

10th Annual Word of the Kingdom Conference
Sunday February 15th 2015
Back to the Future

1). Heb 6:1 ¶ *Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, 2 of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. 3 And this we will do if God permits.*

a). These 3 verses from Hebrews Chapter 6 formed the basis of the message that brought our first annual Word of the Kingdom Conference to a close – a message that encouraged us to do just that which the verses say – to go on to perfection, to go on to maturity, building on that which we already knew, the elementary principles of Christ, and making sure that our desire to know the truth would permit the Lord to take us on this remarkable journey.

b). And now, 10 years on, it is possible to look back and see the faithfulness of God in the honoring of His word as we have continued the pursuit of His coming Kingdom, continuing to go to perfection.

c). And so as we go back to look at where we began 10 years ago and then trace our journey to the present we can find encouragement to continue our journey into the future in anticipation of the Millennial Kingdom of Christ.

2). It has been remarkable over these years to have experienced the scriptures fulfilled in our midst – Joh 16:13 *"However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.*

a). There is not one of us who has not continued to experience this work of the Holy Spirit as He reveals to us the truth of scripture concerning the coming 7th Day as it applies to Israel, the 'Church' and the Gentile nations.

b). We continue to see the Lord leading us through the scriptures in just the way that He says in - Isa 28:9 ¶ *"Whom will he teach knowledge? And whom will he make to understand the message? Those just weaned from milk? Those just drawn from the breasts? 10 For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept, Line upon line, line upon line, Here a little, there a little."*

And we continue to be amazed at how the scriptures fit together and how by putting all of the pieces together the complete picture of God's plans and purposes becomes clearer and clearer.

c). It has been remarkable to experience how the Lord has taught us to do that seen in - 1Co 2:13 *These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.*

d). And that seen in - Lu 24:27 *And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.*

e). The scriptures being opened to us after the fashion that we see in - Isa 46:9 *Remember the former things of old, For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, 10 Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things that are not yet done, Saying, 'My counsel shall stand, And I will do all My pleasure,'*

f). It is I think a self-evident truth that our understanding of the scriptures is exponentially greater than it was 10 years ago, and yet paradoxically as our understanding grows so does the realization that we have still only scratched the surface of the depths that the scriptures contain. Some insight into their depth can come from these verses in - Job 11:7 ¶ *"Can you search out the deep things of God? Can you find out the limits of the Almighty? 8 They are higher than heaven-what can you do? Deeper than Sheol-what can you know? 9 Their measure is longer than the earth And broader than the sea.*

g). And yet despite the depth there is no limit to that which the Lord will show us as we continue to press onwards - 1Co 2:9 *But as it is written: Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him." 10 But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. 11 For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God.*

h). But here is the thing, in the midst of this incredible promise we can also find the moment of our greatest danger - the scriptures tell us - 1Co 1:22 *For Jews request a sign, and Greeks [Gentiles - us] seek after wisdom;*

i). The ministry at Christ's first advent produced sign after sign as we can witness most readily through the Book of John and yet despite being given the very thing which they requested, despite the very thing that was before

their eyes continually, what do we find? - Mt 12:38 ¶ *Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered, saying, "Teacher, we want to see a sign from You."*

j). What we see here with regards to Israel should give us pause for thought – we seek after wisdom in relation to Christ and His Kingdom and this wisdom is a treasure beyond value - Col 2:1 ¶ *For I want you to know what a great conflict I have for you and those in Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh, 2 that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, and attaining to all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ, 3 in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.* And isn't it interesting that these verses are written not just to the Colossians but also to 'those in Laodicea'.

k). That which God has been faithfully opening to us from the scriptures is no less than the revelation of His Son, the firstborn over all creation – bringing about the renewing of our mind so as to be in line with His mind that we may choose to act according to the scriptures – Php 2:5 *Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, 6 who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, 7 but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.*

Col 3:9 Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, 10 and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him, 11 where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all. 12 ¶ Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; 13 bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. 14 But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. 15 And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful. 16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

l). However, to relate to one another as we see in these verses from Colossians is not automatic, but is rather a matter of intentional practice as we progress towards maturity, as we understand the interrelated nature of our relationship with Christ, with one another; the nature of our journey together

and that which awaits us at the Judgment Seat, as we seek after the wisdom that will enable us to be successful there.

3). Thinking of the enormity of that which God has done for us through His Word and thinking about the extraordinary promises and the ever present dangers will inevitably lead us to a Book that we have studied in detail twice already – a Book that finds itself placed between 2 remarkable references to the church found there in Acts and Revelation – it is the Book of Ephesians.

a). And if we remember any of the details from our previous studies we will recall that the ‘church’ in Ephesus was really very unique in the enormous blessing God had given to them.

b). Ephesus, we will recall, was a port city on the Mediterranean Sea in an area known as Asia Minor, located in modern day Turkey. This whole region of Asia Minor had received thorough teaching and was the recipient of not only the scripturally recorded letter of Paul to the Ephesians, but also the letters of 1 and 2 Peter – 1Pe 1:1 ¶ *Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To the pilgrims of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, 2 elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ:*

c). And of course they also received the Apostle John’s Revelation of Jesus Christ – Re 1:11 saying, *"I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last," and, "What you see, write in a book and send it to the seven churches which are in Asia: to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamos, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea."*

d). From this alone we would realize that we are dealing with a group of Christians who were well grounded in the word of truth, who had been going on to maturity and had every reason to continue to do so.

e). And we might also note that God was not tardy in trying to get their attention and provide them with encouragement and warnings.

f). Paul’s personal involvement with Ephesus is recorded in Acts Chapters 18 and 19. And we find in Acts 18 that having come to Ephesus he leaves Priscilla and Aquila there to minister - Ac 18:18 ¶ *So Paul still remained a good while. Then he took leave of the brethren and sailed for Syria, and Priscilla and Aquila were with him. He had his hair cut off at Cenchrea, for he had taken a vow. 19 And he came to Ephesus, and left them there; but he himself entered the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews. 20 When they asked him to stay a longer time with them, he did not consent, 21 but took leave of them, saying, "I must by all means keep*

this coming feast in Jerusalem; but I will return again to you, God willing." And he sailed from Ephesus.

g). Paul himself returned later to Asia, and having his center in Ephesus, spent some three years teaching the mysteries that had been entrusted to him – Ac 19:8 ¶ *And he went into the synagogue and spoke boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading concerning the things of the kingdom of God. 9 But when some were hardened and did not believe, but spoke evil of the Way before the multitude, he departed from them and withdrew the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus. 10 And this continued for two years, so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.*

h). Notice from v8 the subject of Paul's teaching, 'the kingdom of God'

i). And note from v9 that 'all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks'.

j). Then following his release from prison in Rome, about 62AD, Paul then began to travel once again and it is while in Macedonia that he writes his first letter to Timothy - 1Ti 1:1 ¶ *Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the commandment of God our Savior and the Lord Jesus Christ, our hope, 2 To Timothy, a true son in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord. 3 As I urged you when I went into Macedonia--remain in Ephesus that you may charge some that they teach no other doctrine, 4 nor give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which cause disputes rather than godly edification which is in faith.*

k). And where do we find Timothy? In Ephesus and where does Paul want him to stay? In Ephesus.

l). And the reason Paul wants Timothy there is 'to charge some that they teach no other doctrine', nor be sidetracked by 'fables and endless genealogies'.

m). As we look at the experience of this remarkable group of people it is difficult not to draw a parallel with our own experience as we have received an extraordinary quantity and quality of scriptural teaching over the years.

4). So, let's look at the bookends between which Paul's letter to the Ephesians is framed. The first of these we find in - Acts 20 where we find Paul again passing through Asia and although not stopping in Ephesus he calls the elders of the church to him at Miletus to deliver what would be his last face to face admonition to them Ac 20:17 ¶ *From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called for the elders of the church. 18 And when they had come to him, he said to them: "You know, from the first day that I came to Asia, in what manner I always lived among you, 19 "serving the Lord with all humility, with many tears and trials which happened to*

me by the plotting of the Jews; 20 "how I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house, 21 "testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. 22 "And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there, 23 "except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me. 24 "But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God. 25 "And indeed, now I know that you all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, will see my face no more. 26 "Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men. 27 "For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God. 28 "Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. 29 "For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. 30 "Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. 31 "Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears. 32 "So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified..... 37 Then they all wept freely, and fell on Paul's neck and kissed him, 38 sorrowing most of all for the words which he spoke, that they would see his face no more. And they accompanied him to the ship.

a). So what do we see here? In the midst of those who had been given a mature understanding of the Word of the Kingdom, in the midst of those who had received exemplary teaching there would be those who would rise up 'speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after themselves' – and this very thing we have seen within these walls and in other places amongst others in pursuit of the Kingdom.

b). And then, addressing the church in Ephesus in the Book of Revelation we find - Re 2:4 "Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love.

A verse with an even more chilling commentary in - 2Ti 1:13 *Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. 14 That good thing which was committed to you, keep by the Holy Spirit who dwells in us. 15 ¶ This you know, that all those in Asia have turned away from me, among whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes.*

c). Not only then do we see the church in Ephesus having left its first love, but also all those in Asia turning away from Paul, turning away from the Word of the Kingdom, the gospel he brought to them.

d). And what we should realize is that leaving their first love and turning away from Paul is to go to a 'second' love, to turn from Paul to something or someone else – there can be no spiritual vacuum here – to turn from the truth is to turn to the lie. To leave the first love is to embrace the love of something else.

e). The inevitability of this action is the work of our enemy and his purpose is clear – and it appears from what we read in Revelation 2:4 and 2 Timothy 1:13-15 that with respect to this group of Kingdom believers in Ephesus he had accomplished his purpose.

5). Now with regards to the similarity between us and the Ephesians we would all pray that it would stop with the attaining of the level of spiritual maturity we have seen; and yet there have been those who have risen up speaking perverse things and we would be foolish not to realize that we are susceptible to leaving our first love, the potential to turn away is always there. Our natural disposition to seek after wisdom could take us in a complete wrong direction unless we cling to the scriptures - Jas 3:15 *This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic. 16 For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there.*

a). So what might we find in the scriptures themselves that would keep us on the right track? Well, the list is endless, although we have a glimpse through the word of Paul to Timothy, *Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.* There are however 3 things in particular that we will look at with regard to this from the Book of Ephesians that will help us.

b). Remembering then, that which the Ephesians had been taught and the level of understanding they had, evidenced by the content of the Book as a whole, let's note how Paul prays for them in - Eph 1:15 ¶ *Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, 16 do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers: 17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, 18 the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, 19 and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power 20 which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead*

and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, 21 far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. 22 And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, 23 which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

Here then is a prayer for those established in the truth, to continue to have the truth revealed to them, for their eyes to be continually opened, for them to continue to understand and continue to know - Heb 10:35 *Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. 36 For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise: 37 "For yet a little while, And He who is coming will come and will not tarry. 38 Now the just shall live by faith; But if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him." 39 But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul.*

c). Not only should this be the constant prayer for ourselves, but also the prayer we should daily be offering for one another.

d). Now look how Paul prays for the Ephesians in - Eph 3:14 ¶ *For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, 15 from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, 16 that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, 17 that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height-- 19 to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. 20 Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, 21 to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.*

And that which we see here presupposes an answer to the prayer in Chapter 1 as it is only through receiving that asked for in that prayer from Chapter 1 that the Ephesians would be ‘strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man’ that Christ would ‘dwell in your hearts through faith’, that they might be ‘filled with all the fullness of God’.

e). Again this should form a constant prayer for ourselves and for each other, remembering of course that the answers to these prayers do not drop from the ether but from our proper, continual, consistent, resolute engagement with the word of God – remembering again - Ro 10:17 *So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*

f). This then is the pathway to maturity that will lead us to know the love of Christ and to demonstrate that love towards one another, it is the progression that we see in – 2Pe 1:5 ¶ *But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, 6 to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, 7 to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love.*

A progression that must be seen in connection with - Jas 3:17 *But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.*

g). And should we follow this progression not only will it provide us with what we need to accomplish that which we will look at next, but it will also provide us with the motivation and determination to do so on a continuous basis - Eph 6:10 ¶ *Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. 11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. 13 Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. 14 Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, 15 and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; 16 above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. 17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; 18 praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints—*

And again, our being strong in the Lord and in the power of His might is not a nebulous affair, but rather the result of having the eyes of our understanding enlightened, knowing the hope of His calling and what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints; so that we are strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, being filled with the fullness of God.

h). Only in this way may we take up the whole armor of God so that we can withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand – putting on and never taking off the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the preparation of the gospel of peace, taking above all the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And this we are to do while praying always – praying the very things we have seen in Ephesians Chapters 1 and 3 and being watchful to this end.

i). To go back to the original recipients of this letter for a moment we must conclude, given the evidence of Revelation 2:4, that at some point they stepped out of this process either by embracing the lie and/or by deceiving themselves for whatever reason that might be. But, to be sure it will have begun by not taking seriously the first warning seen in the Book of Hebrews - Heb 2:1 ¶ *Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away.*

6). If, 10 years on, we aren't at least as diligent as we were 10 years ago about rightly dividing the word of truth, if we have not progressed toward loving each other more than we did then, if we have unforgiveness, bitterness and envy that we want to hang on to then we are already drifting – but don't be discouraged, today is the first day of the rest of our journey, forgiveness is a breath away and glory awaits – our race is not run till we hit the finish line - Heb 12:1 ¶ *Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,*

a). That which we see through the experience of the Ephesians does not have to be ours collectively, but on an individual basis it can so easily be – where and how and why we continue to seek after wisdom will determine it all – Pr 3:13 ¶ *Happy is the man who finds wisdom, And the man who gains understanding; 14 For her proceeds are better than the profits of silver, And her gain than fine gold. 15 She is more precious than rubies, And all the things you may desire cannot compare with her. 16 Length of days is in her right hand, In her left hand riches and honor. 17 Her ways are ways of pleasantness, And all her paths are peace. 18 She is a tree of life to those who take hold of her, And happy are all who retain her.*