

THE SONSHIP OF THE BELIEVER

We have learned in these studies that Jesus is, literally, received by the believer and that divine *sonship* is produced by that experience. God's Word promises us an intriguing finish to this divine *sonship*! To help our understanding of it, it can be likened to the reproduction process that takes place in the natural realm. The reproduction process that takes place in the physical realm has an interesting parallel in the "*spiritual*" realm. The "*spiritual* reproduction" is like physical reproduction in that it involves **(1)** conception, **(2)** prenatal (pregnancy) period, **(3)** birth and delivery. This complete reproductive process is necessary for men to become the sons of God.

When the Bible refers to our being born of God...or refers to us as the "*sons of God*"...it envisions the whole process of reproduction rather than the individual steps within the process. We do likewise when we speak of bearing children...or having children...because, when we speak of having a child, we are not referring just to the conception...or to the carrying...of the child, but, rather, we are referring to the whole reproduction process that is involved in the "*birthing*" of that child. The Bible describes the Christian as "*God's child*" even though all of the steps of his reproduction have not yet been completed. Paul exhorts us to "*walk as becomes the sons of God*", and John insists, "*Beloved now are we the sons of God.*"

Jesus' words to Nicodemus offer good insight into this subject. Concerning spiritual life, Jesus says to him, "...*except a man be `born again' he cannot see the kingdom of God*" (John 3:3). In the original language, the exact meaning of "*born again*" is not just the event of being born because the word that is used in the original language has to do with "*fathering*"...or begetting. However, "*born again*", as it is used here, can be properly understood as referring to spiritual conception... starting life all over again from the conception stage...it is the point at which one begins his new life as a child of God.

Nicodemus understands the implication, and the significance, of Christ's words. He knows that a new conception is referred to, but he does not see how it is possible, for he asks, "...*can he enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born?*" (John 3:4). Nicodemus was correct in understanding the Lord to be speaking of conception and pregnancy, but, what Nicodemus did not understand was that Jesus was not talking about a second physical conception, but, rather, a spiritual one. Man needs to be conceived again to become God's son, but he is not conceived of the flesh...the Spirit of God conceives him!

Jesus' answer to Nicodemus was, "*That which is born of flesh is flesh, and that which is born of Spirit is spirit*". Poor Nicodemus was unable to comprehend Christ's words because he was attempting to comprehend spiritual things by a thinking that was limited to the natural realm...a thinking that, of course, made a second birth a physical impossibility.

John later refers to this matter of being born again when, in his epistle, he says. . . "*Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for His (God's) seed remains in him...*" (I John 3:9). God's seed in man is clearly a reproductive feature because conception is

envisioned in this verse.

What Jesus was saying to Nicodemus was, "While your mother and father were involved in your first birth...natural generation...it is the Holy Spirit and the Word of God that will effect your spiritual regeneration. You must have a second conception if you hope to see the kingdom of God because, just as you needed a "physical" birth to begin life on earth, so also do you need a 'spiritual' birth to begin life in God's kingdom!"

There is a sense in which the Christian is one who is "pregnant" with the life of God because, just as the sperm and ovum unite, in physical union, to form a new creation, so also does the Holy Spirit and the soul of a man unite in spiritual union, to form a new creation. The very instant one opens the door of his heart to the Lord a spiritual pregnancy occurs that is akin to the physical one...and it is just as real!

God uses every possible imagery to convey divine, spiritual truth and the Holy Spirit seems to have ransacked every possible illustration in order to clarify God's heavenly principles...like, for instance, the stages of conception, prenatal growth, and delivery all picturing...or illustrating...the life and growth of a child of God!!

"Spiritual pregnancy" takes place the moment one makes a decision to accept Jesus Christ as his personal Savior and, after this "conception", one's life on earth corresponds to the prenatal period of the physical process. The "new man" is allowed to develop for a time before his actual delivery.

The three stages of our sonship		
RECEIVE CHRIST (new nature) NEW BABE	TWO NATURES PRODUCE CHRISTIAN GROWTH (maturity)	REVEALED AS SONS Appear with Christ in glory!

Every Christian is in the "prenatal stage" now because the time of his "delivery" is yet to be in the future!

I John 3:2, "Beloved NOW are we the sons of God..."

(Even when a mother is carrying her child it is just as much her child before the delivery as after the delivery.)

"... and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him..."

(One may not know much about a child during his "prenatal stage...before his "delivery" ...but, after his "delivery", the child appears like his parents!)

Since we are "born of Christ", we must be like Him!

The earthly life is a Christian's "prenatal period"...the time of growth and development...a time of maturity preceding the actual delivery...the future "blessed

event" that every Christian awaits...a time of manifesting or revealing...a time when we will be displayed as the "sons of God!!" Paul tells us, in Romans 8:19, "For the earnest expectation (the "eager longing") of the creation waiteth for the revealing of the sons of God"

God's Word asserts that the manifesting of the sons of God is the great day for which creation longs, and eternity will truly begin for the child of God when, in that yet future time, God's family is gloriously unveiled!

THE WORLD IS WAITING FOR THE SUNRISE!!!

Scripture calls this future "delivery"...or final completion of the process of producing God's sons..."adoption". This term "adoption", as Scripturally employed, conveys a different meaning than the meaning that is conveyed by our culture. Today, in our culture, "adoption" has to do with the legal process of becoming someone's child...or "son". The judge signs a paper and one is legally declared to be the child of a person who was not his parent. However, Biblically, the term "adoption" has to do with the "manifesting, or revealing, of one who is already a son". The Biblical term has nothing to do with one "becoming" a son, but, rather, has only to do with one being "revealed" as a son.

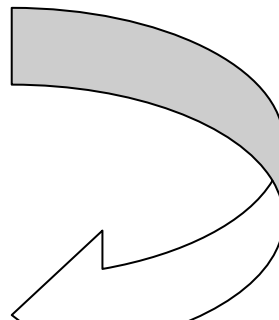
Paul teaches us in Romans 8:15, "...but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father". - Don't misunderstand this verse...we are NOT "adopted" into God's family – we are "born" into His family.

We do NOT become sons of God by any legal process, but rather, we become sons of God by a process of conception and birth and, then, finally, we...at some, unknown, future date...will be "revealed" (delivered) as His sons!!!

In Paul's day, "adoption" was a Roman custom by which sons were officially declared to have reached manhood and, when a boy reached twenty-one years of age, his father would take him to the market place and he would be ceremoniously exhibited...and acknowledged...as an adult. From thenceforth he was regarded as a man in his own right and was allowed to negotiate business. When Paul used the word "adoption" he was thinking in terms of this ceremonial process and he was anticipating the day when the sons of God will be displayed in their maturity.

One receives the "Spirit of adoption" when he is saved, but this Spirit of adoption is not manifested while one is still on this earth because it is only manifested when one puts off the robe of the flesh. Paul says, "We ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for our adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body" (Romans 8:23). This adoption is the final step in God's reproductive system!!

THE PROCESS OF SPIRITUAL REPRODUCTION INVOLVES:



1. **CONCEPTION...WHICH IS . . .**
the coming of the Holy Spirit into one's life to "conceive" the "new man"
2. **PRENATAL PERIOD...WHICH IS . . .**
the time period...after salvation...that one remains on earth in order that the "new man" has a chance to grow and develop.
3. **ADOPTION...WHICH IS**
the delivery of the "new man" after he makes the transition from flesh to spirit...that is, adoption occurs after one has put off his body and his soul is released and stands before Christ, clothed in a new form!!

"For we know that if the earthly house of our tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" - (2 Corinthians 5:1)

When adoption occurs, the birth process is complete and we are ready to begin eternity in the presence of God...because...to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord!