

# THE BELLEVILLE MESSENGER

September 13

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**Editor's Note:** For years Robert Turner edited *Plain Talk*, a paper mailed throughout the country. He often answered questions sent in by readers. The following is one of the "*Queries and Answers*" column. (JH)

## QUERIES and ANSWERS

Bro. Turner:

Is the church, and the kingdom of Christ, one and the same? I thought we settled this when we fought the premillennial question years ago. YP

**Reply:**

When YP (young preacher) becomes OP he may have learned that "we" do not "settle" anything – period. This is a sectarian, creedal conception, as erroneous and dangerous among "us" as it is among Baptist, Methodist, or any others. It establishes a "Church of Christ" orthodoxy (party centered) which challenges Christ's sole authority to establish doctrine. When "our" brotherhood becomes smaller than all saints (the universal church) or "our" doctrine is established by something other than God's word (such as "the majority opinion of the churches of Christ") "we" are in real trouble.

If you have access to "*The Kingdom of Promise and Prophecy*" (Whiteside), I recommend pp. 166-167, 177, where the above question is discussed. In the premillennial discussions, and in most "first principle" sermons today, gospel preachers have the Messianic kingdom in mind; and hence, for most practical purposes, they are justified in equating kingdom and church. That is – kingdom refers to God's people, viewed from a governmental or "rule" standpoint

(subjects of Jesus Christ, as King); while church designates those same people "called out" or set apart by the gospel of Christ.

## ADDITIONAL POINTS ON "KINGDOM"

We miss the point re. kingdom when we think of people – the "party" – instead of "rule." Check your lexicons. As Vine says, "Basileia (kingdom) is primarily an abstract noun, denoting sovereignty, royal power, dominion,.. then, by metonymy, a concrete noun, denoting the territory or people over whom a king rules." Note, "by metonymy," figure of speech, it means the people. Think "rule," not "people," when you speak of Christ's kingdom.

In Daniel 2:44 this distinction makes an extremely important point. The God of heaven shall set up a kingdom, and (KJV) "the kingdom" shall not be left to other people; (ASV) "the sovereignty thereof." Thinking "people" "party" or something like that, we might conclude that some distinction would remain with a certain party, regardless of what they did. (Some commentaries actually draw this conclusion.) But the passage says the "sovereignty" or "rule" would not change.

Four world empires, the rule of men on a world scale, were depicted by the great image of gold, silver, brass, and iron – with extremities of iron and clay. Then God sets up something that breaks in pieces all of these, i.e., the image of human rule, and establishes His government "in the top of the mountains" (Isaiah 2:2) or above and supreme to all human rule; and this "rule" "sovereignty" shall not pass to anyone else.

The Persians succeeded the Babylonians; the Romans the Greeks; but here there shall be no succession of rule. Read it again, and think on it. There SHALL BE NO SUCCESSION OF RULE. This completely destroys the idea of papal succession and other like ideas.

✍ Robert Turner



## LOVE FEASTS

Brethren who advocate church-provided social events believe they have found scriptural support for their practice in Jude 12, where Jude mentions "love feasts" ("feasts of charity," KJV). There is nothing in the context of Jude 12 which leads one to the conclusion that these "love feasts" were common meals. Furthermore, these "love feasts" are nowhere called

"fellowship meals" in the scriptures. Why then, you might ask, do brethren use Jude 12 as an endorsement of the modern practice of "fellowship meals" offered by the church to its members?

First, those who make such an appeal know they must have scriptural authority for their practice, so they have satisfied themselves with Jude's "love feasts." As we have already noted, however, Jude makes no argument for church-promoted and church-provided social meals in this verse. Assumption does not make for scriptural proof.

Secondly, the pronouncements of history are received as authoritative. What I mean is this: History records from the second century a practice of church feasts which were held in connection with their assemblies. Brethren who wish to justify their church feasts today appeal to the historians for proof of their practice. What they fail to remember is that the "mystery of lawlessness" was already working in the days of the apostles (2 Thessalonians 2:7), not to mention during the second century. These brethren are using the historical accounts of an apostate church as proof for their practice today. They have elevated history to scriptural status in the absence of clear Biblical statements that "love feasts" were "fellowship meals."

Thirdly, attempts are made to give scriptural evidence that "love feasts" were indeed church-sponsored meals. It is said that Acts 2:46, Acts 20:11 and 1 Corinthians 11:17-34 refer to this practice. Examination of these passages, however, make it clear that the modern-day practice of "fellowship-meals" is not being discussed.

Acts 2:46 plainly separates common meals from the assembly. While the early Christians were meeting daily in the temple (no doubt to learn the apostles' doctrine, v. 42), they took their food "at home."

In Acts 20:11, the issue is not that a meal was eaten at the same place where the church had worshipped. The issue is that Paul ate a meal which revived his strength after several hours of preaching. This is a far cry from saying that the church provided a "fellowship meal" or a "love feast" as some churches today are doing.

In 1 Corinthians 11:17-34, the apostle rebukes and remedies an abuse of the Lord's Supper which occurred when brethren turned the Lord's Supper into a gluttonous feast. Paul's solution (inspired by the Holy Spirit, 1 Corinthians 2:10-13) was to separate common meals from their assemblies. They had "houses to eat and to drink in" (v. 22), so if they were hungry, they were to eat "at home" (v. 34). This divine separation of common meals from the assembled work of the church should forever answer the question of whether the love feasts of Jude 12 were "fellowship

meals" as some are claiming today. To make the love feasts of Jude 12 common meals is to set Jude against Paul. We must never set scripture against scripture as we endeavor to understand its true meaning.

If love feasts were not common meals (and there is no scriptural support for such a conclusion), then what were they? At least two explanations satisfy the context of Jude without doing violence to the rest of the New Testament which bears upon this subject. Jude's "love feasts" could refer to the continual life of the Christian as he lives in the love of God and His truth. This seems to be Paul's use of the term "feast" in 1 Corinthians 5:8: "wherefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." Jude could be warning Christians of the apostates who pretended to love God, His truth and the brethren, but who were in fact harmful "rocks" among them.

Or, Jude could simply be referring to the Lord's Supper. It is a feast the church has been commanded to observe (Matthew 26:26-29; 1 Corinthians 11:17-34). We partake of the "table of the Lord" (1 Corinthians 10:21) to remember His death for our sins (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 11:26). Under this explanation, Jude is warning of false brethren who "crept in privily" (v. 4), and although they were partaking of the Lord's Supper with them, their error was in fact dangerous to their spiritual well-being.

We must not force our religious practices into the text of scripture. Human wisdom and divine wisdom are not the same (1 Corinthians 1:18-25; Isaiah 55:8). We must be content with what God has said - and not said - about "love feasts."

*✍ Joe R. Price*

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<b>Schedule of Services</b>	
Sun. Bible Study..... 9:30 a.m.	Charles Carpenter.... (317) 839-3873
Sun. Morning Worship... 10:30 a.m.	James Hahn. .... (317) 745-1507
Sun. Evening Worship. .... 5:00 p.m.	
Wed. Bible Study..... 7:00 p.m.	
<b>Elders</b>	
<b>Deacons</b>	
<b>Evangelist</b>	
James Hahn. .... (317) 745-1507	Leon Nevins . . . . . (317) 272-2966 Don Perry..... (765) 676-5825 Alvin Stanley. .... (317) 831-3514