

From "The Ecclesiastical History of the English"  
by the Venerable Bede (A.D. 700)

In the historical writings of the Venerable Bede sometime about A.D. 700, Bede tells how King Edwin of Northumbria had a council in A.D. 627 to decide on the religion to be accepted in his kingdom. In "The Ecclesiastical History of the English", Bede gives the following speech to one of the king's chief men:

"Your Majesty, when we compare the present life of man on earth with that time of which we have no knowledge, it seems to me like the swift flight of a single sparrow through the banqueting hall where you are sitting at dinner on a winter's day with your thanes and counselors.

In the midst, there is a comforting fire to warm the hall; outside, the storms of winter rain and snow are raging. The sparrow flies swiftly in through one door of the hall, and out through another.

While he is inside, he is safe from winter storms; but after a few moments of comfort, he vanishes from sight into the wintry world from which he came. Even so, man appears on earth for a little while; but of what went before this life or what follows, we know nothing."

**An interesting note:** "thegn" or "thane" was an attendant, servant, retainer, or official. The word is Anglo-Saxon: *þeg(e)n*. In Danish it is *degn*, in Old High German *degan*, and in Old Norse *thegn* ("king's follower"). In Domesday Book "thegn" is Latinised as *tainus*.

See Domesday Book or The Ecclesiastical History of the English for more details.