

Sunday, December 14, 2014—Grace Life School of Theology—*Grace History Project*—Lesson 155
Sonship Edification: Distinguishing Characteristics, Part 5 (The New Covenant) and Precursors to SE

Introduction

- The past four lessons (151-154) have been dedicated to a consideration of the distinguishing characteristics of Sonship Edification (SE). In those lessons we considered:
 - The Three Stages of Sonship
 - The Creature
 - Sonship Prayer
 - Spirit Dwelling in Romans 8:9
 - Conditional Nature of Joint-heirship in Romans 8:17
- In this fifth and final lesson in the sequence regarding the Distinguishing Characteristics of SE, we would like to touch on the following issue:
 - The New Covenant

SE on the New Covenant

- Proponents of SE have much to say about the nature of the New Covenant and its role and impact upon the body of Christ in general and their concept of Sonship specifically. An exhaustive study of SE's teaching on the New Covenant could easily take up multiple hours of teaching. For the sake of brevity, I would like to focus on only two aspect of SE's teaching regarding the New Covenant: 1) there are no physical provisions in the New Covenant and 2) nature of the law that is written on the hearts of the recipients of the New Covenant.

No Physical Provisions

- According to SE teachers, the New Covenant (NC) pertains to spiritual things exclusively and contains no physical provisions.
 - “Jeremiah 31:31-34

First and foremost, the NC does NOT covenant for any land, king, throne, kingdom, or anything along those lines at all!!!

The ONLY thing that the New Covenant covenants for are SPIRITUAL THINGS—AND SPIRITUAL THINGS ONLY!

The NC has five things to it mentioned here: 1) “*I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts;*” 2) “*and will be their God, and they shall be my people.*” 3) “*they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying,*

Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them,” 4) *“I will forgive their iniquity,”* 5) *“I will remember their sin no more.”* (Jeremiah 31:33-34)

You’ve got five primary things or components to the NC—and every one of them is SPIRITUAL—they’re all spiritual things!!!!!!!!!!” (Newbold, Romans 8(101-200), 193)

- “When it comes to the New Covenant, you and I are beneficiaries of the New Covenant even though we are not under that covenant as a nation or as Israelites or in conjunction with the rest of the covenants. It is clear in the Scripture that the New Covenant is given to Israel. But it is also clear in the Apostle Paul’s writings that every single aspect of the New Covenant is also provided for us.

The New Covenant and the Old Covenant have a relationship in that neither one of them have to do with land, a king, a kingdom, a name, material blessings, a throne, the repossession of the earth or any of the things that the other covenants do include. They both deal with what has to be “inside a person” that qualifies him to be used by God in His business. The difference is that one of those covenants provides for you to produce it and the other one provides for God to produce it.” (McDaniel, Sonship Orientation Lessons 7 and 8, Page 6)

- “Nothing in the New Covenant has to do with physical, material things. It only covenants for spiritual things. Paul realizes that he has to be an able minister of the New Testament because the thing you have to have to be utilized by God as a son is the Spiritual Fitness that the new covenant covenants for”. (McDaniel, Sonship Orientation Lessons 9 and 10, Page 2)
- “Now, we left off our examination of the New Covenant to see the Palestinian (or God’s Jehovahness) Covenant. Let’s return there just to make sure that you have a proper appreciation for what the New Covenant covenants for.

By this time you should understand that: The NC does NOT covenant for any land, king, throne, kingdom, or anything along those lines at all

The ONLY thing that the New Covenant covenants for are SPIRITUAL THINGS.

The NC has five components: 1) “I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in in their hearts” 2) “and will be their God, and they shall be my people” 3) “they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them” 4) “I will forgive their iniquity” 5) “I will remember their sin no more”

No matter who you are, no matter what program you live in, if you are going to be fit to be utilized by God and enter into doing business with Him, you have to have those five things and that means we have to have them too.

There are two major mistakes that are made with regard to the covenants: 1) The idea that we are in a covenant relationship with God and that the covenants are for us; 2) The idea that even the New Covenant has nothing to do with us at all.

It is true that we are not “under” the New Covenant, but we are beneficiaries of the things in the New Covenant. The New Covenant is a must for spiritual fitness; no matter which program you are a part of. The reason they object to being beneficiaries of the New Covenant is because it is given under Israel’s program. I’m not saying that we shouldn’t be careful about those things, but think about this; the Cross took place under Israel’s program too. Does that mean that you are not a beneficiary of what took place there? If not, then you are in real trouble. . .

This matches the 1st component of the new covenant in Jeremiah 31. Jeremiah 31:33–
But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and **write it in their hearts**; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Notice that this is Paul’s lead-in to telling them that he is “an able minister of the new testament.”

2 Corinthians 3:6–Who also hath made us **able ministers of the New Testament**; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.

I can tell you that all five components of the New Covenant are taught to us by our apostle in his epistles. I am tempted to take you through them, but for now I’m just going to leave it at that. I have shown you the first component of the new covenant as it pertains to us in 2 Corinthians 3:2-3. The other four components of the New Covenant are found in that same book. We aren’t going to go through them now, but we may sometime in the future when we are going through the book of 2 Corinthians.” (McDaniel, Sonship Orientation Lessons 11 and 12, Pages 4-5)

- Not only do many of the above concepts/comments remind one of Progressive Dispensationalism’s suppositions with respect to the New Covenant, but SE’s statements on this matter are simply FALSE. Ezekiel 36:22-29, a clear cross reference to Jeremiah 31, does indicate that land promises/blessings are included in the New Covenant.

What Law is Written on Israel's Heart?

- Newbold and McDaniel both teach that the law being written on the heart in Jeremiah 31 is “the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus” from Romans 8:2.

- “NC = “*I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts;*” (Jer. 31:33)

Note: most Bible writers and teachers really screw this all up because of that word “*law*” — this is NOT talking about taking the Law of Moses (that Old Covenant law contract) and writing it in the hearts of God’s people!!!

The Old Covenant is an “if/then” contract—and that is totally inconsistent with the NC—and you would know that if you properly had understood and appreciated the **Palestinian Covenant** in the first place! (The covenant for God to provide spiritual fitness by His J-ness and grace).

The “*law*” being spoken of is a law as it was used by Paul in Romans 6-8—not the Law of Moses, but the law of Righteousness—the law of Christ; the *law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus*—which is all so you can think like God does!!!

And in both programs, all these issues get taught to the proper recipients in the proper way—Israel gets it taught to them by Christ Himself with all His corrective doctrine in the gospel accounts; the remnant get it taught to them in the books of Hebrews through Revelations — and we get it taught to us in the epistles of Paul.” (Newbold, Romans 8 (101-200), 200)

- With respect to the “*law*” in Jeremiah 31:33 Mike McDaniel states the following:
 - “Normally, what do you think of when you read the word “*law*”. But as you know, many words in your Bible have more than one meaning. This “*law*” is not the “Law of Moses.” This is referring to a law “sanctification-wise” and you should already know about it because you have been through the first thirteen verses of Romans 8.

Romans 8:2—For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.

The “*law*” referred to in Jeremiah 31:33 (and in Romans 8:2) is the never failing truth (law) that sets you free from the “law of sin and death” which is the old covenant.

Next, with regard to their sanctification, God is going to write that law on their hearts. Then, the next component is that He “will be their God and they shall be [His] people.” We are going to talk about these and you will need to know about “heart-writing” because that is going to be going on with you as an adopted son. But for

now, what I want to draw your attention to is contained in the next verse.”
(McDaniel, Sonship Orientation Lessons 9-10, Page 6-7)

Further Reading and Study

- For more information on SE’s teaching regarding the New Covenant please consult the following resources.
 - Mark Newbold
 - [Romans 8 \(101-200\)](#)
 - [Romans 8 \(201-300\)](#)
 - Mike McDaniel
 - Sonship Orientation Lessons [7](#) and [8](#)
 - Sonship Orientation Lessons [9](#) and [10](#)
 - Sonship Orientation Lessons [11](#) and [12](#)

Precursors to Sonship

- In the first lesson I taught regarding Sonship (Lesson 143) I stated:
 - “you ought not to assume that you understand how a person is using that term. The terms “adoption” and “sonship” have widely varied meanings depending on who is using them.”
- In Lesson 143 we looked at a variety of different ways throughout church history that the concepts of sonship and adoption have been understood and explained. As part of that process we considered the following:
 - Occurrences of the Greek word *huiiothesia* (“adoption” in the KJB) and how the word was translated in various versions.
 - The writings of C.H. Mackintosh on sonship from the 1860s in *Notes on Genesis*.
 - Modern mainline Evangelical Christianity by looking at the entry on “Adoption” by William E. Brown in the popular Evangelical reference work *Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology* edited by Walter A. Elwell
 - Pastor C.R. Stam’s short piece on adoption/sonship from *Two Minutes With the Bible* titled the “The Spirit of Sonship.”
 - Dr. Jake Miller and World Harvest Mission
 - SE teachers Mark Newbold and Mike McDaniel

- While Sonship Edification as a system of Biblical interpretation is a new development within the Grace Movement over the past fifteen to twenty years, finding its point of origin within the writing ministry of Keith Blades, aspects of SE are observable to varying degrees throughout church history.
- Due to the fact that so much of SE's doctrinal platform is CONDITIONAL (indwelling Holy Spirit, conditional progressive sanctification, and Joint-hiership for example) tracing the precursors of SE, while not easy, generally involves identifying groups or men who expounded upon key passages in similar ways.
- While the Grace History Project in no way claims to be exhaustive in its identification of the doctrinal forebears of SE, there are some notable precursors of the system that bear mentioning. These include the following:
 - 1884—*The Theocratic Kingdom* by George N.H. Peters—3 Volumes
 - 1935—*The Berean Expositor, Volume XXV* by Charles Welch
 - 1936—*Firstborn Sons: Their Rights and Risks* by G.H. Lang
 - 1972—*Edification Complex of the Soul* by R. B. Thieme, Jr.
 - 1981—*The Gospel Under Siege: Faith and Works in Tension* by Zane Hodges
- The majority of these writers seek to connect Romans 8:17 with II Timothy 2:12 to maintain their position that joint-heirship with Christ and/or reigning with Christ in eternity is CONDITIONAL. Likewise, every one of these writers appeals to passages outside of the Pauline epistles such as Revelation 2:26-27; 3:11-12, 20-21 as well as others to support their positions. In short, they do not rightly divide the word of truth according to the manner set forth in Paul's epistles nor do they recognize GRACE as God's operating principle for both justification and sanctification during the current dispensation. What are we to conclude from these factual realities? One thing is certain, all these writers view reigning with Christ (II Timothy 2:12) or becoming a joint-heir with Christ (Romans 8:17) as conditioned upon something that believers must strive to attain in some fashion. In other words, reigning and joint-heirship are tied to the believer's works and/or sanctification in order to qualify them for the honor. Ironically, on this point it appears that SE has more in common with the works based sanctification mind set of denominational Christianity than they do with the Grace Message taught by our Apostle Paul.

N.H. Peters

- N.H Peters was born in Berlin, PA and graduated from Wittenburg College, and pastored a number of Lutheran churches in Ohio. Originally published by Funk & Wagnalls in 1884, Peters' three Volume magnum opus *The Theocratic Kingdom* is used by Zane Hodges in the 2nd edition of *The Gospel Under Siege: Faith and Works in Tension* (1992) to buttress his argument that there is a double inheritance spoken of in Romans 8:17 and that only those qualified will co-reign with Christ. After reading the pertinent sections of Peters, I am convinced that Hodges is playing a bit fast and loose with Peters work. Peters' argumentation is not as cut and dry as Hodges lets on. In fact, in my estimation, Peters makes many seemingly contradictory statements and can only be viewed as muddled at best.

- Spanning all three volumes, Peters offers 206 Propositions regarding the nature of the kingdom of God. Proposition 90, found in volume one and titled “Members of the Church, who are faithful are promised this Kingdom” contains statements indicating that only faithful believers will co-reign with Christ.
 - “Only believers are promised this Kingdom. **Faith and its fruits are essential to its inheritance.** This is pointedly declared in Scripture, as e.g. Galatians 5:21; Ephesians 5:5, etc. If the Jews were accounted unworthy because of lack of faith, etc., to receive this Kingdom—if they were rejected and a seed must be raised up unto Abraham, we may rest assured that it will be, it must be, “a righteous seed.” This becomes the more necessary in view of the position that this seed is to occupy in the Coming Kingdom, viz.: **that of co-rulers with Christ. Therefore the Word assures us that even out of “the many” but “few” will be chosen, and those only because they are believing and faithful.**” (Peters, *The Theocratic Kingdom Vol. I.*, 601)
- Proposition 90 directs its readers to also consider Proposition 154, titled “This Theocratic Kingdom includes the visible reign of the risen and glorified saints here on earth.” It is in Proposition 154 that many seemingly conflicting statements are made by Peters. First, Peters seems to state plainly that all believers are “joint-heirs with Christ” based on the normal use of grammar.
 - “This reigning, whatever it is, is the Lord’s appointment and not ours; and hence to ascertain its true meaning, that which God has said concerning it ought to be diligently compared. And when the **plain grammatical meaning undoubtedly teaches** just such a reign as we advocate, it ill becomes the believer in the Word, even if he rejects the teaching, to speak or write disrespectfully of it. . . **This the words plainly denote a real, substantial elevation to rulership, great exalted honor and authority in the coming Kingdom, then language itself has no precise, adequate meaning. This the words plain denote, and, however much we may feel that such a position is far above our deserts, the astonishing grace of God will bestow it. Grace adopts us as sons, and as such we become “heirs of God,” and consequently “joint heirs with Christ. . .”** (Peters, *The Theocratic Kingdom Vol. II.*, 571)
- Elsewhere within Proposition 154, one encounters language that is less clear regarding the believer’s joint-heirship and subsequent reign with Christ. Hodges quotes this statement in his footnotes to support his notion that only those “accounted worthy of rulership” are “joint-heirs with Christ.”
 - “Let the Davidic Kingdom be restored as predicted, and, in the very nature of the case, to verify the promise, the Theocratic king **will also have His associate rulers** assuring the most perfect admonition of the laws, and securing the most perfect government, productive peace, prosperity, and happiness, such as the world has never yet witnessed. **The word emphatically teaches that those thus chosen, accounted worthy of this rulership, are the saints. They are “joint-heirs” (Romans 8:17) with the Christ, who graciously divides without marring his own superiority and supremacy (but rather exalts it thereby), His own inheritance with them.**” (Peters, *The Theocratic Kingdom Vol. II.*, 570)

- Given that these two quotes from Peters can be found on subsequent pages (pages 570 and 571), his argumentation appears unclear. Meanwhile, Hodges seems to be seizing upon the one statement on page 570 that he feels supports his position while failing to cite the second on page 571.
- Later in Proposition 154, Peters quotes a lengthy passage from Graff's "Lay Sermons # 6" which definitely indicates being a part of God's "ruling class" is a "reward of good works that is superadded to salvation," i.e., only the qualified faithful will co-rule with Christ.
 - "Graff ("Greybeard") in his "Lay Sermons," No. 6, truly observes that "the present or ecclesiastical dispensation may therefore be said to be allotted to the development of Christ' aristocracy, the nobility of His Kingdom, the ruling class in the world to come." After urging that humility precedes exaltation he says: "If Christians were not forgetful of the distinguished honors which await them in the future, they would be less concerned about the honors and emoluments of the present." Pregnant words; but alas, how few heed the lesson imparted. In No. 13 he has some thoughtful words on **"the Reward of Good Works that is superadded (added over and above) to Salvation,"** in which the following sentence: "And although the literature of the Church abounds in 'crowns for the departed,' it is not improbable that there will be many crownless heads on the day when the Lord shall appear to receive them, inasmuch as the three crowns (whatever they may typify) designated in the Scriptures are mentioned in each case as the reward of some special service or merit. . . Whatever may be thought of this attempted distinction of crowns, the idea of loss, of simple salvation, is a correct one, as e.g. evidenced by the apostles teaching in I Corinthians 3:8-15. The principle of being thus rewarded by Jesus, e.g. when He addressed His disciples, prefacing the "and I appoint unto you a kingdom," etc. by the declaration, giving a reason for the same: "you are they which have continued with Me in my (trials) temptations," Luke 22:28-29. The unspeakable honor thus conferred explains why the demands of God in reference to supreme love to Him unreserved surrender to His Will, etc., are, **as required in this dispensation, not fanatical requirements (as unbelief suggests), but essential in view of qualifying the saints for this rulership. Hence the Scriptures inform us that we should receive our trials and even tribulation joyfully, because if we endure the testing, these things shall give us a fitness for the special honor of kingship and priesthood.**" (Peters, *The Theocratic Kingdom Vol. II.*, 591-592)
- In this passage Peters seems clear that only those who are properly "qualified" are "fit" for the honor of rulership, kingship, and priesthood. In short, one must qualify himself or herself for the honor of co-reigning with Christ; it is not automatically bestowed as a result of salvation but is "superadded" to it. While this is not the exact same argument being offered by SE, the premise is the same. The believer must in some way, shape, manner, or form attain unto this "special honor."
- In the next lesson we will continue consideration of the precursors of SE.

Works Cited

Peters, N.H. *The Theocratic Kingdom Vol. I & II*. New York: Funk and Wagnall's, 1884.