

Kingdom Living Today

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

38. Those Who Feared The Lord Talked With Each Other

"FOR PROPHECY NEVER HAD ITS ORIGIN IN THE WILL OF MAN, BUT MEN SPOKE FROM GOD AS THEY WERE CARRIED ALONG BY THE HOLY SPIRIT. FOR THE TESTIMONY OF JESUS IS THE SPIRIT OF PROPHECY."

[Reader Note: In Kingdom Living Today, 31. *Do Not Be Afraid Of Them For I Am With You*, the town Ecumenical Clergy Council had ended with 10 of the men remaining behind with Jack for several hours of meaningful questions and answers. He agreed to meet with them again after each one had read *Pastoring By Elders*, *I Hate Nicolaitanism*, and *God's Clergy-less Kingdom*—materials from the Restoration Ministries website that had so strengthened his own walk in Jesus over the years. Not only had the men pored over these materials, but most, befitting their own integrity, had delved deeper into the various facets of the Hebraic Restoration.]

Soon to be ex-Father John Hagan spoke up first as the discussion began. "After reading through the materials you recommended, Jack, I began a quest of my own. I surveyed many of my longstanding parishioners and discovered that with few exceptions, attending Mass pretty much summed up the totality of their religious conviction."

The other men nodded, recognizing a similar pattern among many in their own congregations. The priest's voice rose as he went on, "Through other research I became convicted over the hypocrisy of my denomination. As you probably know, Roman Catholicism claims both the Bible and Church tradition as the source of its authority and faith practices. In fact, I found EVERYTHING we did was based on the traditions which men from the past had established rather than being founded on the Bible." A certain sadness permeated his tone. "I've come to realize that almost every major practice we have today contradicts God's Word. And I think what grieves me most is that among those I surveyed, I found only *three people* who read the Bible routinely, even though the 1963 Vatican II Council required all Catholics to read their Bible daily!" He paused for a deep breath then added, "I want you brothers of mine to know that I've started the process to leave the priesthood."

Startled looks crossed the faces of many. Tim, one of the younger ministers, spoke up. "John, it's not just Catholics you're describing. I've encountered few in my own congregation who pursue God and His interests in their daily lives, even though I try to get that across from the pulpit. Attending Sunday service is all that matters to many."

Simon, the oldest clergyman present, filled Jack in on what had transpired in the past several weeks: "Six of the younger guys here have submitted their resignations." Encouraging looks passed around the table as Alex, who'd just turned 40, broke in. "We realized we're neither old enough nor mature enough in wisdom to shepherd our Father's children."

"And we four older men," Simon rejoined, "believe that we're qualified to be true elder/shepherds as our Father calls for in His Word.^(1Timothy 3:1-7) We're going to intentionally transition the flocks we're serving into biblical Hebraic foundations. If people throw us out, that's up to them—but we believe we need to find who wants

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to come alongside us as extended spiritual family in our new NON-clergy status.”

“Wow!” Jack exclaimed. “I expected some heavy-duty discussion when we got together today, anticipating that most of you would be defending your clergy position. I’m gratified and humbled at the same time to be sitting here with you men.”

“What you’re unaware of, Jack, is that many of us have been playing golf together each week for several years,” Dave, one of the other older men, noted. “And as we read those materials, they became our chief topic of discussion during and after our matches!” He went on earnestly, “We began to fast and pray for each other like never before. In fact, we all met together last week with our wives, and what you see here is what the Spirit of our Lord confirmed—there are *no clergy* in the Kingdom of God! Having that truth anchored, we each needed to discern what God wanted us to do next.”

Tyvon, a younger man, interjected, “I remember from one of George Barna’s polls that over 20 million people have left the religious system to experience the relational intimacy and spiritual power of the earliest Church. I guess 10 more have now been added to that number.” Chortles filled the room.

“Jack, what do you see as the chief hindrance to so many clergy refusing to embrace the Hebraic foundations?” probed Marcus, another senior pastor.

“I’ve shared these truths for over 16 years and believe that restoring the Hebraic foundations is a prophetic revelation of God.^(2Peter 1:20,21) Most professional clergy have resisted it because they see the Hebraic Restoration as just another teaching rather than the will of our Father to restore what’s been lost for centuries.”^(Acts 3:21)

“Even a cursory glance at Church history reveals that clergy have all but silenced the prophetic,” John pointed out. “Rather than testing prophetic utterances as God’s Word requires,^(1Thessalonians 5:19-21) my denomination martyred His messengers.”

“I agree with John,” Tim chimed in. “We clergy are so easily threatened when anything rattles our orderly religious system—even more so when someone prophetically gifted comes along and tells us there weren’t any clergy in the earliest Church.”

Simon chuckled. “Jack, it’s interesting that you’d cite the prophetic backdrop of the Hebraic restoration as being the hindrance for clergy.” He pulled an article out of his briefcase. “During a recent golf match Alex gave us this article by Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the pastor martyred by the Nazis.” He read aloud, “‘Priest against prophet . . . this is the eternal conflict in the church of Christ.’”

He paused to let the words have their impact. Then he read a few more points he’d underlined: “‘The conflict and the struggle between prophet and priest is the conflict over the Word of God and the will of God; specifically, who speaks for God and thus reveals His will for His people.^(Amos 3:7) Prophets are sent when matters are dire. And the conflict comes when the prophet of God addresses the situation but the priest does not test and confirm the prophecy. The priest does not recognize the prophet in his calling. The priest has a platform. The prophet does not. The priest has a congregation. The prophet does not. Clearly, the advantage lies with the priest.’”

Tears filled the older man’s eyes. He handed the article to Marcus, seated next to him, to continue reading. “‘The priest is a hireling and does not feel that God’s people need to repent. He thinks they are generally healthy sheep. He believes this because their condition is a reflection of his ministry, and he is certainly not going to admit that their condition is bad. That would mean **he** would have to repent. The

prophet, in the eyes of the priest, is a threat to the peace that he, the priest, has worked so hard to establish. The reason the priest is threatened is because prophets live in the wind (John 3:8), priests tend to live on the earth. (Romans 12:2) (See Teaching E-mail 45. *Do You Understand the Kingdom?* for more on this topic)

Silence pervaded the room until Simon cleared his throat and declared, "This article tugged at me deeply, as well as the other materials we all read. I don't think God wants just prophets to 'live in the wind', but everyone who claims to be born of Him. (Galatians 5:25) And, I want to be one of those people!"

"Amen!!" resounded. "What's your experience with prophets?" Tim asked Jack.

"We have several with the gift of prophecy among the house churches my wife and I have established," Jack answered. "The more that people personally seek God in His Word in order to apply it to their lives, the more comfortable they are with His prophets and our Lord's purpose for them." (Amos 3:7)

"So you're not threatened by them?" John inquired. "Not at all!" Jack responded sincerely. "As communities of followers of Jesus, we focus on becoming more like Him and on cooperating together in extending His Kingdom. We view the combined efforts of the apostle, evangelist, prophet and shepherd/teacher as key to our being able to serve Him. And they help us attain to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ, Who's our only Head." (Ephesians 4:11-24)

"So you're really seeing this cooperation and spiritual growth taking place?" Simon asked, eager for this to occur among the people he'd served for so long.

"We are!" Jack exclaimed. "We have no ecclesiastical systems where a man's vested interests in maintaining his position need to be defended. (For more on the vested interest of clergy, see the Introduction to *Restoring the Early Church: The Current Plight of the Church in the US*; and, *Discussing How to Restore the Early Church, Lesson 19: The Roman Conquest of the Church*) Since we're a spiritual family rather than a religious system that needs professionals to keep it running smoothly, we trust the words of Jesus: "For where two or three come together in My name, there am I with them." (Matthew 18:20) He added with a smile, "We believe that He's given all His followers authority to apply His Word to their lives, and the power of His Spirit to see it through. (Matthew 16:19) And, we hold resolutely that our biblical applications and any other revelations must be confirmed by two or three." (2Corinthians 13:1)

Dave cut in with determined conviction. "I read in the *Gospel of the Covenant* about Jesus becoming an everlasting Priest in the order of Melchizedek. That article cited a vital truth which we clergy have long overlooked: When the Holy Spirit descended on Jesus during His immersion in the Jordan River, the Levitical priesthood ended and an everlasting Priest in the order of Melchizedek came into being." (Hebrews 7) He looked around the table keenly. "Realizing that Jesus would give His people the *power* to carry out their Covenant responsibilities, John the Baptist announced, "He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire." (Luke 3:16b)

"Alex gave us all the *Gospel of the Covenant* article as well as Dietrich Bonhoeffer's article," Tomas, a younger man, put in. "We all came to realize that our status as clergy was based so much on the old Levitical priesthood, with us men standing poised between God and His people. But now we don't want *anyone*, especially ourselves, to come between a person and the Spirit of Christ within them!" He paused a moment before he added, "When we met together last week, we each repented for having been

deceived. And, this past Sunday all of us asked our congregations for their forgiveness for having deceived them through our ignorance.”

Joy as well as pride in these men welled in Jack so much that he had to stand and shout, “Hallelujah!!!” All the men stood up, many with arms lifted high. Some then fell to their knees sobbing as praises went up to Father God. None had ever experienced in their ministry such a victorious savoring of His love in their midst. Simon began to fervently sing an old worship song as others joined in: “*I have decided to follow Jesus... Though none go with me, still I will follow... The cross before me, the world behind me... No turning back, NO TURNING BACK.*” All fear was gone as hearts were filled with such love for their Lord that they’d willingly lay their lives down for Him. (Revelation 12:11)

As they sat down again, one of the younger men asked, “Jack, exactly what is your purpose in the Kingdom?” Delighted with the question, Jack responded with a broad smile, “My gifting is an evangelist. I love to see people embrace our Father’s Covenant which Jesus made possible. I stay alongside those who are born into Him until I can disciple shepherds who will take my place in eldering.” (Titus 1:5)

“Did you have to quit your job to do this?” Alex inquired. “I recognized God’s gift of evangelism at work in me shortly after my wife and I went to a Hebraic Restoration seminar 16 years ago,” Jack rejoined. “Even though I’ve been retired for five years, I began my ministry while I was still working. Remember, as with the earliest Church, elders weren’t hired—they were honored and provided for because they were serving in their later years.” (1Timothy 5:17,18) Jack went on, “You may remember from *Pastoring By Elders* that pagan Hellenism introduced the paid professional clergy system.”

“I agree with the point you’re making,” Dave nodded. “I’m grieved how detrimental the Hellenist influence on Christendom has been in raising up a professional clergy class—especially since that whole system has hindered us from developing mature ambassadors in our congregations on behalf of our Father. (2Corinthians 5:18-20) All we’ve produced for centuries are passive, self-serving spectators!”

Simon added, “I confess to God and to you all that I once took pride in having one of the largest congregations in town. But now I’m so ashamed of having produced such passivity among hundreds of Sunday morning pewsitters. I promise before God and each of you that things are going to change, or I’m gone!” The younger men noted the intensity of spirit in these two older men and wanted the same determination.

Jack asked pointedly, “Have you all noticed how you’ve set aside your creedal differences in order to be true to our Lord Jesus?” Looking around at each other, they nodded. Jack went on, “You’re each detaching from putting your faith in the man-made creeds which have divided Christianity for centuries, and are now experiencing what the first followers of Jesus meant by ‘doctrine.’ It’s a *way of life* that flows out of your steadfast determination to trust the Spirit of Jesus within you to guide you. (Ephesians 5:8-10) And, it’s your love for Jesus and for one another which unites His followers to cooperate together in extending the Kingdom!”

A time of heartfelt prayer closed their gathering, with a plan for Jack to meet with them regularly to help them make the Hebraic foundations their way of life so they could in turn help others.