

INHERITANCE (*klēronomia*): FROM EARTH TO HEAVEN

Abraham

A life worth living was measured in antiquity by one's inheritance, almost always from one's father. The size of the inheritance was based on the answer to several relevant questions. Am I the oldest in the family or do I fit somewhere else? Does my father own a big farm or a small one? Does he have a lot of sheep and cattle? How much of his property, especially his land, will be coming my way? Can I stand to live around my brothers, especially my oldest brother?

All biblical stories of inheritance begin with Abraham. We hear the Lord's almost shouted directive: "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee" (Gen. 12:1; see Abr. 2:3). The keyword is *land*. Land became one of the underpinning elements of the Abrahamic covenant in addition to posterity and priesthood (see Gen. 15:5–7; 17:1–8; 22:15–17; 26:1–5; 28:1–4; 35:9–12; Abr. 2:6, 9–11). The future aspect of this covenant was that "in thee [Abraham] shall all the nations of the earth be blessed" (Gen. 12:3; 18:18; also 22:18; 26:4).¹

Importantly, as we have come to expect, Abraham obediently left his home in Ur of the Chaldees, taking his wife Sarah and his nephew Lot. Years later, after the near sacrifice of Isaac, Abraham acquired his first piece of land, the field that included the cave of Machpelah for burying Sarah. He acquired it by purchase, not by inheritance nor by taking it away from another person. Rather, he measured out four hundred shekels of silver by weight to buy it (see Gen. 23:2–20). As significant as anything else in the account is the fact that the modest-sized property included what became the family burial plot, eventually welcoming Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as well as Rebekah and Leah, into its deep, dark interior.² This point would become one of the substantial foundations for the resistance in Israelite law to one clan acquiring property from another clan. The family burial plots sat within family properties and those properties had been received by sacred lot in the days of Joshua before the Lord at the sanctuary (see Josh. 14:1–5;

¹Noel B. Reynolds, in "Understanding the Abrahamic Covenant through the Book of Mormon," *BYU Studies* 57:3 (2018), 39–74, especially 52–66, has recently set out the unusual perspective found in the Book of Mormon on God's covenant with Abraham.

24:30, 32–33; Judg. 2:9; 1 Sam. 25:1; 1 Kgs. 2:34).³ The fact that the Lord guided the casting of lots for dividing the land conferred a sacred character on the whole countryside, including especially the plots of ground that fell to families (see Josh. 18:1–10; 19:51).⁴ After all, every inch belonged to Jehovah and the former Hebrew slaves effectively were now his tenants (see Lev. 25:23; Deut. 4:20; 9:26, 29; 1 Sam. 10:1; etc.).⁵ But the story does not end here.

The Lord had been in the mix all along. Beginning with Abraham and continuing through the Joseph Stories in the latter half of the book of Genesis and ending with the Moses and Joshua narratives, the Lord had been in charge of the covenant with them, even when his people were away from the land of Canaan.⁶ In this way, he chose to make his covenant with the descendants of Abraham, effectively making them his children.⁷ We run into language like, “Is not [Jehovah] your father, who created you, who made you and established you?” (Lev. 32:6, RSV). Again, “Thus saith the Lord, Israel is my son, even my firstborn” (Ex. 4:22). Further, “O Lord, thou art our father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand” (Isa. 64:8; see Hosea 11:1). In a different vein, the Lord effectively became the inheritance or the lot of the children of Israel. We read words like, “The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup . . . yea, I have a goodly heritage” (Ps. 16:5–6; also Isa. 34:17).⁸

When we reach the New Testament era, we run headlong into two parables of Jesus that bring us into the world of ancient inheritance laws. The one has to do with the Prodigal Son.

²See Gen. 25:8–10; 35:27–29; 49:29–32; 50:12–13.

³W. Dommershausen, “*gōrāl*,” *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, 2:452; Edouard Lipiński, “*nāhal*,” *TDOT*, 9:325, 327; Johannes Hermann and Werner Foerster, “*klēros*,” *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 3:774–75.

⁴Hermann and Foerster, “*klēros*,” *TDNT*, 3:759, 771, 772, 774–75.

⁵Lipiński, “*nāhal*,” *TDOT*, 9:328, 331, 333.

⁶Hermann and Foerster, “*klēros*,” *TDNT*, 3:769–70.

⁷Lipiński, “*nāhal*,” *TDOT*, 9:328.

⁸Hans Heinrich Schmid, “*gōrāl*,” in Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann, *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 3 vols., trans. Mark E. Biddle (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1997), 1:311; Hermann and Foerster, “*klēros*,” *TDNT*, 3:762.

From this parable and from other ancient sources, we learn that it was possible for a child, a male child, to take the part of the inheritance that was due to him before the death of his father. We read: “the younger [son] . . . said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto [the two sons] his living,” or his property.⁹

The second has to do with the wicked husbandmen who had leased a vineyard from an absentee landlord (see Mark 12:1–9). This parable is more important for our purposes because of how it was to be interpreted. When the landlord sent a representative to collect the rent, the husbandmen “beat him, and sent him away empty” (Mark 12:3). Sadly, the renters mistreated a series of agents sent by the landlord, beating some and even killing more than one. These men were not just angling to hold onto the produce from the vineyard but to take over the property itself through hostile actions, actions not unknown in earlier days.¹⁰ They, of course, misjudged the owner on two counts. They did not know that he would extend kindness to try to bring them into conformity with the original agreement by sending initially a series of representatives and finally his son, the heir. Further, they did not know how ruthlessly forceful he would become after they abused and then killed the heir, judging that, after the heir’s death, “the inheritance shall be ours” (Mark 12:7).

In reality, the point of Jesus’ story about the renters tipped the world of inheritance on its side. Instead of husbandmen attempting to seize property that belonged to another, the parable really had to do with “the kingdom of God” which, as Matthew quoted Jesus, “shall be taken from you [husbandmen], and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof” (Matt. 21:43). Hence, although Jesus’ sketch rested on the matter of ancient heirship, his message carried a spiritual aim that bore upon those who at first enjoyed access to God’s kingdom but, because of their treatment of his agents, patently in acts of hostility and apostasy, lost their access to an inheritance therein.¹¹ Jesus had effectively lifted the question of inheritance from the terrestrial world into the celestial.

⁹Lipiński, “*nāhal*,” *TDOT*, 9:321–22.

¹⁰Lipiński, “*nāhal*,” *TDOT*, 9:320–21; Hermann and Foerster, “*klēros*,” *TDNT*, 3:759, 779.

¹¹Hermann and Foerster, “*klēros*,” *TDNT*, 3:781–82.

In fact, certain passages in the Old Testament come very close to this sort of concept. For example, the last verse in the book of Daniel reads: “But go your way till the end; and you shall rest, and shall stand in your allotted place at the end of the days” (Dan. 12:13, RSV). In an intriguing shift, the Septuagint reading of the last expression brings the “allotted place” or inheritance into the heavenly world: “you shall rest, and shall stand in your glory (*doxa*) at the end of days” (Dan. 12:13, LXX).¹² Psalm 16 presents the following: “Lord, you have assigned me my portion and my cup; you have made my lot secure.” How secure? The psalmist then sings, “The boundary lines [of my lot] have fallen for me in pleasant places; surely I have a delightful inheritance” (Ps. 16:5–6, NIV). All this is done by the Lord, setting the person’s inheritance on a celestial footing (see Isa. 34:17; also Acts 26:18; Col. 1:12).¹³

The pseudepigrapha continue this trajectory toward an inheritance that is to be located in heaven, particularly the document known as First Enoch that was evidently composed in the second century before the common era.¹⁴ It breathes the air of the Old Testament and stands close to the New Testament in many of its ideas.¹⁵ Initially we read, “From [the Lord of the Spirits], the lot of eternal life has been given to me” (1 Enoch 37:4).¹⁶ Then we come upon the following: “And I saw a dwelling place underneath the wings of the Lord of the Spirits; . . . and my soul desired that dwelling place. Already my portion is there; for thus has it been reserved for

¹²Dommershausen, “*gōrāl*,” *TDOT*, 2:455.

¹³Schmid, “*gōrāl*,” *TLOT*, 1:311; Hermann and Foerster, “*klēros*,” *TDNT*, 3:761, 763–64.

¹⁴Ephraim Isaac, “1 (Ethiopic Apocalypse of) Enoch,” in James H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. 1, *Apocalyptic Literature and Testaments* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1983), 6–7; George W. E. Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 1: A Commentary on the Book of 1 Enoch, Chapters 1–36; 81–108*, *Hermeneia—A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 118–24.

¹⁵Isaac, “1 (Ethiopic Apocalypse of) Enoch,” 9–10; Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 1*, 28–30, 68–70, 82–87.

¹⁶See the comments in George W. E. Nickelsburg and James C. VanderKam, *1 Enoch 2: A Commentary on the Book of 1 Enoch, Chapters 37–82*, *Hermeneia—A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), 91–92.

me before the Lord of the Spirits” (1 Enoch 39:7–8).¹⁷ The final passage runs thus: “he [the Son of Man] has revealed the wisdom of the Lord of the Spirits to the righteous and the holy ones, for he has preserved *the lot of the righteous* . . . they will be saved in his name and it is his good pleasure that they have [eternal] life” (1 Enoch 48:7; emphasis added).¹⁸ In the light of these passages, it becomes clear that a certain spiritual refinement had occurred in how the ancients saw a person’s inheritance. That is, one’s real inheritance lies in the heavens and not on the earth. A piece of ground paired with a flock of sheep and goats does not constitute a person’s most important inheritance; rather, that choice heritage consists of a place by God’s side.

New Testament

This is exactly where the New Testament stands on the matter of inheritance. How much its authors took their clues from the Old Testament and pseudepigraphic literature remains a matter for study. But we have to observe that the book of Jude quotes directly from the book of First Enoch. And the appearance of a number of pseudepigraphic pieces among the Dead Sea Scrolls brings us to notice that their influence reached into the world of ideas out of which the New Testament was born.

We pick up, first, that in the New Testament “inheritance [rests] on the ground of a filial relationship to God.”¹⁹ This concept is not new, of course. We have already run across language that made the ancient Israelites the sons and daughters of God. In his dedicatory prayer for the temple, Solomon came close to this idea when he petitioned the Lord to “hear thou in heaven, and forgive the sin of thy servants, and of thy people Israel” (1 Kgs. 8:36). In its context, the expression “thy people Israel” bears a sense of intimacy and close relationship. Other expressions go beyond this. As early as the Exodus saga, Moses was commanded to say to Pharaoh, “Thus saith the Lord, Israel is my son, even my firstborn” (Ex. 4:22). Such language is

¹⁷Nickelsburg and VanderKam, *1 Enoch 2*, 124.

¹⁸Nickelsburg and VanderKam, *1 Enoch 2*, 173–74; Hermann and Foerster, “*klēros*,” *TDNT*, 3:761–62.

¹⁹Hermann and Foerster, “*klēros*,” *TDNT*, 3:783.

mirrored in the song of Moses which he intoned “in the ears of the congregation of Israel,” singing, “is not he thy father that hath bought thee? hath he not made thee, and established thee?” (Deut. 31:30 and 32:6). From Jeremiah’s record we hear the Lord utter the words, “I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my firstborn” (Jer. 31:9). Then from Hosea’s pen we discover that “when Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt” (Hos. 11:1).²⁰

In all of these cases, the relationship of father to son is one of the Lord to his people Israel, but only after the Lord brought the Hebrew slaves out of Egypt. Moreover, the relationship is not one of the Lord to an individual. That kind of link arose in the days of Israel’s kings. In response to King David’s offer to build a temple in Jerusalem, the Lord through Nathan the prophet told David that his successor would erect a temple. In addition, underscoring the special relationship with the temple’s builder, the Lord affirmed that “I will be his father, and he shall be my son” (1 Sam. 7:14; see 1 Chr. 17:13; 22:10). On a later occasion, David shared this message with his chosen leaders, repeating the words of the Lord about his son Solomon: “Solomon thy son, he shall build my house and my courts: for I have chosen him to be my son, and I will be his father” (1 Chr. 28:6; see Ps. 2:6–7).²¹ We note that in each of these passages, the Lord established the relationship of father; it was not by King Solomon’s choice.

Three further elements are added to the father-son relationship in a later passage in Psalm 89. They consist of the presence of a covenant, a universal dominion over all the nations of the earth, and an everlasting salvation. We listen as the psalmist, quoting the Lord, sings the words, “He [the king] shall cry unto me, Thou art my father, my God, and the rock of my salvation. Also I will make him my firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth. My mercy will I keep for him for evermore, and my covenant shall stand fast with him” (Ps. 89:26–28; also Ps. 2:8).²²

All of these concepts lie behind language that we find in the New Testament. What is distinctive in the New Testament is the insistence on adoption in preference to natural, physical descent from Abraham. Such a concept was at home in certain ancient societies—although not in

²⁰Lipiński, “*nāhal*,” *TDOT*, 9:328.

²¹Lipiński, “*nāhal*,” *TDOT*, 9:329–30.

²²Lipiński, “*nāhal*,” *TDOT*, 9:330.

the Old Testament laws on inheritance—where we come upon the adoption of a foreigner as an heir.²³ According to Jesus’ teachings, “many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness” (Matt. 8:11–12; also Luke 13:28–29). This prospect is dreary indeed for those who claim Abraham as their founding ancestor.²⁴ As a matter of fact, much earlier John the Baptist had sent up a bright warning flare when he declared to his hearers that they should “think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham” (Matt. 3:9).

We hasten to add that such children of Abraham become sons and daughters by adoption through faith, just as Abraham became God’s chosen one because of his faith (see Gen. 15:6). These principles of adoption and faith, accompanied by God’s Spirit, undergird much of the Apostle Paul’s teaching. For example, we do not read far into his majestic letter to the Romans before we run into these words: “if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit.” And what will be the result? Simply stated, “as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.” Indeed, “ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.” Moreover, “the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God,” that is to say, the true heirs through adoption (Rom. 8:11, 14–16). And what does this adoption consist of? It consists of “the redemption of our body” (Rom. 8:23). But this is not the whole story. For “if [we are] children, then [we are] heirs, heirs of God, and *joint heirs* with Christ” (Rom. 8:17; emphasis added).

Turning back to Abraham, we encounter more of Paul’s teachings. Knowing that a literal descent from Abraham counts for nothing, what does? And how do we know it? Paul answered by asking, “what saith the scripture?” Citing the language of Genesis in the Septuagint, he then answered that “Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness” (Rom. 4:3, quoting LXX Gen. 15:6). That is, being an heir of God does not depend on being a

²³Lipiński, “*nāhal*,” *TDOT*, 9:323.

²⁴Hermann and Foerster, “*klēros*,” *TDNT*, 3:782.

descendant but on merit, on something that we do.²⁵ But wait a minute. Someone else is involved. That person is Christ.

In his struggle against those who were teaching another gospel to church members in Galatia, Paul made it abundantly clear that heirship does not come through the Mosaic Law. Neither does it come from physical descent through Abraham nor, for Gentiles, by accepting the Law as the path to heaven. Rather, “as Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness,” so “they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham,” not those who embrace the Mosaic Law. Additionally, as if to make the point more forcefully, Paul wrote that “they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham” (Gal. 3:6–7, 9). There is more.

In discussing heavenly inheritances, Paul seized on the singular term *seed* or offspring that appears in the Lord’s repeated promises to Abraham in the book of Genesis. For instance, after Abraham reached the territory of Shechem on his way from Ur of the Chaldees, the Lord appeared to him and promised that “unto thy seed will I give this land” (Gen. 12:7). Again, after the near sacrifice of Isaac, the Lord uttered words that are repeated throughout scripture, “in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed” (Gen. 22:18).²⁶ To be sure, this *seed* or offspring represented the unborn generations who would make up Abraham’s family (see Gen. 13:15; 15:5; 17:7–8; 22:17; 24:7; Acts 7:5). But for Paul, who sought to make a point about Christ’s role in securing our everlasting inheritances, the singular noun pointed to Christ. Paul therefore turned his considerable skills to say: “Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring.” Fair enough so far. Then came his main point: “It does not say, ‘And to offsprings,’ referring to many; but, referring to one, ‘And to your offspring,’ which is Christ” (Gal. 3:16, RSV).²⁷

How does this work? First, we must understand that “if the [eternal] inheritance be of the law [of Moses], it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise” (Gal. 3:18). This promise to Abraham predated the law by “four hundred and thirty years” (Gal. 3:17). When

²⁵Hermann and Foerster, “*klēros*,” *TDNT*, 3:782.

²⁶1 Nephi 15:18; 22:9; 3 Nephi 20:25, 27; D&C 124:58.

²⁷Hermann and Foerster, “*klēros*,” *TDNT*, 3:783–85.

it finally came, “the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith” (Gal. 3:24). Specifically, as if warming to a crescendo, Paul wrote that “ye are all the children of God *by faith* in Christ Jesus. . . . There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free . . . And *if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise*” (Gal. 3:26, 28–29; emphasis added). Significantly, as Paul taught here, this condition of being heirs was to extend to both Jews and Gentiles, with no barriers between them (see Eph. 2:11–22).

We must quickly add that, just as it is possible to become an heir of God through faith, so it is possible to lose that heirship and its associated eternal blessings. The Old Testament sets the bar and hints at the serious consequences of such a loss. The classic case involved Reuben, Jacob’s oldest son who, because of incest (see Gen. 35:22), lost his right of primogeniture (see Gen. 49:3–4; 1 Chr. 5:1–2) and, astonishingly, his right to inherit two-thirds of his father’s estate, not just a mere double portion.²⁸ When we move this loss into the heavenly realm, it is the pseudepigrapha that introduce us to the frightening results.²⁹ In the book of Second Enoch, also known as Slavonic Enoch because of the language that preserves it, we learn about “a very frightful place . . . [where] every kind of torture and torment . . . and darkness and gloom [persist].” Enoch’s angelic guides, who took him to view this place, informed him that it was “prepared for those who practice godless uncleanness on the earth, . . . and who . . . steal souls secretly . . . [and] who do not acknowledge their Creator, but bow down to idols, . . . bowing down to vile things made by hands.” For these people, “this [dreadful] place has been prepared as an eternal reward” (2 Enoch 10:1–2, 4–6).³⁰ From the Psalms of Solomon we hear that “the inheritance of sinners is destruction and darkness, and their lawless actions shall pursue them

²⁸Lipiński, “*nāhal*,” *TDOT*, 9:322–23; the Hebrew expression translated “double portion” in Deut. 21:7 means “two thirds;” see 2 Kgs. 2:9 and Zech. 13:8 where “two thirds” appears metaphorically.

²⁹Hermann and Foerster, “*klēros*,” *TDNT*, 3:780–81.

³⁰Francis I. Andersen, “2 (Slavonic Apocalypse of) Enoch,” in James H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. 1, Apocalyptic Literature and Testaments, 119–20.

below into Hades” (Psalms of Solomon 15:10; also 14:9).³¹

Now we turn to the language of the New Testament. Besides Paul, others spoke or wrote about the heavenly blessings that come to the faithful, from being “heirs of the kingdom” (James 2:5) to possessing “an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you” (1 Pet. 1:4).³² That is only part of the story. This heirship is to be realized with one’s spouse, not in some state of solitary loneliness, but rather “*being heirs together* of the grace of life” (1 Pet. 3:7; emphasis added).³³ Not incidentally, such a passage hints strongly at regularized steps or ordinances that swing this door wide to co-heirship with one’s spouse. Moreover, heavenly heirship or inheritance always carries an implicit promise of ruling and reigning in the next life (see Matt. 25:21; Luke 19:17; Rom 5:17; Rev. 5:10; 20:4; 22:5; compare 1 Cor. 4:8).³⁴

In a different vein, when Paul wrote about the fate that awaits sinners, he did not fill in the blanks about the potentially gruesome suffering that such people may face. Without any elaboration, he wrote simply “that they which do [wicked] things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.” Of course, he appended a list of what he called “the works of the flesh” before making this judgment, including “fornication, . . . witchcraft, . . . [and] murders” (Gal. 5:19–21). Elsewhere he asked a straightforward question, “Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?” before appending a list of wrongdoers whose numbers, among others, are made up of “idolaters, . . . thieves, . . . [and] extortioners” (1 Cor. 6:9–10).

Other New Testament sources employ evocative language when touching on the eventual inheritance of the wicked, most of which speak of darkness in one way or another.³⁵ It is Jesus

³¹R. B. Wright, “Psalms of Solomon,” in James H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. 2 (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1985), 664.

³²See Matt. 19:29; 25:34; Mark 10:17–21; Luke 10:25–28; 18:18–22; 1 Pet. 3:8–9; Rev. 21:7.

³³Joseph H. Thayer, *Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 4th ed., rpt. (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson’s Publishers, 2017), 593.

³⁴Hermann and Foerster, “*klēros*,” *TDNT*, 3:783.

³⁵Hermann and Foerster, “*klēros*,” *TDNT*, 3:783, present terms that characterize spiritual inheritance, though often without the term “inheritance.”

who declares that the defiant “children of the kingdom shall be cast into outer darkness” where one, sadly, will hear, but because of the darkness will not see, “weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matt. 8:12; also 22:13; 25:30). Other passages present images of darkness. In the book of Revelation, the kingdom of “the beast,” after he is dethroned, is “full of darkness” where its inhabitants “gnawed their tongues for pain” and were full of “sores” (Rev. 16:10–11). We come upon the expression “the mist of darkness” that is to persist “for ever” in the second epistle of Peter (2 Pet. 2:17). The tiny letter of Jude speaks menacingly about “everlasting chains” and “the vengeance of eternal fire” coupled with “the blackness [gloom] of darkness for ever” (Jude 1:6–7, 13).

In its turn, the book of Revelation presents frightful details of that future existence and brings us into the world of liquid sulfur, often called brimstone in scripture. The usual expression is “fire and brimstone” that characterize a lake where the wicked will spend a tortured eternity, not resting on the shore sipping cold lemonade but actually sitting in the heated liquid (see Rev. 21:8; Ps. 11:6). With them will be prominent personalities such as “the devil” who is to be “cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever” (Rev. 20:10; also 19:20). Others will join them, including “death and hell,” who are from the unseen world and who will also be “cast into the lake of fire,” a fate that represents “the second death” (Rev. 20:14). The most vivid of tortures facing the wicked is linked to “the beast” and his followers. They shall be forced to “drink of the wine of the wrath of God,” suffering torment “with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb.” Moreover, “the [hot] smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night” (Rev. 14:10–11).

At this juncture it is important to explore the opposite—what it is like to receive an inheritance inside the celestial world. We have already reviewed the principle of adoption wherein the Father adopts us as his heavenly children, that is, as Paul wrote, “joint-heirs with Christ.” Enjoying this status, we can address God as “Abba,” the equivalent of “Dad,” and “Father” (Rom. 8:15–16; see Gal. 4:6–7). Plainly, adoption of believers comes as a result of their full embrace of the gospel message. The change in status from outsider to accepted one is immediate and the accompanying blessings begin to flow in this life, with a crescendo in the life to come, at the endtime.

This circumstance was anticipated in part by Old Testament passages that speak of

inheritance not as land or animals but of ancient Israel as God’s allotment. For example, we read that Israelites “are thy people and thine inheritance” (Deut. 9:29). Again, expressed more fully, “When the most High divided to the nations their inheritance, . . . he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel. For the Lord’s portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance” (Deut. 32:8–9). That is not all.

God took “strangers” and “eunuchs” to himself as his own, indicating his interest both in individuals and in non-Israelites. We read that “the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to the Lord, to serve him, . . . them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: . . . an house of prayer for all people” (Isa. 56:6–7). Furthermore, “thus saith the Lord unto the eunuchs that keep my sabbaths, . . . and take hold of my covenant; . . . unto them will I give in mine house and within my walls a place and a name . . . an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off” (Isa. 56:4–5). Without subtlety, God pulls these people into the endtime with an expression overflowing with meaning like “an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off.” As we have already seen, the Septuagint reading of the last verse of the book of Daniel promised the prophet that “you shall rest, and *stand in your glory at the end of days*” (Dan. 12:13, LXX; emphasis added).³⁶

When we turn again to the New Testament, we come upon Paul’s speech before King Agrippa wherein the Apostle rehearsed the appearance of the Resurrected Jesus to him on the road to Damascus. Speaking about the Gentiles to Paul, the Risen Christ declared that “now I send thee” to them. What was his purpose? “To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me” (Acts 26:17–18). A heavenly sanctified inheritance, therefore, was available to all, including especially the Gentiles (see Eph. 3:6).³⁷

What is more, believers go into heaven not as servants of God but as sons and daughters because of Christ. Even Jews, who enjoyed the blessings of the law of Moses, needed to “receive the adoption of sons [and daughters]” before entering the next world. To them and to Gentiles,

³⁶Hermann and Foerster, “*klēros*,” *TDNT*, 3:760–61; Dommershausen, “*gōrāl*,” *TDOT*, 2:455.

³⁷Hermann and Foerster, “68↑Δ≅H, 680Δ T̄, BΔ≅Φ680Δ T̄, @8 680Δ≅H, @8≅680Δ.:∇, 680Δ≅< μ≅H, ΦΛ(680Δ≅< μ≅H, 680Δ≅<≅μΞT, 6∇9∇680Δ≅<≅μΞT, 680Δ≅<≅μ.:∇,” *TDNT*, 3:763, 785.

“God hath sent forth the Spirit of his [own] Son into [their] hearts” as a preparation. At the end, those who were children then are now to become “an heir of God through Christ” (Gal. 4:5–7). With this, the work of God to bring about “the immortality and eternal life of man” stands complete (Moses 1:39). Hallelujah!