

What Do You Call a Christian? – Child of God

Scripture Reading: Matthew 18:1-14

As we have already noted, words change meaning over the years. Sometimes they lose meaning through overuse. Sometimes they are mishandled, causing the true meanings to be corrupted or lost. The word “Christian” has been overused and mishandled over the years. It is the purpose of this study to regain its original and true meaning through the study of Biblical words and phrases.

The next term in our study is “Child of God.”

What Christ has done for His people not only makes us friends with God, but we also become family! – a royal family (I Peter 2:9-10; Revelation 1:5-6). To be God’s child, having a position in His family, brings privileges and responsibilities. What Christ did on the cross has qualified us to receive the family inheritance. In a sense, Christ died, leaving us a will. Then Christ rose again and became the executor of His own will, causing us to share in all the benefits of His Kingdom! See Romans 8:16-17; Hebrews 9:14-17 cp. 8:6.

Matthew 18:1-14 gives us an overview of what it means to be a “Child of God.”

Matthew 18:1-4 – To become a child of God requires humility and conversion.

By our original nature, we are worldly children of wrath, deserving God’s punishment. God changes our nature through the new birth. See Luke 18:15-17; Ephesians 2:1-6; II Corinthians 5:17.

Matthew 18:5-14 – The child of God is cherished, protected and preserved by the Father, the Son of Man, and the angels. God will make note of how people treat His children. Christ was sent to be like a shepherd, to gather, guide, and protect them. Angels are on assignment to minister to them. See Matthew 25:31-46; Mark 9:41; Luke 18:7; John 6:37-40; 10:27-30; Hebrews 1:7,14.

The Child of God must be born again, by the work of God’s Spirit.

We must be children born of God’s Spirit, not reformed children of our own making, or of the making of religion. As previously stated, this requires humility, faith and a conversion by the power of God through the Gospel. See Matthew 18:1-4; Mark 10:13-16; John 1:12-13; Romans 9:8,24-26 (cp. I Peter 2:9-10); Galatians 3:26 (cp. I Peter 1:1-5,22-25).

The Child of God is responsible for its behavior.

Children need discipline and should follow instructions. God's children are directed to a Spirit-filled life of love, purity, and obedience to the truth. See Ephesians 5:1-21; I John 3:1-11; 4:1-13. As necessary, God gives His child personal correction (Hebrews 12:5-11).

The Child of God will bear a resemblance to their Heavenly Father.

As we show resemblance to our earthly parents, so we should show the identifying traits of our Heavenly Father. We should be known as makers of peace / reconciliation. We should demonstrate love and mercy to others. We should be peaceful, patient, and kind. We should be lovers of truth. Our character should shine as light in the darkness. We should be holy people – people who respond to life differently than others in this world – as if we were from another world. See Matthew 5:9,13-16,43-48; Philippians 2:14-15; Colossians 3:1-10; I Thessalonians 5:5-8; I Peter 1:13-16; I John 4:1-19.

The Child of God has an inheritance.

As stated earlier, the children of God are included in a will, in which Christ's death makes that will in effect (Hebrews 9:14-17 cp. 8:6). The resurrected Christ can now be executor of the will and carry out its fulfillment. A satisfied Savior shall satisfy the Father, bringing all the children safely home to receive all their inheritance – from their new birth to their glorification. See Isaiah 53:11; I John 2:1-2; 4:9-10 ["propitiation" refers to God's justice being satisfied]. See also John 6:37-40; 10:27-30; Galatians 2:20; Romans 8:28-39 cp. Philippians 1:6,11,19; I Thessalonians 5:23-24; Hebrews 13:20-21).

There are things that we inherit immediately, such as the divine nature – the fruit of the Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit (I Corinthians 2:9-16; II Peter 1:1-4; Galatians 5:22-23; Ephesians 4:7-13; Romans 12:3-8).

We have much more inheritance to receive in the future: A **new** body, a **new** heaven and a **new** earth, where there will be **no** sin, temptation, sorrow, pain, death, or Satan! See Acts 20:32; 26:18; Romans 8:16-17,23; Ephesians 1:10-11,17-18 (cp.5:5); Colossians 1:12; I Peter 1:3-4 cp. Philippians 3:20-21; Revelation 21:1-7.

Let's briefly look at the subject of adoption (Greek = "*the placement of a mature son*"). This is a different analogy than our previous study of the new birth. **New birth focuses on the relationship** God's Spirit created – giving us spiritual life / a new nature. **Adoption focuses on the fact that we were unworthy outsiders, but Christ has given us the privileges and position to be heirs of His Kingdom** (Romans 8:14-23; Galatians 4:1-7; Ephesians 1:5-6 – Note: vs. 5 is referring to the adoption of mature sons). New birth (regeneration) makes you God's child. Adoption makes you a mature son who inherits a privileged position.