

## **Doctrine of Inheritance in the New Testament**

1. The Greeks relied more on wills for distributing an inheritance than did the Israelites.
2. If a citizen died without a will, his sons in good standing inherited the property in equal parts, the eldest receiving the same as his brothers.
3. Daughters received dowries, which reverted to other heirs if the daughter was divorced or remained childless.
4. If a man had no sons, he usually adopted one to continue the family. If he had daughters, he would arrange for one of them to marry the adopted son. In that instance the major share of the inheritance fell to the daughter and her husband.
5. If only daughters survived, the estate passed to them. If a man died without a will and left no natural or adopted heirs, his closest male relatives received his property.
6. According to Roman law, the property of a man who died without a will went to his wife and children.
7. But married daughters living with their husbands or children who had been emancipated from their father's authority did not share in the inheritance.
8. If a man left no wife and children, the inheritance passed to his male relatives.
9. The Romans held that a child became his father's heir the moment he was born, and that the patriarch continued to live spiritually through his heirs. Legally adopted children had full inheritance rights.
10. The Apostle Paul's glorious concept of a spiritual inheritance for Christians is primarily of Jewish origin. But the doctrine was strongly influenced by Greek and Roman inheritance practices.
11. Three of these influences were:
  - inheritance was regarded as immediate as well as ultimate,
  - all legitimate heirs usually shared the inheritance equally and jointly rather than a division favoring a firstborn son, and
  - legally adopted children enjoyed full inheritance rights along with natural offspring.
12. According to Paul, the Christian's spiritual inheritance is based strictly on our relationship to Christ.

- *Galatians 3:26 For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.*
- *Galatians 3:29 And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.*

13. This spiritual birthright cannot be inherited by sinners.

- *1 Corinthians 6:9 Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, 10 Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. 11 And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.*

14. The present possession of the spiritual inheritance as well as its future glory is emphasized in Romans 8.

- *Romans 8:16 The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: 17 And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.*

15. Paul also declared that the Spirit's indwelling power is both the sign and seal that we are heirs of God's promise.

- *Ephesians 1:13 In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, 14 Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.*

16. Those who are redeemed, including the Gentiles, become God's adopted sons with full inheritance rights.

- *Galatians 4:1 Now I say, That the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all; 2 But is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father. 3 Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world: 4 But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, 5 To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. 6 And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. 7 Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.*

17. Other New Testament passages present the Christian's spiritual inheritance as a reward for faithfulness and Christlikeness.

18. Jesus invited those showing kindness in His name to "*inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world*" (Matthew 25:34).

19. Peter counseled suffering saints in the Roman world to be patient in their trials, "*That ye should inherit a blessing*" (1 Peter 3:9).
20. James declared that the poor of this world have been chosen to be "*rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He [God] hath promised to them that love Him*" (James 2:5).
21. In a burst of joy, Peter celebrated every Christian's "*lively hope*" of his heavenly inheritance: "*To an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you*" (1 Peter 1:3-4).