

The Children of God

Luke 2:14 "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests." NIV [the better attested reading of it]

Matt 19:14 But Jesus said, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven."

In light of the Redemptive Covenant, these verses should take on a whole new meaning, especially the idea of God's little children coming to him. Jesus uses the same affectionate phrase "little children" when speaking to his disciples in Jn. 13:33. Paul uses it in Gal. 4:19. And it is used throughout 1John. Believers are God's eternal children whom he dearly loves, given to Christ before the ages for redemption on the cross. We are the prodigal children brought home to our Father by the One he sent to redeem them. We are the lost sheep for whom the Shepherd calls, who recognize his voice and come to him. We are the seeds planted by God in his vineyard in the light, and not the seeds planted by the enemy in the night. We are the children of the promise, not the children of the flesh. We are wheat and not tares: that is our nature. God is our Savior: that is *his* nature. What he declares with his word becomes reality, and he declared us justified in Christ on the cross. *Therefore, the day of Christ's coming is truly a cause for hilarious celebration!*

This is the foundational truth of the Gospel.

This is where the glad tidings come from.

This is where we find our comfort and our security.

Let me remind you that when I present competing points of view, as this lesson does extensively, the purpose is to increase your knowledge, not your confusion. We often learn more about a particular body of truth by contrasting it with another, than we do by merely stating it. That is my intent in the lesson. The broader our understanding of the reasoning behind competing points of view, the more likely we are to recognize our own bias; and the *less* likely we are to allow our bias to create disunity in the Body. I've tried to use statements about universal atonement and conditional salvation that were made by the best proponents of that view, rather than characterizing them myself. If my own bias has crept in as I describe those views with which I disagree, I do apologize. Unity does not require agreement or acceptance. It does require forbearance.

'May the Lord bless you and keep you. May he make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you; May he turn his face toward you, and give you peace.' **So shall they put my name on the children of Israel**, and I will bless them. Num. 6:24-27