

# Kingdom Living Today

*Illustrating the WAY of God's Kingdom for a Modern World*

## 3. The Kingdom is Within the Followers of Jesus

“MY FOLLOWERS SPEAK OF THE GLORY  
OF MY KINGDOM SO THAT ALL MEN  
MAY KNOW OF MY MIGHTY ACTS.  
MY KINGDOM IS AN EVERLASTING  
KINGDOM, ENDURING THROUGH ALL  
GENERATIONS. I AM FAITHFUL TO ALL  
MY PROMISES AND LOVING TOWARD  
ALL WHO FOLLOW ME.”

Jack and Dee sat on their back deck contentedly enjoying their coffee. Between sips Dee asked, “I wonder how that young couple we met in the park a few months ago are doing?”

Jack replied, “You mean Brett and Lacie, don’t you? Nice folks. I’m glad we’ve both felt led to pray for them each day. It sure would be nice to hear that our Lord has answered our prayers!”

Dee smiled in agreement. “I’d like to think that when and if we do encounter them again, there’ll be a real hunger for everything our Lord desires for their lives.”

Jack added, “I think that note I gave Brett with the Restorationministries.org website pointed them toward the truths they’ll need if they’re sincere in following Jesus wholeheartedly with loving, obedient trust.”

“Think back, dear,” Dee responded a few moments later. “We were at the same point of questioning what was frustrating our spiritual lives as they are! Do you realize that it’s been 16 years since we took part in that Hebraic Restoration seminar? I’m so glad we followed the Holy Spirit’s prompting to go.”

Jack took his wife’s hand. “Back then I was an elder, coordinating three home fellowships and leading one myself. I remember that our elders’ board studied all the major writers on home churches before dividing the entire congregation into smaller groups.”

“You certainly tried to do your best to help our church body,” Dee replied. “You put a lot of time and effort into the whole transition to fellowship in homes.”

Jack nodded somewhat sadly. “As I look back now, I realize how wrong our goal was: to make people feel accepted and comfortable by getting together every week in each other’s houses. But we were just following what all those noted writers on home fellowships had recommended.

“Don’t be too hard on yourself, dear,” Dee murmured. “We all thought that just getting together to chat and do a Bible study in an informal setting was what biblical fellowship was supposed to be.”

“The trouble was,” added Jack wryly, “we never saw anyone growing in Christ’s likeness! People talked *about* God’s Word, but we didn’t see much fruit from all that discussion! I’m not sure that we even saw one new person come to Christ during that whole time. I guess that’s because what we were doing seemed right from our

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*Sharing the Hebraic Foundations of the Earliest Followers of Jesus  
Preparing Today's Followers of Jesus to Fulfill Their Part in His Kingdom*

human perspective but had nothing to do with *God's* purposes for getting together!"

Dee sighed. "Our Father purposed that we meet in homes to help each other remain repentant so that He could answer our prayers.<sup>(1 Peter 3:12)</sup> And those who are more mature in His ways are to come alongside to help the others apply His Word to their lives.<sup>(Acts 2:42,46,47)</sup> That way we all become equipped to expand His Kingdom through our daily contacts with unbelievers."<sup>(1 Peter 2:12)</sup>

She paused for a moment then added, "When we meet in homes, we're also able to share our resources and spiritual giftings with our fellowship family. <sup>(1 Corinthians 12:6,7,26)</sup> And we're never at a loss for testimonies of how He's been at work around us!"

Jack sat up, folding his hands on his lap. "We sure missed His plan back then, didn't we? The home groups in that old congregation ended up repeating what they'd always done in the church fellowship hall, like just another meeting. But we overlooked our Father's whole intent that He'd made clear in the Scriptures: that we be *extended spiritual family*—a twenty-four hour a day, seven-day a week commitment to each other as brothers and sisters."<sup>(Matthew 12:49,50)</sup>

His voice intensified as he got into the topic. "And don't forget all those "one-anothers" in the Newer Testament! It's in the course of our daily lives as extended spiritual family that we live those out."

"Oh," Dee replied, "you mean showing how we belong to Jesus *as a body* by loving one another, serving one another, admonishing one another..."<sup>(i.e., Romans 12:9-16)</sup>

"You've got it, gal!" he laughed. "And there are 54 "one-another" ways in the Newer Testament that flesh out what *agape* love looks like in action! That's how the earliest followers of Jesus were identified by outsiders — by their *love* for each other!"<sup>(John 13:35)</sup>

Dee chuckled. "Well, as you said, it's been 16 years since we encountered the truths God is restoring to His people. What I remember most about our introduction to the Hebraic foundations was that they enabled the first followers of Christ to be so spiritually powerful and relationally intimate through His Spirit.<sup>(2 Peter 1:3)</sup> What an amazing 180° turn He's made in *our* lives since then, Jack!"

"Look at it this way, Dee," her husband said. "Can you think of any similarities between how we're wholeheartedly living by His Spirit now day by day<sup>(John 3:8)</sup>, and how we used to spend so much time orchestrating and planning out all those services and activities back at the church building?"

She shook her head at the very thought. "I can't think of even one similarity. All I know is how mindful of serving the King of the Kingdom we've become. Back then, the Sunday service and weekly meetings pretty much comprised our spiritual life. But now, each day we're praying and looking for opportunities to expand His Kingdom because we love Him so much!"<sup>(1 Peter 3:15)</sup>

"Just like that day at the park before we met Brett and Lacie, how we prayed for an opportunity to represent Jesus to someone!" Jack laughed. "It sure seems like that's how Father God wants us to live — ready and available for His purposes with everyone we meet.<sup>(Colossians 4:5,6)</sup> When we were busy keeping the religious system going, it never occurred to us to look for ways to do our part in the Kingdom. I use to feel that I was giving my all in directing the affairs of our congregation and the

home fellowships I was responsible for.”

Dee couldn't have agreed more. “Who would have ever thought that *loving the Lord our God* and *loving our neighbor as ourselves* would find so many chances to be lived out for His glory through us!”(Luke 10:27)

Jack paused thoughtfully for a moment then declared earnestly, “Dee, over these 16 years we've changed from being “churched” people to becoming *followers of Christ* bent on seeing His Kingdom expanded on earth. We haven't had to depend on institutions and creeds because we're standing on God's Word as truth.(John 17:17)

“And,” added Dee joyfully, “we're relying on the indwelling Holy Spirit to guide and empower us to do His will.”(John 14:15-17)

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It was early evening at Brett and Lacie's house. Supper was finished, the dishes had been washed and put away, and they could finally sit back and talk.

“Lacie, what would Jack and Dee think if they saw us now?”

His wife pondered for a moment as she leaned back into the sofa cushion. “I think they'd be pleased with how determined we've become in living for Jesus and wanting our marriage to reflect Him.”

Brett followed with another question. “How far have you gotten in reading *The Gospel of the Covenant?*”

“I've only read through the first part that discusses covenants, Brett. But my eyes have been opened to see my heavenly Father in an entirely different way!”

He smiled in agreement. “When I read that the word *covenant* can mean “to come into union with,” I realized that the covenant our Father offers us through Jesus invites us to live *in union with Him*.(Ephesians 2:21,22) I'd never heard that before!

“And since union implies *oneness*,” replied Lacie thoughtfully, “that means our Father's goal is for us to live in union *with Him* so that His love and power will work in and through us.(Ephesians 2:10; 6:10) That's *spiritual intimacy*, isn't it?” Then she smiled. “Wasn't it gracious of God that Jack pointed you toward *The Gospel of the Covenant?*”

He grinned back at her. “We'll make that part of our morning time together until we've both embraced the Covenant our Father offers us. Maybe that way we'll learn what Jesus meant when He promised that *streams of living water would flow from within us by His Spirit*.”(John 7:38,39)

Lacie was pleased by his willingness to lead them spiritually. “I was also amazed to learn from that article how our covenant union with our Father plays into our marriage covenant with each other!”

Putting his arm around her Brett added, “I can see why so many Christian couples who have no idea about the relationship between these two covenants are getting divorced today. Instead of seeing God's intent for their marriage covenant to be as permanent and loving as their covenant with Him,(Daniel 9:4; Nehemiah 1:5) they're following the world's way of putting themselves and their personal happiness first.”

“But giving up on your marriage and hoping for a newer, better spouse has nothing to do with loving God and walking according to His Word!”(Malachi 2:14-16) Lacie's voice wavered with sadness.

Brett, sensing the depth of her dismay, responded, "It sure doesn't!" They were both quiet as they realized how many of their friends had left their spouse for someone else.

After a bit Brett broke the silence with a new thought. "I'd never realized that our living in union with Jesus is actually an *ongoing journey* with Him here on earth until the time when our names are read aloud before the host of heaven."(2 Peter 1:10,11)

Sighing with longing, Lacie remarked, "I used to think that heaven was way off in the future. But Brett, I find myself more and more eager to want to please our Lord and be greeted with "Well done, good and faithful servant!"(Matthew 25:21)

"I feel the same way, Lacie. If I think about our lives as a *lifelong pilgrimage* of growing more and more like Jesus through His indwelling Spirit, I'm more focused on HIS purpose for us rather than looking for what will make our life here on earth more gratifying and easier."(1 Peter 1:1,2)

Lacie leaned against her husband's shoulder. "There really is an intensity of determination when we realize what it means for Jesus to be *Lord* of our lives. That's why we need to depend so much on the indwelling Spirit for power to press on in God's will and purpose to the end."(2 Timothy 4:7,8)

"When I saw the *pilgrimage* aspect of life that's set forth in both the Older and Newer Testaments," Brett responded, "I realized something. My eternal salvation takes place when my name is read from the Lamb's Book of Life in heaven — and that's at the *end* of my life journey!"(Revelation 3:5)

Lacie's eyes widened. "So that's why we find all those verses in both testaments about *enduring to the end*, and not falling away!"(Hosea 7:13; Matthew 24:10-13)

The young man's voice turned serious. "As I've been going through the Bible, I've noticed how God is constantly calling us to be on guard and stand firm in our faith!(1 Timothy 4:1) If there were no chance of us straying or falling away, He wouldn't keep warning us!"(1 Corinthians 16:13; Hebrews 3:12)

"And that's why our eternal salvation comes *after* we've persevered to the end."(James 1:12)

Brett paused as he looked with love at his wife. "I'm so thankful we're on this journey together, hon. I wish we had the chance to meet up with Jack and Dee again so could thank them for nudging us along in Jesus!"

"Brett," she beamed, "I'm going to ask our Lord to have us run into Jack and Dee again. I want them to rejoice with us over what He's been doing in our lives."

Reaching over to hug her he answered, "I'll join you in that prayer."