

SEED & BREAD

FOR THE SOWER (SA. 55: 10) FOR THE EATER
BRIEF BIBLICAL MESSAGES FROM

THE WORD OF TRUTH MINISTRY

Otis Q. Sellers, Bible Teacher

THE KINGDOM WITHIN MEN

The kingdom of God is coming upon the earth. It is not a present reality. By the words "kingdom of God" I mean God's government. This earth in its entirety is to be ruled and controlled by the One who is now seated in heaven on the rights of God. He said long ago: "**The heaven is My throne, and the earth is My footstool.**" In view of this declaration we can say with assurance that when God does govern the earth, it will be done from His throne and not from the footstool.

For almost two thousand years men have been praying, "**Thy kingdom come.**" Since Jesus Christ told men to pray after this manner, this is good - even though it is quite evident that many who are making this request do not know what the words "Thy kingdom" mean. Do they know that they are asking for a divinely-instituted moral world order, in which God's will will be done on earth as it is in heaven? It is plain that this is not the case.

Nevertheless, the kingdom is coming; that is, the day will surely come when God will speak in heaven and the government of this world will become the government of our Lord, even His Christ (Rev. 11:15). As Dr. George E. Ladd has well said: "The day is surely coming when God will take the reins of government into His hands and the kingdom of God will come on earth and His will be done even as it is in heaven."

In the Revelation, John positions himself far into the future and sees the divine assumption of sovereignty over the earth as having already taken place, then in view of the dire events that are happening as a result of the revolt against the divine rule, reports the twenty-four elders as saying: "**We give Thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because you have taken to Thee Thy great power and do govern**" (Rev. 11:17).

Indeed, supported by the full authority of God's Word we are able to say without

qualifications that the kingdom of God is coming, that divine government may be a reality at any moment. The prospect of this should make every child of God very happy indeed. We very much want to see this come about, to be an observer of it and a participant in it.

We do not want, at present, to be "caught up into the air." This can wait until its proper time. We do not want to go to heaven. This earth, not heaven, is our future home. We want to see the glorious results of God intervening, just as He said He would; we want to see divine government, the kingdom of God upon earth, our dwelling place, both now and forever.

Not only can we say that "the kingdom is coming," but we can also say upon the authority of God's Word that when it does come it will be within men. This is a most important truth that was declared by the Lord Jesus, a truth that few recognize. By stating that the kingdom will be within men, it is not meant that the whole of the kingdom will be found inside of men, for it will also be outside and around men, even as the atmosphere is at this present moment. In fact when the kingdom comes it will be so all-pervasive that there will be no place upon earth that a man can go and find a sign saying: "Warning, God's government ends here."

Yes, even in the wilderness and solitary places the moral force and power of God's government will be in complete, active control, ruling, watching, providing, blessing, even punishing - if need be. In that day one can sleep in the wilderness and no harm will ever come upon him (Ezek. 34:25). If he should thirst while in the desert places, let Him look unto God, and in the wilderness streams shall break out (Isa. 4:17, 18). It has ever been the obligation and proper duty of governments to supply their citizens with pure water. God's government will be no exception to this.

The fact that the kingdom of God when it comes will be within men is based upon a declaration made by the Lord Jesus in Luke 17:20, 21 - a statement which when separated from its context would seem to say that it was then and there within those to whom His words were specifically directed. The ignoring of the context of this passage has made possible much misapplication and misuse of our Lord's message. This has long been the favorite verse of the self-styled liberal thinkers, also of the humanists who hold that there is nothing but good dwelling in the hearts of men.

The words "**the kingdom of God is within you**" were spoken directly to the unfriendly Pharisees, men with a malignant hatred for the meek and lowly One who was embarrassing and exposing them with the miracles He performed and the words which He spoke. And when we read the strictures laid upon them by the Lord Jesus in Matt. 23: 1-36 we are inclined to say that if the kingdom of God was within these Pharisees as a ruling and motivating force, then we do not want it within us.

Many students of the Word have come upon this difficulty, as a look at the various commentaries will reveal. C.I. Scofield, and many others, seek to overcome the problem here by saying that *entos* does not mean "within" but "in the midst of." (See *Scofield Reference Bible* notes on Luke 17:21).

With this I do not agree. The word *entos* is found only twice in the New Testament, here and in Matt. 23:26 where it is also translated "within," but in a setting which clearly indicates that it means "within" or "inside of," being set in contrast with "outside." This word should not be mistranslated in order to get rid of the difficulty.

As already stated, the declaration "the kingdom of God is within you" has a context that should be carefully considered since it is the key to what the Lord meant by these words. The section begins telling us of the Pharisees "demanding" that He tell them when the kingdom of God should come. The Greek word *eperotao* means "to accost someone with an inquiry." The Pharisees considered themselves to be the authoritative teachers in Israel with the right to require answers of others who may be teaching. They exhibited a total lack of respect and submission in making this demand of the Lord Jesus.

The Lord Jesus could have answered them by saying that it would come in its blade stage (Mark 4:28), the moment when He arose from the dead, for that was when it did come, but He gave them no answer. They wanted to know *when* it would come, but He ignored their question and told them *how* it would come. And in telling them *how* He declared emphatically: "**The kingdom of God does not come with observation.**" The Greek word *parateresis* which is translated "observation" here means outward show or public display. And this is truth that all God-fearing men need to learn, need to believe, and then speak and teach accordingly. Therefore, any who say that the kingdom of God comes with the great outward display set forth in 1 Thess. 4:16, 17 are guilty of contradicting the declaration of Jesus Christ.

The advent of the kingdom of God is a future event that will introduce the earth-wide rule of God's government and which precedes all the events of Matthew 24, including the second coming of the Lord Jesus. Thus it was that our Lord's reply to the Pharisees has nothing to do with *when* it would come, but it does give important information as to *how* it should come. Our Lord's next statement bears this out: "Neither shall they say, Lo here, or Lo there! for behold the kingdom of God is within you." (Luke 17:21).

We need to note carefully the two occurrences of the word 'Lo' and the one occurrence of "behold." These three are the same word (*idou*) in the Greek and they should be translated uniformly. I would prefer the use of "behold" in all three since

idou always indicates an element of surprise, even as we do when we say, "Look, there it is." However, none will say anything like this when God's government is imposed upon the earth and all its inhabitants. When it comes it will be within all men, no exceptions.

That God's government, in its universal character, will be inside of men is one of its features that distinguishes it from all human governments that have ever been. Human governments cannot get within men. These must work outside of men, and, of necessity, usually at a distance, drawing near (we hope) when needed or called. These need to see a man doing wrong, catch him in the act, lay hold of him, try him in fallible human courts, and, when found guilty, punish him. But since most wrongdoers are careful to keep their actions hid, even to the extent of killing all witnesses, many wrongful acts go undetected and unpunished.

It will not be so with God's government. When it comes, it will be **within** men, there to bring blessings and help, there to bring punishment upon evildoers, even to eliminating men from the joys of living under such a beneficent and benevolent government.

Of course there are many who will ask: "If the kingdom of God does not come with observation or outward show, how will we know it is here?" The answer is simple. You will know it because it will be within you, also from the effects this tremendous fact will have upon your person and your life. Inasmuch as the kingdom of God is established upon all men by God pouring out a measure of His Spirit upon all flesh (Acts 2: 17), certainly the Spirit will bear witness to all flesh that they are under God's government. In fact, no minute of any day will be without its witness that God is governing.

If there should then be any who still doubt that God has assumed sovereignty and is actually governing, just let him consider taking one step in the wrong direction. He will immediately hear a word behind him saying: "**This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left**" (Isa. 30:21).

In addition to this there will be the work of the Holy Spirit, acting as a **paraclete**, one positioned alongside to give help, who will be making the facts concerning all that is sin in God's sight, concerning all that is righteousness before Him, and what His judgments are in regard to any matter (John 16:7-10). If one cannot know from all this that the kingdom of God has come and is a blessed reality, maybe he would know it if someone arose from the dead. Remember, if there were resurrections in the blade stage of the kingdom (Matt. 27:52), think what it will be when we reach that stage called "the full grain in the ear" (Mark 4:28).

Again let me say that the kingdom of God is coming, and when it comes it will be within men. This does not mean that inside men is the only place it will be. It will be above men, around men, over men, and under men. It will be as all-pervasive as the principle of gravitation. Its moral law will be fixed by divine decree, and it will be present and operative in the whole earth. This is what the world sorely needs. This should ever be in our minds when we say: "**Thy kingdom come.**"

End Issue No. SB150