
THE CHURCH THE PROPHETS SAW

The common belief today is:

- The church is not necessary.
- People can be Christians without being a member of any church.
- People are tired of "*organized religion.*"

The Bible has a completely different view:

- The church was in **the eternal plans of God** (Eph 3:10-11).
- The church is **the "bride of Christ"** which He died for (Eph 5:25).
- Jesus is the **Savior of the church** (Eph 5:23).

So the church is supremely important to God. He planned the church before He created the world.

DANIEL'S PROPHECY

Intro. to story:

- Daniel in Babylonian captivity.
- Wicked king Nebuchadnezzar had a nightmare.
- He forgot the nightmare.
- He threatened all the "wise" men with death.
- Arioch (captain of guard) was going to kill Daniel.
- Daniel prayed and God revealed the dream to him.

Daniel 2:31-36

31 "You, O king, were watching; and behold, a great image! This great image, whose splendor was excellent, stood before you; and its form was awesome.

32 "This image's head was of fine gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze,

33 "its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay.

34 "You watched while a stone was cut out without hands, which struck the image on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces.

35 "Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold were crushed together, and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; the wind carried them away so that no trace of them was found. And the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.

36 "This is the dream. Now we will tell the interpretation of it before the king.

NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S IMAGE:

- Head of gold.
- Breast and arms of silver.
- Belly and thighs of brass.
- Legs of iron.

Notice that each successive metal becomes more inferior.

These metals indicate **different kingdoms of the earth** and each kingdom will be inferior in some way to the others which preceded it.

INTERPRETATION OF THE IMAGE:

The 1st kingdom is revealed:

Daniel 2:36-38

36 "This is the dream. Now we will tell the interpretation of it before the king.

37 "You, O king, are a king of kings. For the God of heaven has given you a kingdom, power, strength, and glory;

38 "and wherever the children of men dwell, or the beasts of the field and the birds of the heaven, He has given them into your hand, and has made you ruler over them all; **you are this head of gold.**



Gold ⇒ Babylon Empire

There shall arise a 2nd kingdom:

Daniel 2:39

39 "But **after you shall arise another kingdom inferior to yours; ...**



Silver ⇒ Medo-Persian Empire (538 BC)

The Bible itself tells us that the next kingdom to arise was the Medo-Persian Kingdom. In Daniel 5, Daniel was interpreting some mysterious handwriting on the wall to Belshazzar (Nebuchadnezzar's grandson):

Daniel 5:28-31

28 "PERES: Your kingdom has been divided, and given to the **Medes and Persians.**"

29 Then Belshazzar gave the command, and they clothed Daniel with purple and put a chain of gold around his neck, and made a proclamation concerning him that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom.

30 That very night Belshazzar, king of the Chaldeans, was slain.

31 And Darius the Mede received the kingdom, being about sixty-two years old.

But there would arise a 3rd kingdom:

Daniel 2:39

39 "But after you shall arise another kingdom inferior to yours; **then another, a third kingdom of bronze**, which shall rule over all the earth.

Bronze ⇒ Greek Empire (336 BC)

Once again, the Bible itself tells us that this third kingdom is the Grecian Kingdom:

Daniel 8:20-21

20 "The ram which you saw, having the two horns; they are the kings of **Media and Persia**.

21 "And the male goat is **the kingdom of Greece**. The large horn that is between its eyes is the first king.

Finally, there would arise a 4th kingdom:

Daniel 2:40-44

40 "And the fourth kingdom shall be as strong as iron, inasmuch as iron breaks in pieces and shatters everything; and like iron that crushes, that kingdom will break in pieces and crush all the others.

41 "Whereas you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter's clay and partly of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; yet the strength of the iron shall be in it, just as you saw the iron mixed with ceramic clay.

42 "And as the toes of the feet were partly of iron and partly of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly fragile.

43 "As you saw iron mixed with ceramic clay, they will mingle with the seed of men; but they will not adhere to one another, just as iron does not mix with clay.

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

Iron ⇨ Roman Empire (146 BC)

This 4th kingdom was like iron -- not as elaborate as gold, or silver, but stronger!

During the Roman Empire God would set up His kingdom and it would never be destroyed.

WHAT IS THE KINGDOM?

Matthew 16:13-19

13 When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, "Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?"

14 So they said, "Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets."

15 He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?"

16 Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

17 Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.

18 "And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build **My church**, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

19 "And I will give you the keys of **the kingdom of heaven**, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."

church = God's kingdom

Q: Why would the Lord call his church a "kingdom"?

A: To indicate the type of government within the church.

- Not anarchy
- Not a democracy

The church would operate like a kingdom. Jesus would be the King and we would be as His subjects.

Daniel 7:13-14

13 "I was watching in the night visions,
And behold, One like the Son of Man,
Coming with the clouds of heaven!
He came to the Ancient of Days,
And they brought Him near before Him.

14 Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom,
That all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him.

His dominion is an everlasting dominion,
Which shall not pass away,
And His kingdom the one
Which shall not be destroyed.

From this we learn when this heavenly kingdom would begin:

- a) The "Son of man" would ascend in the clouds of heaven
- b) He would approach the "Ancient of days" (i.e. God the Father)
- c) An everlasting kingdom would then be given to Him

According to Daniel, during the kings of the Roman Empire, God will establish the church (kingdom) which shall "never be destroyed."

ISAIAH'S PROPHECY

Now, Isaiah gives us more information about this church (kingdom) which the Lord would establish:

Isaiah 2:2-3

2 Now it shall come to pass in the latter days
That the mountain of **the Lord's house**
Shall be established on the top of the mountains,
And shall be exalted above the hills;
And all nations shall flow to it.
3 Many people shall come and say,
"Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD,
To the house of the God of Jacob;
He will teach us His ways,
And we shall walk in His paths."
For out of Zion shall go forth the law,
And the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

Q: What is the "Lord's house"?

1 Timothy 3:15

15 but if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in **the house of God, which is the church of the living God**, the pillar and ground of the truth.

"house of God" = church

Q: When will the "last days" come?

Joel 2:28 ⇒ **Acts 2:17**

17 'And it shall come to pass in **the last days**, says God,
That **I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh**;
Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
Your young men shall see visions,
Your old men shall dream dreams.

Last days will come when the Holy Spirit is poured out on all flesh. Then the church would be established.

NOTE: This refers to the "*last days of the Jewish nation*" – for it was destroyed as a nation in 70 A.D.

Q: What is meant by "*all nations will flow unto it*"?

Not just for Jews, but Gentiles as well -- blacks, whites, browns, reds, yellows, etc.

Genesis 12:3

3 I will bless those who bless you,
And I will curse him who curses you;
And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

Q: According to Isaiah 2, where will the church begin?

A: Jerusalem!

ONE LAST PROPHECY

Luke 24:46-49

46 Then He said to them, "Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day,

47 "and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

48 "And you are witnesses of these things.

49 "Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high."

Q: What does this have to do with the establishment of the church?

- Apostles told to stay in the city Isaiah prophesied the church would begin in.
- Apostles told they would receive power from Holy Spirit – a signal that the "last days" had begun.

Q: What additional signs did Jesus give to indicate when the church would begin?

A: Repentance and remission of sins would be preached in Jesus' name.

SUMMARY OF PROPHECIES

- a) Roman Empire
- b) After Jesus ascends in clouds
- c) "Last days"
- d) Jerusalem
- e) Holy Spirit poured out on all flesh
- f) Repentance and remission of sins preached

"THE TIME IS AT HAND"

As we come to the NT we see that the time is getting close for the church/kingdom.

Matthew 3:1-2

- 1 In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea,
- 2 and saying, "Repent, for **the kingdom of heaven is at hand!**"

"at hand" -- means close, but not yet

Matthew 4:17

- 17 From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, "Repent, for **the kingdom of heaven is at hand.**"

Matthew 10:5-7

- 5 These twelve [apostles] Jesus sent out and commanded them, saying: "Do not go into the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter a city of the Samaritans.
- 6 "But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.
- 7 "And as you go, preach, saying, '**The kingdom of heaven is at hand.**'

JOHN THE BAPTIST

Q: Did John the Baptist build the church?

John's death recorded in Matthew 14:

Matthew 16:18

- 18 "... I will build My church ...

Again, John's death recorded in Mark 6:

Mark 9:1

1 And He said to them, "Assuredly, I say to you that there are some standing here who will not taste death till they see **the kingdom of God present with power.**"

Please notice:

- **If** the church is NOT the kingdom,
- **And** the kingdom did NOT come during the life time of those apostles
- **THEN** a prophecy of Jesus failed to come to pass!!!

But back to the question: Did John the baptist build the church? -- NO! John was dead, but the church/kingdom was still in the future.

After the death of Jesus:

Mark 15:43

43 Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent council member, who was himself **waiting for the kingdom of God**, coming and taking courage, went in to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus.

It is obvious that John the baptist neither built the church, nor was he a member of the church!

FULFILLMENT OF PROPHECY

Acts 1:4-8

4 And being assembled together with them, **He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem**, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, "which," He said, "you have heard from Me;

5 "for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

6 Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, "Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?"

7 And He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority.

8 "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

Things are getting just right for these prophecies about the church to be fulfilled:

- a) Roman Empire
- b) Jerusalem
- c) Jesus is about to ascend in the clouds

Acts 1:9

9 Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and **a cloud received Him out of their sight.**

These apostles did like Jesus commanded and returned to Jerusalem. Ten days later (a Sunday morning, 9 AM in the year 30 AD):

Acts 2:1-4

1 When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.

2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting.

3 Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them.

4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

Here we see the Holy Spirit being poured out.

Q: Was this actually the fulfillment of the OT prophecy about the Spirit being poured out on all flesh?

Acts 2:5-17

5 And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven.

6 And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were confused, because everyone heard them speak in his own language.

7 Then they were all amazed and marveled, saying to one another, "Look, are not all these who speak Galileans?"

8 "And how is it that we hear, each in our own language in which we were born?"

9 "Parthians and Medes and Elamites, those dwelling in Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia,

10 "Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya adjoining Cyrene, visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes,

11 "Cretans and Arabs; we hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God."

12 So they were all amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "Whatever could this mean?"

13 Others mocking said, "They are full of new wine."

14 But Peter, standing up with the eleven, raised his voice and said to them, "Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and heed my words.

15 "For these are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day.

16 "But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

17 'And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God,

That I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh;

Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,

Your young men shall see visions,

Your old men shall dream dreams.

So this really is the fulfillment of those OT prophecies.

- a) Roman Empire
- b) Jesus ascended in the clouds
- c) Jerusalem
- d) Holy Spirit poured out on all flesh
- e) "Last days"

Only one thing left to fulfill all the prophecies: Repentance and remission of sins being preached in Jesus name.

Peter began to preach the gospel to these people. He told them:

- How Jesus was the true Messiah
- That He had been unjustly condemned
- That He had died for their sins
- That He arose from the grave
- That He is now in heaven at the right hand of God

Acts 2:36-38

36 "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."

37 Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?"

38 Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

What did these people do?

Acts 2:41, 47

41 Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them.

47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And **the Lord added to the church** daily those who were being saved.

Here, for the first time, the church is spoken of as a reality! From this point on, men of God could truthfully say they were in the kingdom of God:

Colossians 1:13

13 [God] as delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into **the kingdom** of the Son of His love,

Revelation 1:9

9 I, John, **both your brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom** and patience of Jesus Christ, ...

THE NECESSITY OF THE CHURCH

The church was not accident and neither is it a "non-essential."

- The Church was part of the eternal purpose of God (Eph. 3:10-11).
- He carefully worked out His plan to bring the church into the world at just the right time.
- When Jesus died, He was dying for the church!

Ephesians 5:25

25 Husbands, love your wives, just as **Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her,**

FINDING THE RIGHT CHURCH

My friend, you do not want to waste your time on the wrong church. The Devil is real and he is busy creating his own churches to deceive people.

- He doesn't care if you go to church – as long as it's the wrong one.
- He doesn't care if you "worship" God – as long as you don't do it the way God said.
- He doesn't care if you read the Bible – as long as you don't do what the Bible says.

How can you find the right church in the midst of all the churches?

Remember: *The prophecy in Dan. 2:44 said the Lord's church would never be destroyed.* It's still around today, but how do we find it?

1 John 2:3-5

3 Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments.

4 He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

5 But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him.

CONCLUSION

There is a popular idea that:

- The church is not necessary
- That it's a nice "*place*" to go on special occasions
- That it's a nice "*place*" for women and children, but
- It's not really necessary

The church is often viewed as an extravagance which we can do without.

What do these passages tell us?

- They show us that the church was in the eternal purposes of God!
- They show us that we cannot be saved without the church.
- If someone dies without the church, there is no hope!

Ephesians 5:23

23 For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and **He is the Savior of the body.**

You need to come into the kingdom of God. How? Jesus taught one must be "*born again*" to enter the kingdom (Jn 3:3,5)

THE CHURCH THE PROPHETS SAW

QUESTIONS:

- 1) In Nebuchadnezzar's dream, what happened to the metal as you viewed it from the top and move down?
- 2) Why was the Lord's church called a "*kingdom*"?
- 3) According to the Bible, when did the "*last days*" begin?
- 4) What definite sign would occur to let men know that the "*last days*" had arrived?
- 5) According to Isaiah, where would the Lord's church begin – what city?
- 6) Was John the baptizer a member of the Lord's church?
- 7) What chapter in the NT shows the establishment of the Lord's church?
- 8) How can we find the Lord's church today – when there are so many churches to choose from?