

# SEED & BREAD

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BRIEF BIBLICAL MESSAGES FROM

## THE WORD OF TRUTH MINISTRY

Otis Q. Sellers, Bible Teacher

# A FORETASTE OF THE KINGDOM

What will the kingdom of God be like? What will it be like to live upon this earth in the day when it is governed by God? These questions have exercised many. Believing, as I do, that at any moment, God may speak in heaven and assume sovereignty over all mankind, both the living and the dead, I find myself wondering what it will be like to live upon this earth when God governs.

These questions have both a general and a specific answer: general, so far as one's being a subject of the kingdom of God is concerned; and specific, so far as one's being a son of God, a part of the nobility, and performing a special service. This study will deal only with the general.

My interest in this has caused me to seek a greater degree of familiarity with that part of the Old Testament that extends from the Psalms to Malachi. I believe that these books deal primarily with a time to come when God is going to establish His own order or system upon the earth. This will be vastly different from anything that man has ever experienced in the past or is experiencing at present. It will be a new method of dealing with mankind, a new dispensation, a new administration.

The world to come will be one in which absolute justice will prevail. In its dominion, it will always be well for the good and ill for the wicked (Isa. 3: 10, 11). Some would like to think that it is this way today, but the obvious facts tell us that we are not now living in a moral universe where sin always carries its own penalty and righteousness always brings its own reward.

In the order of things to come, mercy, love, and forgiveness will be available to men; but grace will no longer characterize God's dealings with

men. (See Issue No **SB057**.) Grace is the opposite of government, and grace is not possible under a system that has as a part of its constitution the rule that every sin and disobedience will have its just recompense of reward. The coming order is to be a time of absolute government in contrast with the present time of absolute grace. Under God's government, no one will ever suffer except what they justly deserve to suffer. The innocent will never suffer, but the guilty certainly will.

In God's coming order, all that is good becomes permanent; and all that is evil will be only for the moment. Under such a system, the good will ever increase in number; and the evil will decrease as men find that sin does not pay-not even a momentary gain. Truly, **"In His days shall the righteous flourish"** (Psalm 72:7).

Thus, we realize and believe that the advent of the kingdom of God will have a profound effect upon the morals of men; but we must also realize and believe that God's government will have a profound effect upon the physical aspects of mankind. A government that is not concerned about the health and physical welfare of its subjects is not fit to be called a government. God's government will be concerned about the health of all the earth's people. This truth is epitomized for us in the simple declaration, **"And the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick"** (Isa. 33:24).

A very important revelation concerning this can be found in a declaration made by our Lord. The Pharisees had spoken blasphemy against His miracles. They said He performed them by the power of "Beelzebub the prince of the devils." In His answer to them, the Lord said in part: **"But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you"** (Matt. 12:28).

Since we know and fully believe that He did cast out demons by the Spirit of God, can we do nothing else but believe that the kingdom of God had come to these blaspheming Pharisees? This creates numerous difficulties.

Not long after this, the Lord said to His disciples: **"But I tell you of a truth, there be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God"** (Luke 9:27). Then in connection with Joseph, the man who made the arrangements and provided a place for the burial of the Lord Jesus, we are told that he was one, **"who also himself waited for the kingdom of God"** (Luke 23:51).

The reader will quickly see the discrepancy in these three statements. If the kingdom of God had come to the Pharisees, how then could it be said to be coming before all the disciples had died; and why would Joseph still be waiting for it?

Critics have questioned my teaching that the kingdom of God will be a future condition of things upon this earth after God has assumed sovereignty. They have bombarded me with quotations of the passage in Matt. 12:28, in order to prove that His kingdom was a reality during the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ.

Whenever there are apparent discrepancies, or when a passage is to be used to build a doctrine or to refute a man's teaching, the translation should always be carefully checked to make sure one is standing on a solid foundation. Hundreds of Biblical discrepancies and misunderstandings have been created by inadequate or erroneous translations in the King James Version of the New Testament.

When a check is made of Matt. 12:28, the difficulty in rendering the original Greek is seen at once. This is apparent in the efforts of the translators to express it. Here are some examples:

"the kingdom of God has burst out above you." Fenton

"the kingdom of God has overtaken you." Goodspeed

"the kingdom of God is already upon you." Montgomery

"the reign of God has reached you already." Moffatt

"hath come upon you unawares the kingdom of God." Rotherham

"the kingdom of God outstrips in time to you." Concordant

"the kingdom of God has swept over you unawares." Phillips

A variety of renderings such as these indicates that the original must be checked before the careful student can come to any conclusion.

The translator's problem here is in the Greek word rendered "is come." This is *phthano*, the exact form here being *ephthasen* (aorist). An interesting and illuminating occurrence of this word is found in 1 Thess. 4:15, where it is translated "prevent," which all students will recognize at once as an old English word that has changed its meaning. It comes from the Latin *prae* (before) and *venire* (to come). In the days when the KJV first made its appearance, *prevent* meant to go before, that is, precede. This *oc-*

currence, in the light of its context, gives us a good grip on the meaning of *phthano*. It means "to move ahead of"; and a literal rendering of Matt. 12:28 would be, "the kingdom of God moves ahead to you." Although this may sound awkward, it becomes our task to get the meaning, not to rewrite it. I believe it means that the Pharisees and all who witnessed it had seen a preview of one aspect of the kingdom of God, or that they had a foretaste of it. An honest paraphrase of the Greek here would read: **"But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, you have a foretaste of the kingdom of God."**

By the process of logical deduction and projection, we have every right to believe that every beneficent miracle performed by the Lord Jesus was a foretaste of the kingdom of God. Further proof of this is found in Matthew 10:7, 8, where we find that when the Lord sent forth His twelve disciples to herald the nearness of the kingdom of the heavens (Matthew's name for the kingdom of God, see Issue No. 28), He commanded them in connection with this proclamation to, "heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils." Each one of these acts was a foretaste of the kingdom, a preview of what could be expected from God in the day when He governs the earth.

Of course, any such "foretaste" could be a "savor of life or a savor of death." No man could witness or be the beneficiary of such a miracle without becoming responsible to God to act upon its evidence. This is what our Lord had reference to when He said: **"If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloke for their sin. If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both Me and My father"** (John 15:22-24).

If we examine this particular miracle which brought forth the statement, "you have a foretaste of the kingdom of God," we find the following facts. Someone had **"brought unto Him one possessed with a devil, blind, and dumb"** (Matt. 12:22). Our Lord healed the man immediately and completely so that this demonpossessed, blind, deaf-mute both spake and saw. In this man's afflictions, we see some of the things that have come upon mankind because Adam sinned and brought sin and death into the world. Our Lord came to do the work that would remove this curse with all its effects, and here we have a preview of how this will be done. Wholly apart from any act of the demon-possessed man, the Lord made him whole. Thus it will be when the foretaste becomes "a feast of good things unto all people," when the preview becomes the reality.

Our Lord made the lame to walk, caused the blind to see, cleansed the lepers, gave hearing to the deaf, restored sanity to broken minds, caused the dumb to speak, cast out demons, healed the sick, restored severed members to the body, fed the hungry multitudes, yes, and even raised some who were dead. Each one of these was a foretaste of the kingdom.

The Bible reveals that God ushers in His kingdom by bringing blessings to all mankind. In the previews of the kingdom, we find such words as, "**He healed all that were sick**" (Matt. 8: 16), "**healing every sickness and disease among the people**" (Matt. 9:35), "**great multitudes followed Him and He healed them all**" (Matt. 12: 15). He made no exceptions or distinctions; and, thus, He provided a preview of the healing, health, and soundness that will be the immediate portion of all mankind when God assumes sovereignty. It is entirely fitting that God's long dispensation of grace should end with a public display of grace such as the world has never seen before.

**END ISSUE NO. SB067**