

**But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law,<sup>5</sup> to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons.<sup>6</sup> Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, “Abba, Father.”<sup>7</sup> So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir.** (NIV 84)

Theme: God’s Plan for Adoption

1. To give up his Son at the right time.
2. To purchase us and make us his own children.

A lot goes into adopting a child—especially if that child is from some third-world country overseas. The cost to adopt a child could be 25,000-50,000 dollars or more. That is because you have to go through adoption agencies both here and abroad, lawyers get involved, there are travel costs, medical expenses, paperwork that needs to be filed for both governments. I recently read a story about a couple who adopted a child from Sierra Leone and from the time they visited the orphanage and decided to adopt a boy to the time they were finally able to take him back to America with them it was over a year, and it almost didn’t happen multiple times! There is a lot of patience, money, and planning that goes into adopting a child—it is no small task. The same thing can be said about God adopting us as his children.

Where this analogy limps is that at one time we were God’s children. He created us in his own image and likeness. We were perfect and holy and in-tune with his will. At the beginning of the world we belonged to him.

But we lost the image of God, we fell into sin. With the rebellion of Adam and Eve came sin and death came through sin. No longer are we in the perfect image of God. Adam and Eve passed their sin down to each and every one of us. And since we have two sinful parents, we are sinners. There is nothing good that lives in us by nature, we are completely dead in our transgressions and sins—there is not even one spark of good inside of us.

And because of our sinful nature, we can do nothing but sin. Before we were brought to faith in Christ, each and everything we did was

sin—it was impossible for us to do anything to please God. We were slaves to sin—controlled by it, consumed in it. Sin had complete mastery over us. Being a slave to something means that we were owned and controlled—that is how we were slaves to sin. We like to think that there is some good inside of all of us, we also don’t like to think of ourselves as being a slave to anything, thinking that we have control over what we think, say, or do. But when we look back at our life and our honest with ourselves we see just how often everything we did was steeped in sin; even the good we often do is done for a selfish reason. Yes, sin has complete control over all of us.

And we were slaves to sin in a completely different way: sin condemns us. We were on our way to eternal damnation. We deserve to be punished with the pain and agony of hell for each and every one of our sins. And since we are slaves to sin, we were slaves to its condemnation. We were once God’s children, but we rejected him and became slaves to sin—now we are longer his children.

So God made a plan to adopt us as his dear children. And that plan meant giving up his one and only Son. He would be born of a virgin, but conceived by the Holy Spirit, making him God and man at the same time. So it was God’s plan to give up his son, sending him into the world as one of us, to forsake his son forcing him to suffer the pain and agony of hell in our place, sending him to his death, only to raise him from the dead three days later.

For thousands of years God had made this promise, giving the people bits and pieces of this plan along the way. Then finally, **when the time had fully come God sent his son**, he set his plan in motion. God did this when the time was perfectly right. But think about his timing: a virgin was nine months pregnant and had to travel a distance of about 70 miles over mountains and down valleys in order to be born in Bethlehem to fulfill the prophecy. Maybe she rode on a donkey but Scripture never tells us that—she very well could have walked.

Because so many visitors were in town for the census the inn was booked and the only place God’s son could be born was a barn and he was placed in a feeding trough? Herod, the king at that the time, wanted Jesus and all babies around his age killed, so Jesus had to flee to Egypt to save his life. None of that seems like the ideal time. After waiting for thousands of years, you may think that God would pick a better time to send his son.

But God knows exactly what he is doing. The time when Jesus came into the world was in fact the ideal time for him to do so—for many reasons. One is the *Pax Romana*, that is, “the Peace of Rome.” At the time, because of the power of the Romans Government the world was at peace, there was a relative lack of war. The Romans had also built an elaborate system of roads which made travel and the spread the gospel easier. Greek was the common language at the time, not only is it a precise language, which helps teach and explain doctrine, but having a common language was also valuable in spreading the gospel. Also by the time of Christ and beyond—especially when Jerusalem was destroyed in AD 70, the Jews scattered throughout the world, and since Jesus were the majority of early Christians, this too helped spread the gospel.

So yes, it may not have been the ideal circumstances for Jesus to be born, but it was the best time for him to come. The timing was just right for the gospel to be spread throughout the world after his death and resurrection.

So at just the right time, God sent his Son into the world—**born of a woman, born under law**. As a man Jesus was subject to law, his own law. God, who created the world, who set up laws to govern that world, made himself subject to his own laws, which he commanded the people to obey—just as if he was a common man.

But that wasn’t it. He also made himself subject to the laws of men—the laws of the Roman Government and the Jewish officials. God who created men, made himself subject to the laws of men; he willingly obeyed people whom he had complete control over.

Why would God do such a thing? Paul says, **to redeem those under the law**. The word redeem means to buy back, to pay a price for someone—to pay a ransom price for someone to get them back. Christ paid the ransom price for our sins. He redeemed us by shedding his blood on the cross, giving up his own life. Peter says in his first letter, **it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect**.

The Greek word that we translate as “redeem” comes originally from the slave market. It involves paying the price for someone, or paying for them to set them free. That is what the Lord has done for us; he

has purchased and won us from the slavery of sin. We have been set free from its condemnation by the blood of Christ.

God had to send his Son and Jesus had to be born of a virgin—he had to be both God and man in order to redeem us. As man to live under the law, as God to keep that law perfectly. As man to die on the cross; but as we read in Psalm 47, **No man can redeem the life of another or give to God a ransom for him**. So he had to be God to give us his perfect life and to pay for our sins. It wouldn’t be a big deal for God to keep his law perfectly, it wouldn’t have been a big deal for man to die. If Jesus isn’t God he couldn’t have paid for our sins; if Jesus isn’t man he wouldn’t have been subject to the law and he wouldn’t have died. If Jesus isn’t both true God and true man he couldn’t have served as our substitute and thus redeemed us. So God’s eternal plan was to send a Savior who is both God and man.

And the result is that we are no longer slaves. Our sins have been removed and paid for, so they will not come back to us to condemn us. The Lord has removed them as far as east is from west; he has thrown them into the depths of the sea. Sin no longer has control over us. We are now able to say ‘no’ to sin. We are now able to live a God-pleasing life because our acts have been washed clean, sanitized by Christ and his blood.

Instead of slaves, we are sons. Through faith in Christ we have been adopted as children of God. Slaves have no rights; slaves will not inherit anything from their masters. But we are no longer slaves; we are sons because of God through Christ. Yes, even females are considered sons of God in sense, for in this culture it was sons alone who received an inheritance (woman received an inheritance through their husbands side). So all of us are considered sons. And since we are sons of God, we are his heirs, who will inherit everything he has given to us—including the forgiveness of sins and eternal life in heaven. Paul says in verse seven, **if you are a son, then you are also an heir of God through Christ**. An inheritance is something you receive as a gift—not something you have earned or deserved, but given to you out of love. So it is the our eternal inheritance.

There is another benefit we have from being sons of God—he is our Father. He is not some aloof God who stays up on his heaven sitting on his throne watching his subjects. He became one of us; he knows exactly what it is like living in this sin-filled world. He loves us and cares for us as a Father loves and cares for his own children.

Paul even uses an Aramaic word for Father, *Abba*. This is a term of endearment. It indicates a close connection, a close connection that we have with the creator of the world through faith in his son who became one of us.

And so we can approach God as a child approaches his Father. We know he loves us and cares for us—to the extent that he sent his son to suffer and die for us. And so we know that we can go before him with all our worries and problems. We can go before him and ask for anything and be confident that just as a Father wouldn't give his child anything that will harm him, the Lord will answer our prayers in a way that is always a benefit to us.

All these gifts are given to us simply out of the love of the Lord. We were born as slaves—his enemies, but God adopted us as his own and gives us gift after gift—and it all started with the gift of his son, who took on flesh to save us.

Adopting a child takes a lot of time, patience, knowledge, and money. A lot goes into it—planning is important. God's eternal plan to adopt us took time, knowledge, and love. His eternal plan to adopt us as his own dear children was to give up his one and only son, sending him to a sinful world and then forsaking him to the pain and agony of hell. So that by the price of his son's blood our sins would be paid for and we would be made his heirs who would live with him for eternity as perfect and holy. That's a lot to give up to adopt poor sinful sinners. But that is exactly what the Lord did because he loves us. May we sing his praises for the gift of his son who came just at the right time to redeem us and make us children of God. Amen.