 Paul tells us the point at which we enter the family –as many as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ. We are baptized into Christ, and have become heirs with Christ.

1. This adoption process is also described as a spiritual rebirth. **John 3:3-5** – *3 Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." 4 Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" 5 Jesus answered,*

"Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. Notice again that this rebirth is "of water" – a clear reference to the command of baptism as the point at which one becomes a child of God.

III. What does it mean to be in the Family of God?

A. God intends that our lives to be a reflection and reproduction of Jesus' fellowship with the His Father.

John 17:20-21 *"I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; "that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. Paul declares that we are joint-heirs with Christ, and sons of God through faith. Our relationship to God as Our Father is the backdrop for Jesus teaching in the Sermon on the Mount in **Matt. 5-7**. Jesus calls God **your Father** 17 times in this sermon. Notice how Jesus uses the picture of the God's family to describe our responsibilities and relationships toward God.*

B. As Children, we must honor our Father: Matt

5:16*"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven".*

- **Phil 2:15** – *15 that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world,*

- **Mal 1:6** – *A son honors his father, And a servant his master. If then I am the Father, Where is My honor? And if I am a Master, Where is My reverence? Says the Lord of hosts To you priests who despise My name. Yet you say, 'In what way have we despised*

Your name?’ God expects his children to seek to please Him and honor his word.

C. As children we must obey the Father. As Jesus was subject to His Father in His work for us, so we must be submissive if we are to be legitimate members of the family. **Matt 7:21-23** – *“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. 22 Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ 23 And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’* Being a child of God requires obedience.

D. As children we must imitate the character of our Father – Matt 5:44-45 *“But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven*

- **Matt 5:48** *“Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.* The children must show the family likeness in their conduct.

- **Eph 5:1-2** – *Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. 2 And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.*

Conclusion: Can you measure the blessing that God has provided in the opportunity you have to be His child. God’s love and provision is unfathomable. Why would anyone not want to be the child of Our Father in heaven? Many have rejected the opportunity, but John says...

- **1 John 3:1** – *Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!*

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