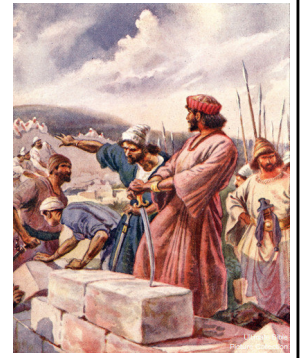


# The Sword and The Trowel

They which builded on the wall, and they that bare burdens, with those that laded, every one with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other hand held a weapon. For the builders, every one had his sword girded by his side, and so builded (Nehemiah 4:17-18)

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## The Everlasting Kingdom

“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 for ever” (Dan. 2:44).

This particular passage, found in the Old Testament book of Daniel, is a very important passage. It tells us a number of things. It tells that God is the one who will set up this kingdom. It even tells us when this will take place. It is a kingdom that will remain with its original citizens. It is a kingdom that will be more powerful than any other preceding it. It is an everlasting kingdom.

Despite what is so clearly taught in this verse, there are those who make complete hash of it as they try to wedge it into various theories and speculations of the pre-millennial stripe. This dramatically illustrates that there are those who fail to “rightly divide the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15). Let us be careful not to think that we cannot also fail in this regard.

We may find ourselves limiting the kingdom to the church upon the earth. While it is true that the church is the kingdom, we may do an injustice to what is taught in the Scriptures if we say it is no more than that. It is the purpose of this article to investigate the kingdom as it is taught in the Bible.

## The Area Of God’s Kingdom

In the broadest sense, the kingdom of God includes all of heaven and earth. The Psalmist wrote, “The LORD hath prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all” (Psa. 103:19). Paul said essential the same thing in Acts 17:24, “God that made the world and all things therein, seeing

that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands.”

Of course, this is not to say that the whole world is in submission to God. These verses, and any others like them, establish the principle that God has a throne, a kingdom, and is Lord over everything. This only seems to be natural since God is omnipotent and omnipresent. This kingdom would have existed from the beginning and would exist until the heavens and earth vanish away (2 Peter 3:10). This cannot be the kingdom spoken of in Daniel as this kingdom has an end and the one in Daniel 2:44 does not. Daniel was speaking of a different kingdom, one that would exist within this framework of the broad sense of God’s kingdom. That different kingdom is the church of our Lord Jesus Christ. Bear in mind that God through the prophet Daniel in 2:44 had no problem recognizing that kingdoms of the world and another kingdom that will last forever. Why should we have a problem with it?

## The Dream Of Nebuchadnezzar

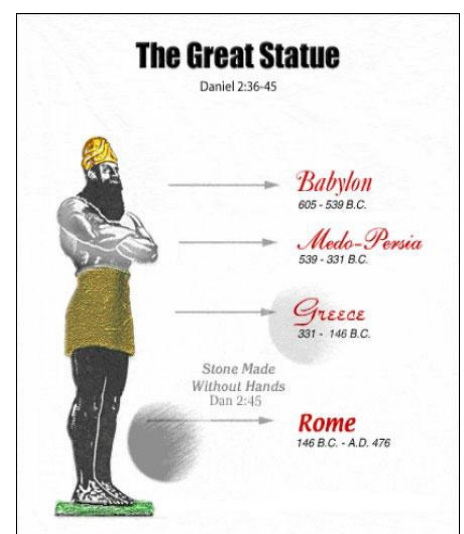
In Daniel 2 we learn that Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, had a dream that greatly troubled him. He sought amongst the wise men one who could interpret it for him. This was complicated by his admission that he could not remember any details of the dream! In his desperation he decreed that anyone who failed to carry out his desires would be put to death. The knowledge of this dream and its interpretation came to Daniel in a vision from God (Dan. 2:19-23).

After some preliminaries, Daniel stood before the king to reveal his dream and its interpretation. Daniel tells the king that he had seen a great and awesome image standing before him in his dream. “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” (Dan. 2:32-33). Daniel also told him he had seen “...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...and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth” (Dan. 2:34-35).

Then Daniel gave Nebuchadnezzar the interpretation of the dream. He informed the king that the different parts of the great image represented four kingdoms. He, Nebuchadnezzar, was the head of gold (Dan. 2:38). The other kingdoms would succeed the kingdom of Babylon. Though Daniel does not state it, these kingdoms would be the Medo-Persian, Greek or Macedonian, and the Roman Empire. Daniel states that in the days of “these kings” (the Roman Empire) that there would come a fifth kingdom which would be an everlasting kingdom (Dan. 2:44).

[I have included below an artist’s conception of the great image of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream]



## Whence Came This Kingdom?

The Roman Empire was in power when the events of the New Testament took place. This means that we should look for the kingdom in the New Testament. Jesus said, *“The time is fulfilled and the kingdom is at hand”* (Mk. 1:15). This helps narrow our search. Jesus also said that the kingdom would come in the lifetime of those who were standing with Him (Mk. 9:1). Later, after His resurrection from the dead, Jesus had a conversation with His disciples. They asked if He was about to restore the kingdom to Israel (Acts 1:6). Jesus replied, *“But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth”* (Acts 1:8).

All of this came to pass on the Day of Pentecost. Acts 2:1-4 records the Holy Spirit coming with power. The gospel was preached for the first time that day (Acts 2:2-36). Some who heard it asked what to do (Acts 2:37). They were told to repent and be baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38). *“And the same day there were added unto them about three souls”* (Acts 2:41). The Lord added these ones to the church (Acts 2:47).

The kingdom was to come and it did. As a result of this we read in the New Testament about the kingdom spoken of in the present tense—as existing then and not in the future. Paul speaks of the Colossians being in the kingdom, *“Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son”* (Col. 1:13). He wrote that the Thessalonians had been called into the kingdom (1 Thess. 2:12). The Hebrew writer spoke a kingdom which already was in existence in Hebrews 12:28, *“Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.”* The apostle John understood that he was in the kingdom along with those to whom he wrote (Rev. 1:9).

## The Kingdom Is The Church

We also discover that this kingdom is also known as the church. In Matthew 16:18-19 Jesus used the terms

“church” and “kingdom” interchangeably. Jesus is the king of the kingdom (Lk. 1:33) and He is the head of the church (Col. 1:18). Though we may notice different terminology, the administration is the same in both. The kingdom of Christ is a spiritual kingdom (Jn. 18:36; Rom. 14:17; Lk. 17:20-21). Philippians 3:20 (NKJV) tells us that *“our citizenship is in heaven...”* which is where we find our king, Jesus, sitting on the throne with the Father in heaven (Heb. 1:3, 13; Rev. 3:21). The kingdoms of the world are generally measured by land and riches. The kingdom of Christ is measured by people, in particular the souls of people. These enter the kingdom by the new birth (Jn. 3:5). The citizens of Christ’s kingdom are move out of love to keep His commandments (Jn. 14:15). The authority wielded by Christ has been delegated to Him by the Father (Matt. 28:18). Thus, to do the will of Christ is to do the will of the Father.

## The Enduring Nature Of The Kingdom

God spoke through Nathan the prophet and made a covenant with David. He promised a number of things for David’s son Solomon. There was also in this covenant a prophecy about a kingdom that will last forever. *“And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever”* (2 Sam. 7:16). We even see in the New Testament how the kingdom is to be without end (Lk. 1:33). In 2 Peter 1:11 it is described as an *“everlasting kingdom.”* The word “everlasting” is AIONIOS and is translated sometimes as “eternal” in other passages in the New Testament (see Matt. 25:46).

There is coming a time when the heavens and the earth will be no more. *“But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up”* (2 Peter 3:10). What of the kingdom when this happens?

Before this happens Jesus will have appeared and the saints will have met Him in the air (1 Thess. 4:13-18). These will be the ones who are faithful citizens of the kingdom. They will be delivered to God the Father (1 Cor.

15:24). Thus, the kingdom will not be destroyed, but will be transported into the presence of God for all eternity.

## Beware Of False Theories

There are theories that the kingdom has not as yet come. Some of this may be due to a misconception that we are to pray the words of Jesus in Matthew 6:9-13 (erroneously called the Lord’s Prayer). Jesus was giving an example of how to pray, not a prayer to be uttered piecemeal. Nevertheless, there are those who will recite these words as a prayer and likely conclude the kingdom has not come. This is due to the words, *“Thy kingdom come.”* When Jesus uttered these words the kingdom had not yet come. However, the kingdom has come now and these words are no longer applicable in that sense. There are others who are wedded to the pre-millennial theory. In this theory Jesus came here to set up the kingdom and failed to do so. He will return at some point in the future and at that time set up the kingdom. Thus, the advocates of this theory do not believe the kingdom has come and are eagerly awaiting it. In either case, there is a belief that the kingdom has not come.

There are some serious ramifications to this belief. If the kingdom has not come, then there are no conversions, *“And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven”* (Matt. 18:3). If there is no kingdom, then no one has been delivered out of sin, (Col. 1:13) and no one has been born again (Jn. 3:5). Also you do not have to be concerned about the frequency of partaking of the Lord’s Supper. There is not supposed to be any partaking of the Lord’s Supper because the kingdom has not come yet, *“For I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come”* (Lk. 22:18).

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