

The Kingdom of Dan. 2: 44

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Is Christ's church synonymous with the kingdom in Dan. 2: 44? In other words, has the prophecy in the second chapter of Daniel concerning the setting up of the kingdom of God been fulfilled? Let us quote the passage:

"And in the days of those kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed, nor shall the sovereignty thereof be left to another people; but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever."

The kingdoms spoken of in this prophecy are evidently the kingdoms of Babylonia, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. The prophecy requires that the kingdom of God be established during the days of those kings or kingdoms. Those kingdoms did not flourish at the same time. But if God's kingdom is set up during the existence of any one of them, the prophecy has been fulfilled. The kingdom evidently was to be set up during the reach of years from the birth of the kingdom of Babylonia to the downfall or death of the Roman Empire.

In Dan. 2: 45 we have the following: "Forasmuch as thou sawest that a 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."

We learn from these passages quoted from Daniel: (1) God will set up a kingdom. (2) It will be set up during the span of years allotted to the four kingdoms mentioned. (3) This kingdom shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms. (4) This kingdom shall be set up without the sword. (5) The kingdom shall stand forever.

Now, can we show that the church or the kingdom of Christ now upon the earth answers to the above description? If we can, the proposition is made out. Some time during the reign of Augustus Cæsar, the king of the Roman Empire, John the Baptist was born, and some thirty years later began his work. Matt. 3: 1, 2 says of him: "And in those days cometh John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, saying, Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Now, then, Mark (1: 14, 15) says: "Now after John was delivered up, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe in the gospel." Now, I think we can say *we know* the kingdom spoken of by Jesus is identical with the kingdom spoken of by Daniel in Dan. 2: 44. Both Jesus and John gave us to understand that the time had come when God's kingdom should be established. John evidently was speaking as directed by the Holy Spirit. Jesus certainly had the Spirit without measure. Did John or Jesus ever say they were mistaken as to the time the kingdom was to be set up? or did they ever say that, owing to the condition of affairs, they had decided to change the time for the establishing of the kingdom? or did they say they had decided to substitute something else for the kingdom at the present and establish the kingdom later?

No, none of those propositions are true. Jesus Christ did exactly what he came to do, and that was to rebuild the tabernacle of David, which had been torn down. He established his church on the first Pentecost after the death of Jesus. That is the only institution that he has set up to the present time. Is the church a kingdom? It is. Hear Paul: "Who delivered us out of the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love." (Col. 1: 13.) Well, is the church the tabernacle of David? James thought it was. Hear what James says: "After they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Breth-

ren, hearken unto me: Symeon hath rehearsed how first God visited the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, After these things I will return, and I will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up; that the residue of men may seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who maketh these things known from of old." (Acts 15: 13-18.) Now we can say we know again. Know what? We know that James, an inspired man, quoted that passage from Amos 9: 11, 12 to prove that David's tabernacle had been set up, which in other days had fallen. If David's tabernacle had been set up, who was its head? His son, of course. Who was he? King Jesus. To this agree the words of the Holy Spirit: "Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly, that God hath made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye crucified." (Acts 2: 36.)

We have learned that God has set up a kingdom. We know it was set up without a sword. We have learned, too, that this kingdom was set up within the span of years allotted to the four kingdoms of the book of Daniel. Then you ask: "Did that church, or kingdom, destroy the four kingdoms?" We leave that up to God. He said that it would do it. They are gone. Where is the man who will say that God did not do what he said he would do? "Let God be true, but every man a liar." You ask: "Will the church stand forever?" Well, it is here yet after almost two thousand years have come and gone since its birth. I believe it will be here when Jesus comes.

You say: "If you teach the truth, the apostles surely were in ignorance about the nature of the kingdom." Well, it is certain that John the Baptist was not counting on an earthly kingdom. I am just as certain that Christ was not looking forward to the ruling of such an institution, for he said: "My kingdom is not of this world." And after the apostles had received the Holy Spirit they never one time mentioned an earthly rule.

But the objector will say: "The promise to Israel was twofold in its nature—that is, God promised both a temporal and a spiritual blessing, and, therefore, he is bound just as much by his promise to give them their Canaan home as to give them Jesus and the church." Exactly, but he gave them all he promised them through Abraham, their father, so far as land was concerned. But they spurned it. They would not, and did not, keep their part of the covenant. Hear what God says about that: "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah; not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them forth out of the land of Egypt; for they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord." (Heb. 8: 8, 9.) God gave the land to them. They proved themselves unworthy of it, so God allowed their enemies to take it away from them. God allowed them to return to their homes. They were worse than they were at first. He destroyed their city, Jerusalem, and scattered them to the four corners of the earth and made a new covenant with them. The very fact that he says a "new covenant" means the other covenant is old. If it is old, what does that signify? That it is nigh unto vanishing. It seems that any one could see that. The old covenant is the one that contained the land grant. The new

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The Uniform Lesson

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Peter Released from Prison

The additional feature in the Gospel Advocate of comments on the Bible lesson for the following Sunday is a feature which will be much appreciated by the students of their Sunday's lesson. Many, no doubt, read the paper who are not situated so they are able to attend classes on Sunday. Those who do attend will get from these comments a different viewpoint from the regular writer of the literature. I am happy to contribute this discussion on the next lesson.

In the lesson selected for March 12 we have an incident in the life of Peter. Miraculous demonstrations accompanied his release from prison. The persecutions had been exceedingly fierce for some time. Herod had killed James. This seemed to please the Jews, and Herod continued his diabolical schemes. He seized Peter and delivered him to the prison keepers, who made every preparation possible to keep him there safely. This is not the first time Peter was in prison. Upon a former occasion he had been retained through one night. (Acts 4: 3.)

While Peter was in prison, the record states that the church prayed earnestly for him. We do not know the exact connection between the prayers made by the church and the release of Peter. It might be that this is a lesson in having faith enough in God to pray for the release of a friend.

I think we need to see that God intervened miraculously in Peter's case. He was bound with two chains between two guards. This under ordinary conditions, would make it impossible for him to escape, but divine intervention knows no barriers. Nothing man could do could keep God from releasing Peter. Notwithstanding the four quaternions of soldiers and the chains connecting Peter to the guards and the heavy doors and bars of the prison, God was able to effect an escape.

One cannot read this lesson without being impressed with the miraculous power of God. An angel was dispatched to the prison. A light shined in the cell, and the angel smote Peter sufficient to wake him and bade him rise up quickly. Divine power caused the chains to fall from Peter's hands. He was told to gird himself, put on his sandals, and follow the angel. There is a very excellent lesson in this part of the narrative. God did not do anything for Peter which he was able to accomplish himself. It was impossible for Peter to escape unaided. He could clothe himself and follow his liberator. God expects all of us to do our part in every accomplishment. He has already done for man that which man himself could not do. The Lord has provided a plan of salvation. He has endowed us with ability to hear, understand, and obey. He leaves the consequences of our disobedience in our own hands.

Seemingly this escape was so much like a vision that Peter did not fully comprehend its significance until he had gotten out of the prison. In this seemingly unconscious condition, Peter passed the guards and came to the gigantic gate leading out from the prison yard. Another miracle was performed when the iron gate swung open of its own accord and allowed Peter and the angel to pass through unmolested.

When Peter came to himself, hence fully realizing his escape, he again was left to his own responsibility. He was able to find a place of refuge. He went to the home of Mary, the mother of John Mark. Here prayers had been made for Peter's delivery; and when the maid went to the door and reported that it was Peter who was knock-

ing, all were in consternation because their prayers had been so unexpectedly and miraculously answered. This suggests to our mind that man is not able to understand always the answer to his prayers.

After their amazement subsided, the door was opened and Peter appeared in the midst of the company. He bade them keep their peace. I take it for granted that Peter wanted this silence for his safety and for the protection of the other church members. If Herod could have found Peter, there is no doubt he would have done his very best to have slain him. It appears that the whereabouts of Peter were kept a profound secret, so that there was no possibility of Herod's finding him. It seems from this story that the Lord was instrumental in preserving the life of the apostle Peter, so that the gospel might be spread more successfully than if Peter had died. Some people have suggested that there seems to be some respect of persons shown between James and Peter. The Lord allowed James to be beheaded, but preserved Peter.

These are some of the mysteries which the Lord has not revealed. God said: "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us." If all could be satisfied with the revelation the Lord has made without trying to delve into his secrets, I believe we would be blessed by so doing. There are so many unrevealed questions that any one who studies seriously will find many unanswered questions in the Lord's word. We should not be troubled with them. If we will grasp all the truths he has revealed, that will be sufficient.

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covenant is the promise of Jesus that God gave to Abraham.

Not only did God take the land of Canaan from the Jews; he has taken the kingdom of Christ from them too, it seems to me. Hear Jesus: "Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken away from you, and shall be given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof." (Matt. 21: 43.) Can you now put your hand on one Jewish congregation of disciples of Christ? Such a thing is unknown. Of course the way is open for individual Jews to come, but will they come? So far they have not.

The invitations of Jesus evidently contain all he has in store for mankind. Read them: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." (Matt. 11: 28, 29.) No land promise there. Let us try again: "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And he that heareth, let him say, Come. . . . He that will, let him take the water of life freely." (Rev. 22: 17.) What is offered in these two invitations? Life and rest. How thankful I am to have the hope that when I am called from my grave it will be to a life of real life and rest, and not to a long, weary thousand years of toil and labor, or ups and downs, of clouds and sunshine, and probably of death again.

Oh, deliver me, Lord Jesus, from hopes and expectations that do not lift my soul on high; but come thou quickly, bringing me that life that is life indeed, and soothe my tired soul with that rest that knows no ending.