

THE KINGDOM MY PASSION...Dennis Baldwin

At 55 years old Michael J Fox, an actor and nominee of 18 Emmys is also the father of 4 and happily married to actress Tracy Pollan. Michael, a Canadian born actor who starred in the NBC TV version of "Family Ties" in the early 1980's and came to us as Alex P. Keaton. Michael has Parkinson's disease. He was diagnosed 26 years ago. He seems to be beating all the odds as he continues to live and function much longer than many others with Parkinson's have been able to do. Much of that is attributable to the right mix of medications. One of the 6 Rules for Surviving Adversity according to Michael is *hope*. He defines it in this way: "To me, hope is *informed optimism*".

A Bible word associated with optimism might be "zeal". Isaiah 9:7 indicates that when it comes to the future reign of God's Son on the throne of David, "*There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, On the throne of David and over his kingdom, To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness From then on and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this.*". It is because of God's "zeal" that we can look to the future with "*informed optimism*".

To be uninformed, misinformed, or otherwise ignorant (*as it is translated in the KJV*) concerning those who are asleep in their graves in death is to lack the kind of optimism which will comfort us in our grief. To be a "*stranger to the covenants of God*" is to be "*without informed optimism*", yea to be without the God of all comfort in a dangerous world full of doubt and insecurity.

Even if it was written in Scripture long ago, you can be sure it's written for us. God wants the combination of his steady, constant calling and warm, personal counsel in Scripture to come to characterize us, keeping us alert for whatever he will do next. Romans 15:4 (MSG)

When all this starts to happen, up on your feet. Stand tall with your heads high. Help is on the way!" Luke 21:28 (MSG)

When you go to church and cannot there hear the "gospel of the kingdom"; when we as a society are drowning in information but starving for wisdom; what does one do?

The Bible offers a plethora of topics for our concern:

- The worldwide proclamation of the gospel
- The Abomination of Desolation

- Revelation of the Antichrist/Great tribulation
- Return of Jesus to the Earth/Destruction of Man of Sin
- First Resurrection/Giving Immortality to Saints
- Establishment of God's Kingdom/Thousand Year Reign
- Satan Bound for 1,000 years/Peace
- Process of Putting all things under Christ's Feet
- Ruling with a "rod of iron"
- Resurrection of "rest of the dead"
- Final subjection of all rule and all authority
- Perfect Universe/No more curse/No more death

Confronted with all these issues where will we find the answers we need? Let's not let our "passion" grow cold! We need a good infusion of "informed optimism". Zeal can be a negative quality if not used in the right way.

Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for *their* salvation.² For I testify about them that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge. Romans 10:1-2 (NASB)

THE KINGDOM—MY PASSION

The gospels tell us that Joseph of Arimathea was a counselor, a good man and just. (Luke 23:50) It is thought that he was a prominent member of the Council that met in Matthew 26:59. It is also thought that he did not consent to the counsel and their deeds. (Luke 23:51) He was also a disciple of Jesus, but secretly, for fear of the Jews. (John 19:38) He boldly went to Pilate and begged the body of Jesus. After Jesus was taken down from the cross Joseph, together with the assistance of Nicodemus, wrapped Jesus in linen clothes and laid him in Joseph's own new tomb. Nicodemus was the one you will recall who came to Jesus by night and it was to him that Jesus said, "You must be born again". (John 3:7) It was also to Nicodemus that Jesus said, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believeth in him might not perish but have everlasting life". (John 3:16)

Let's get back to Joseph. We are told by both Mark and Luke that he waited for the kingdom of God. (Mark 15:43/Luke 23:51) The fact that he waited for the Kingdom of God tells us first of all it was something worthy of waiting for and also that the kingdom had not yet *come*. With the help of Paul, we learn that hope prompts us to expect something we do not have and cannot see; (an "informed optimism" if you will) causing us to wait patiently for the fulfillment of our hope. Joseph waited for a kingdom which he did not see.

Paul said that if we "hope for what we do not see then do we with patience wait for it". (Rom. 8:24-25) Joseph was waiting for the kingdom of God, a kingdom which had not yet been established. Now, the question I will ask you is; "Are you patiently waiting for the kingdom of God"? Is it your hope?

The kingdom was an important subject to Jesus. He spoke of it often. We would do well to examine the gospels, and for that matter the entire Bible for more information regarding God's kingdom which is yet to come, making sure we begin to wait for it ourselves with an "informed optimism".

After observing John the Baptist training his disciples how to pray, the disciples asked Jesus to teach *them* to pray. (Luke 11:1) The first request Jesus included in what we call, "The Lord's Prayer", was; "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven". (Matt. 6:9) There is evidently something about the coming of God's Kingdom that merits our passion for its presence. As I understand it *God's will* will then be carried out in the earth as it is in heaven now. When one gets the passion for the coming of God's Kingdom he can truly begin to pray for the kingdom that Joseph waited for, to come. It is important to notice that the Kingdom of God is a kingdom to come. It is not a kingdom to have to travel beyond the blue to see and experience because it is *coming*.

So important was the message of the Kingdom of God that Jesus taught his disciples, to "seek it *first*". (Matt. 6:33) This seeking is in the context of worrying about food, water and clothing. It is more important to seek the Kingdom of God than to be anxious about what we will eat, drink or wear. I should think that those three things are very important; how about you? But, in our personal hierarchy of important things, we need to put our search for the Kingdom of God and His righteousness first.

Jesus' ministry followed a tremendous promise made to his mother in the announcement of his birth by Gabriel the Archangel. "The Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end." (Luke 1:32-33) I should think if I was promised a son

who would fulfill this promise, I would make sure he had that information as he grew up. Jesus no doubt put all this together with his personal knowledge of the scriptures and the revelations given to him by God his Father and discovered he had a promising future. No wonder the Hebrew writer wrote of the “joy that was set before Jesus”. (Heb 12:2) The Kingdom of God was important to him.

Jesus knew early on that he was God’s son; (Luke 2:49) and as he no doubt pondered that reign and thought on David’s words in Psalm 2:7-8, the excitement and the passion must have thrived.

Fast forward in Jesus’ life and hear the observation in Hebrews 12:2. Think of how he must have felt as he read and pondered the implications in Psalm 2:7-8. That Psalm related directly to him.

Psalm 2:7-8 (KJV) I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou *art* my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give *thee* the heathen *for* thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth *for* thy possession.

Jesus knew that he was the “seed of Abraham” and that God had made a promise to bless all nations of the earth in Abraham and his seed. (Gen. 26:4) He also knew that God had made a “land promise” to Abraham and his seed, (Gen 13:15) which David referred to in Psalm 2:8; where God promised to give “his Son” the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession. With that knowledge Jesus could say assuredly, “Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth.” (Matt. 5:5)

He could also promise to his disciples, “and just as My Father has granted Me a kingdom, I grant you that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and you will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. (Luke 22:29-30 (NASB) He knew that the government referred to in Isaiah 9:6 would be on *his* shoulders and he also shared in the zeal of the Lord of Hosts and the excitement of the fulfillment of this promise.

Isaiah 9:6-7 (NASB) For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; There will be no end to the increase of *His* government or of peace, On the throne of David and over his kingdom, To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness From then on and forevermore. *The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this.* Is it any wonder that Jesus would pray for the Father to fulfill the glorious promises which were his before the world was created?

Jesus looked forward to being the king mentioned in Isaiah 32:1 who would “reign in righteousness” together with his disciples being among the princes who would rule in judgment judging the twelve tribes of Israel. Jesus said to those who had followed him: “Truly I say to you, that you who have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.” **Matthew 19:28 (NASB)**

Jesus knew that he was David’s Lord who was to be invited by God to “sit on his right hand til his enemies were made to be his footstool,” (Psalm 110:1) and that he was the nobleman in the parable who would go to a far country and receive for himself a kingdom and return. (Luke 19:12)

Knowing the scriptures he also knew that he was the “son of man” who would come with the clouds of heaven; be brought near to the “Ancient of Days” and be presented the right to dominion, glory and a kingdom. (Daniel 7:14)

He expected to be the stone which would smite the image of world governments on its feet and crush the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold and put an end to all these governments. (Daniel 2:44-45) Jesus fully expected to reign over a kingdom set up by the “God of heaven” which would last forever. He expected to reign over the “kingdom and dominion and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heavens” and expected that kingdom to be an everlasting kingdom and that all nations would serve and obey *him*.” Daniel 7:27. Can you now begin to understand the “joy that was set before Jesus”: (Heb. 12:2) and why he was able to look beyond the suffering and see the future glory: the glory that Peter spoke about:

“Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the *grace that should come* unto you: Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.” **1 Peter 1:10-11 (KJV)**

Jesus spoke of that glory: “**Matthew 25:31-32 (ASV)** But when the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the angels with him, then shall he sit on the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all the nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.” He expected to be the King who would say to those on his right hand, “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world”. **Matthew 25:34 (ASV)** Jesus knew that all this would occur when he sits on the throne of his father David and reigns over the house of Jacob. (Luke 1:32-33) That’s why in the parable of Matthew 25

he said in verse 31, "But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne."

The disciples wondered when all these wonderful things Jesus had spoken to them about would come to be. "What shall be the sign of thy coming and of the end of the world?" Matthew 24:3. Jesus went on to tell them about various signs which would indicate the sureness of his coming. These included false Christ's, mass deception, wars and rumors thereof, famines, pestilences, earthquakes and abounding iniquity. (Matt. 24) Jesus also pointed to the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet as a sign and, like Daniel, Jesus prophesied of a great time of trouble/tribulation which there had never been the like. (Matt. 24:21/Daniel 12:1) The disciples also needed reminding of how they would be treated and hated of all nations for his name's sake. (Ver.9) False Christs would arise, he said, and deceive a lot of people. (Ver.24) Things would get so bad that if those days were not shortened, there would be no flesh saved. (Ver.22)

However, in spite of all this, Jesus told them plainly, "No man knows that day or hour, no not even the angels in heaven, only the Father knows". (Matthew 24) They would ask him the same question again in a different way. "Will you *at this time* restore again the Kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6) Gently, Jesus responded to their question by reminding them again that this was something that the Father had put in his own power. (Ver.7) They; he reminded them; would be empowered to be the witnesses (Ver. 8) which were needed to get the "gospel of the kingdom" into all the world, the world wide proclamation of which would usher in the end of the world and that kingdom he told his disciples to seek first. (Matt. 24:14)

While this will truly be the end of a lot of things it will also be the beginning of some wonderful changes in this world. The inhabitants will not say "I'm sick". (Isaiah 33:24) There will be no more death, or sorrow, or crying, or pain. (Rev. 21:4) There will be no more wars. (Psalm 46:9) The munitions of war will be remade into pruning hooks.

Isaiah 2:4 (MSG) He'll settle things fairly between nations. He'll make things right between many peoples. They'll turn their swords into shovels, their spears into hoes. No more will nation fight nation; they won't play war anymore.

Isn't that a beautiful picture? John said "There will no longer be any curse". (Rev. 22:3) I draw from this statement that the curse in the Garden (where God cursed the ground because of man), (Gen. 3:17) will no longer infest the ground. The ground will no longer bring forth thorns and thistles and man will not live by the sweat of his brow any more.

Zechariah said that in the day when the Lord will be king over all the earth, "People will live in it, and there will no longer be a curse, for Jerusalem will dwell in security."

Zechariah 14:11 (NASB) God said,

"I will also rejoice in Jerusalem and be glad in My people; And there will no longer be heard in her The voice of weeping and the sound of crying." **Isaiah 65:19 (NASB)** Just think how much improved the world would be today if the nations of the world were at peace with Jerusalem. Is it any wonder that David advised others to "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem; they shall prosper that love thee." (Psalm 122:6) When God rejoices in Jerusalem and is glad among His people and the knowledge of the Lord covers the earth as the waters cover the sea; peace like a river will flow out over the hills and valleys of this old world. The earth renewed because of God's plan will bless its inhabitants with health and happiness. Health and peace will be the rule of the day rather than the exception.

Habakkuk 2:14 (KJV) For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.

Isaiah 11:9 (ASV) They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of Jehovah, as the waters cover the sea.

Habakkuk the prophet resounded with the promise that the earth will one day be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD as the waters cover the sea". Isaiah added that when the earth is filled with the knowledge of the glory of Jehovah as the waters cover the sea, "they will not hurt nor destroy in all of God's Holy Mountain." That being the stone that Daniel prophesied would strike world governments on the feet, grind all nations to powder, like the chaff of the summer threshing floor which the wind carries away and that stone which would become a great mountain and fill the whole of the earth. Are you beginning to get excited about the joy that was set before Jesus our Savior? We can get a taste of that glory today as we examine the promises made. I think I can begin to understand the kingdom plan in a small way, having tasted the good Word of God and the powers of the world to come myself. (Heb. 6:5) Having tasted the good Word of God like Joseph of Arimathaea, I too plan on waiting for that Kingdom which Joseph waited for and anticipate the glorious reign of the Son of God, Jesus our Messiah, on the throne of David, when he reigns over the house of Jacob forever.