

Episode: God and His Family No. 03

Narrator: Apostle John

Primary Scriptures: 1 John 3:1-10; 4:7-21

Story Summary: God sees us as his children

Location: Israel

Time: First Century

Suggested Memory Scriptures: 1 John 3:1; 4:21

Some of the most commonly known words in the Bible are the beginning of the Lord's Prayer, "Our Father in Heaven" or "Our Father who art in Heaven." Jesus begins this teaching to his disciples by instructing them that God is his father and their father. All of them are children of God. They are an intimate family, with God as the father.

That may have sounded a bit odd to the disciples. The Old Testament doesn't emphasize this aspect of a relationship with God. When Jesus emphasized this aspect of his relationship with God, the Jewish leaders regarded it as blasphemy.

Since all of the disciples are God's children, then they are all brothers and sisters. John said in 1 John 4:10, "This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not God's child, nor is anyone who does not love their brother and sister."

For some of the early Christians this would have had interesting connotations. Some were poor, some rich; some came from Rome, others from small towns; some had been Jews, other not. Perhaps that is why Paul wrote of the notion that Christians were adopted children of God.¹ In the Roman Empire, adopted children were from other families and were sometimes adults. They were chosen and were given special privileges. Different but not inferior.

In the ancient Roman world, children were the property of the father. Fathers were often cruel or uncaring about their children. When John wrote about being a child of God, he took special care to show that being a child of God was a special privilege, and that God wanted to be a loving, intimate father. Many of the early Christians had grown up with the Jewish mindset that God was a strict and, often, unpleasant king. To those people, John would have told them the best possible news: "See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!"²

¹ Galatians 4:5

² 1 John 3:1