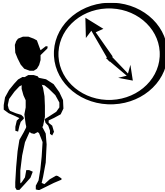


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Time of Assembly



Sunday:

Bible Study	9:00 a.m.
Worship	10:00 a.m.
Worship	5:00 p.m.
(every other week)	

Wednesday:

Bible Study	6:30 p. m.
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The Church in Prophecy

By Jerry C. Brewer

Over the period of many centuries, the process of revealing God's eternal purpose in the church was gradual. As parents impart knowledge to their children in portions and parts from infancy to adulthood, God dealt with the human race in the revelation of His eternal purpose. Fed on milk when they are infants, children are given stronger food as they mature. In this fashion, God gradually unfolded his kingdom to man in diverse portions. Accomplishing this tutoring process through the promises to the patriarchs and the inspired utterances of the prophets, God dealt with humanity as humanity was able to understand His purpose.

The revelation of God's eternal purpose began after the fall and was first contained in the promise of a One who would bruise the head of the serpent (Genesis 3:15). It was reiterated in the promise to Abraham that "*in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed,*" (Genesis 12:3) and repeated in further promises concerning his seed. "*As for me, behold my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations. Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee...And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations, for an everlasting covenant*" (Genesis 17:4-5, 7).

That "everlasting covenant" is the "church" the "*kingdom which cannot be moved*" (Hebrews 12:28), and existed in the promises that God renewed to Isaac at Beersheba, (Genesis 26:24) and to Jacob at Bethel (Genesis 28:14). The prophecies of the old covenant all pointed to Jesus Christ and the establishment of his kingdom (Hebrews 1:1-2). Without fully understanding the things of which they spoke, the prophets, moved by the Holy Spirit, foretold the coming of the

kingdom and the time and place of its establishment (I Peter 1:10-12).

While Israel was in Babylonian captivity God foretold His everlasting kingdom through the prophet Daniel. The second chapter of Daniel recounts a dream of Nebuchadnezzar, which he could not remember. Calling his sorcerers, magicians, and astrologers, he commanded that they tell him not only the dream but the interpretation thereof.

When they were unable to do so he decreed that they should be destroyed. But Daniel intervened and asked that the king's decree be rescinded. He asked the king for time and promised that he would make known the dream and its interpretation. With his request granted, Daniel related the dream and what it meant.

“Thou, O king, sawest, and behold a great image. This great image, whose brightness was excellent, stood before thee; and the form thereof was terrible. This image's head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, His legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay. Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth. This is the dream, and we will tell the interpretation thereof before the king. Thou, O king, art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, strength, and glory. And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath he given into thine hand and hath made thee ruler over them all. Thou art this head of gold. And after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee, and another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth. And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron: forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things: and as iron that breaketh all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise. And whereas thou sawest the feet and toes, part of potters' clay, and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as thou sawest the iron mixed with miry clay. And as the toes of the feet were part of iron, and part of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken. And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men: but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay.

"And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever. Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream is certain,

and the interpretation thereof sure" (Daniel 2:31-45).

The various parts of the image, Daniel said, were four kingdoms of men and the head of gold represented the Babylonian kingdom over which Nebuchadnezzar reigned. The dream depicted the Babylonian Empire's fall, and the rise and fall of the Medo-Persian Empire represented by the breast and arms of silver. The thighs and belly of brass were the empire of Alexander, and the legs of iron and the feet of iron and clay were the Roman Empire. The church, "the everlasting kingdom," was represented as a small stone "*cut out of the mountain without hands*" which consumed the kingdoms of men -- a picture of the universal nature of the church. Then, for the first time in the Old Testament, a time frame was given for this to come to pass.

"And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms and it shall stand forever" (Daniel 2:44).

"In the days of these kings" referred to the last great kingdom represented by the image, the Roman Empire, and specified when the kingdom of God would be established. The Grecian empire fell about 31 B.C. and the remnants of the Roman empire fell in approximately 1453 A.D.

Therefore the kingdom which Daniel foretold was established between those dates. But a more specific time for its establishment came to Daniel in a later vision in the first year of the reign of Belshazzar. *"I saw in the night visions, and behold one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed" (Daniel 7:13-14).*

The events seen by Daniel in chapter seven would signal the establishment of the everlasting kingdom which Daniel described in Nebuchadnezzar's dream.

1. The Son of man, Jesus Christ, would come to the Ancient of Days [God] with the clouds of heaven.
2. When he came to the Ancient of Days he would be given dominion, and glory, and a kingdom. The New Testament records the fulfillment of the things Daniel saw in his vision. *"And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven" (Acts 1:9-11).*

Christ was given dominion after He (“*one like unto the Son of man*”) ascended to the Father (“*came to the Ancient of days*”) and “*they brought him near before him*” (cf. Psalms 24, His triumphal entry).

The kingdom was established after Christ’s death, burial, resurrection, and ascension, and on the day of Pentecost following the death of Christ, Peter recounted those events and crowned his sermon with the proclamation of Christ’s kingship. “*This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we are all witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear ... Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye crucified, both Lord and Christ*” (Acts 2:32-33, 36).

Those things were done when Rome ruled the world. Rome was the last great kingdom represented by feet of clay mixed with iron of the image of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream and the establishment of the everlasting kingdom of God took place “*in the days of those kings.*” True to Daniel’s prophecy, the Chaldean kingdom fell to the Medo-Persian Empire of Darius and Cyrus when they conquered Babylon, the fact of which is confirmed by Josephus.

And this is the end of the posterity of King Nebuchadnezzar, as history informs us; but when Babylon was taken by Darius, and when he, with his kinsman Cyrus, had put an end to the dominion of the Babylonians, he was sixty-two years old...Moreover, he took Daniel the prophet and honoured him very greatly, and kept him with him; for he was one of the three presidents whom he sent over his 360 provinces... (Antiquities of The Jews, Book X, Ch. XI, p. 324).

Josephus also chronicled the rise of the Macedonian Empire of Alexander the Great in 335 B.C., (Bk. XI, Ch. VIII, pp. 348-351), and the rise of Rome following the breakup of Alexander’s empire, (Bk. XIV, Ch. IV, pp. 418-420). These were the great kingdoms foretold by Daniel and in the days of the Roman kings Jesus was born, conducted his personal ministry, died, was resurrected and ascended to the Father, and established His kingdom, precisely fulfilling Daniel's prophecy.

Daniel foretold the coming of the kingdom in the time of the Roman kings, which was a general span of time. But Isaiah's prophecy was more specific, pinpointing not only the time but the place of its establishment as well. “*And it shall come to pass in the last days that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths; for out of Zion shall go forth the law and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people, and they shall*

beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more’ (Isaiah 2:2-4).

The figurative nature of Isaiah's prophecy has a number of parallels with Daniel's which aid in our understanding of both.

1. Isaiah said, “*In the last days.*” Daniel said, “*In the days of these kings.*”
2. Isaiah said, “*the mountain of the Lord's house*” would be “*exalted above the hills,*” distinguishing between the Lord's kingdom and those of men. Daniel said the stone cut out without hands (indicating its divine origin) consumed the kingdoms of men and became a great mountain.
3. “*The mountain of the Lord's house*” is figurative of the great strength and power of the kingdom of God and that it would, “*exalted above the hills*” contrasts this divine kingdom of the Creator of the heavens and the earth with the nations of men (“the hills”).

According to Isaiah's prophecy, the kingdom would be established “*in the last days*” and “*out of Zion shall go forth the law and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.*” That last phrase is a Hebraism, a Hebrew literary device stating the same thing in two different ways. The law that would go forth from Zion is the same thing as “*the word of the Lord*” and “Zion” is a designation for Jerusalem. That narrowed the time to a specific place -- Jerusalem.

That it would come to pass “*in the last days*” narrows the time frame to the last kingdom depicted by the great image of Nebuchadnezzar's dream -- the time of the Roman Empire. Joel said “*In the last days*” the Lord would pour out his Spirit on all flesh and in Jerusalem Peter quoted Joel's prophecy on Pentecost, saying the events of that day fulfilled it. Isaiah said the kingdom would be established in “*the last days*” and Peter said, “*This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel*” (Acts 2:16-21). Isaiah's prophecy comports with Joel's. When Joel's was fulfilled, the “*mountain of the Lord's house was established in the top of the mountains*” and from Zion went forth the law and the “*word of the Lord from Jerusalem.*”

The church existed in the precise prophecies of the Old Testament, just as it had existed in God's purpose from eternity, and in the promises made to the patriarchs.

