

"The Earthly Kingdom of Jesus Christ"

Part 22

Matthew 13

Introduction: In our study of the coming Kingdom, we have been looking at the parables of Matthew 13. So far, we have looked at three of the parables. We considered the Parable of the Sower, the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares, and the Parable of the Mustard Seed. Each of these parables as well as the others in Matthew 13 were used by our Lord to teach His disciples of the coming age. The Kingdom had been postponed and now there would be an interim age. This age is known as the Mystery Age because it is an age that was never known before.

Matthew 13:34-35

³⁴ *All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them:*

³⁵ *That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world.*

Tonight, in our study we have come to the fourth parable, and we only have one verse given by Jesus to describe this parable but within this one verse there is a great deal of information.

➤ **The Parable of the Leaven**

Matthew 13:33

Notice Matthew 13:33

This parable along with the Parable of the Mustard Seed have been greatly distorted by many teachers of the Bible. Dr. John Gill understands this parable to be teaching of the effects of the Gospel. He says leaven is everywhere else used in a bad sense but here it seems to be taken in a good sense. He sees the leaven as the Gospel and how it spreads and has an internal impact on those who come in contact with it. He also teaches that the "Woman" in this parable is the church or the ministers of the Gospel.

Notice the words of John MacArthur on this parable:

"The first point is that small things can have great influence... The second point... is that the influence is positive... When the kingdom of heaven is faithfully reflected in the lives

of believers, its influence in the world is both pervasive and positive. The life of Christ within believers is spiritual and moral leavening in the world... To the average person of Jesus' day, Jew or Gentile, there is no evidence that leaven carried any connotation of evil or corruption... To take this leaven as representing evil that permeates the kingdom is to twist the obvious meaning and construction of words."

John Gill and John MacArthur are just two of the many teachers who see the Parable of the Leaven as something positive in this present age. But let me just raise a question, "Does that interpretation fit with the first three parables?" The answer is, "NO!" In the Parable of the Sower one out of four respond positively to the Gospel and Jesus even spoke of a decline as this age would progress. In the Parable of the Tares and the Wheat we are told the enemy will produce false believers who will gather with true believers and in the end of the age the tares/false believers will outnumber the wheat/true believers. Then in the Parable of the Mustard Seed Jesus taught that Christendom would lose its identity as time would progress and the world, through the false believers, would have a negative influence to the point that the enemy could feel comfortable resting in the branches/the midst. By understanding that these three parables teach of the increase of evil within Christendom. Then how could this fourth parable teach us that in this age the Gospel will spread until the whole world is Christianized? You see, it does not fit the context. Let us then see the true meaning of the Parable of the Leaven.

1. What does the Bible say about leaven?

Genesis 19:1-3

And there came two angels to Sodom at even; and Lot sat in the gate of Sodom: and Lot seeing them rose up to meet them; and he bowed himself with his face toward the ground;

² *And he said, Behold now, my lords, turn in, I pray you, into your servant's house, and tarry all night, and wash your feet, and ye shall rise up early, and go on your ways. And they said, Nay; but we will abide in the street all night.*

³ *And he pressed upon them greatly; and they turned in unto him, and entered into his house; and he made them a feast, and did bake unleavened bread, and they did eat.*

If the leaven was something good, then why was it eliminated in the bread Lot made for the angels?

Exodus 12:14-15, 19-20

¹⁴ *And this day shall be unto you for a memorial; and ye shall keep it a feast to the LORD throughout your generations; ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever.*

¹⁵ Seven days shall ye eat unleavened bread; even the first day ye shall put away leaven out of your houses: for whosoever eateth leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that soul shall be cut off from Israel.

¹⁹ Seven days shall there be no leaven found in your houses: for whosoever eateth that which is leavened, even that soul shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether he be a stranger, or born in the land.

²⁰ Ye shall eat nothing leavened; in all your habitations shall ye eat unleavened bread.

Here we see that leaven was to be put completely out of the houses of the Israelites when the Passover was celebrated. If leaven is to be seen as something good, then we must question why it is to be put out here and why the person who refuses to do so was cut off.

Leviticus 2:11

¹¹ No meat offering, which ye shall bring unto the LORD, shall be made with leaven: for ye shall burn no leaven, nor any honey, in any offering of the LORD made by fire.

Now let us notice something where leaven was to be used.

Leviticus 23:16-17

¹⁶ Even unto the morrow after the seventh sabbath shall ye number fifty days; and ye shall offer a new meat offering unto the LORD.

¹⁷ Ye shall bring out of your habitations two wave loaves of two tenth deals; they shall be of fine flour; they shall be baked with leaven; they are the firstfruits unto the LORD.

Here we see that on the Feast of Weeks there were to be two loaves baked with leaven. There is a reason why the leaven was included here. The two loaves picture the two groups of people who will make up the church, the Jews and the Gentiles, and as these two groups make up the body of Jesus Christ, we still have the sin nature which is what the leaven represents.

Matthew 16:5-6, 12

⁵ And when his disciples were come to the other side, they had forgotten to take bread.

⁶ Then Jesus said unto them, Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.

¹² Then understood they how that he bade them not *beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.*

Here Jesus presents leaven as that which is evil. So why would He use leaven as something good in Matthew 13 and then here in Matthew 16 use it as something evil? Would that not cause confusion?

1 Corinthians 14:33

³³ *For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.*

We see it again in Luke 12.

Luke 12:1

In the mean time, when there were gathered together an innumerable multitude of people, insomuch that they trode one upon another, he began to say unto his disciples first of all, Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.

Let us notice one more text to see how the Bible presents leaven.

1 Corinthians 5:6-8

⁶ *Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?*

⁷ *Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us:*

⁸ *Therefore 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.*

From all of these Scriptures we can therefore determine that the LEAVEN in Matthew 13 is not the Gospel. It represents evil and not good. Let me show you another point to prove it is not the Gospel.

Notice Matthew 13:33 again.

If it is the Gospel, then why was it hidden?

2. What do the three measures of meal represent?

The three measures of meal here would be the fine flour which would provide food for man. Let us notice the words of F. W. Grant to see the meaning of the three measures of meal:

"It is Leviticus 2 that furnishes us with the key. Among the offerings with which this book opens-all of them speaking of Christ - the meat (or food) offering is the only one in which no life is taken, and no blood shed. It is an offering of "fine flour," representative of Christ, not in the grace of His atoning death, but in His personal perfection and preciousness as the Bread of Life offered first of all as satisfying to God, and also for man: "He that eateth Me, even he shall live by Me." (John 6:57).

Now it is with this meat - offering that leaven is positively forbidden to be mixed with (Leviticus 2:11) "No meat offering, which ye shall bring unto the LORD, shall be made with leaven:" True it is to constant use in Scripture as a figure of evil, that which was a type of the Lord Himself was jealously guarded from all mixture with it. Now in the parable, the "three measures of meal" are just this "fine flour" of the offering. The words are identical in meaning. The flour is man's food, as the offering is, and thus interpreted spiritually can alone apply to Christ. But here the woman is doing precisely the thing forbidden in the law of the offering - she is mixing the leaven with the fine flour. She is corrupting the pure "Bread of Life" with evil and with error."

Now we are starting to see the picture in this parable. The leaven is evil and error that is mixed with the True Doctrines of Jesus Christ. Let us consider one more question.

3. Who does the woman represent?

There are many different views on who this woman pictures, but I believe she represents not only one person or group.

Genesis 3:1-6

Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?

² *And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden:*

³ *But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.*

⁴ *And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die:*

⁵ *For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.*

⁶ *And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.*

Here we see it was the "WOMAN" who added to the Word of God, listened to the Devil, and fed her husband the forbidden fruit. I see a connection between the WOMAN in Matthew 13 and the WOMAN of Genesis 3. The Matthew 13 WOMAN can represent any person or group who corrupts the Truth of the Word and then feeds it to unsuspecting people as the Truth.

Notice Matthew 13:33 again.

There are two more points I want to make before we leave this parable.

a. If we notice closely there was no oil mixed with the three measures of meal.

Oil in the Bible is symbolic of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, we can see clearly that what is happening in this parable is not brought about by the Holy Spirit.

b. The meal was not cast out, but the leaven was mixed with the meal.

This is a picture of how corrupt doctrine is mixed with the Truth in order to disguise the error.

Conclusion:

The picture in this parable is very clear. As this age moves forward in time there will be much more corruption of the Truth of the Word of God. We are certainly seeing this happen today. Let me give you one more thought to consider.

2 Thessalonians 2:7-8

⁷ *For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way.*

⁸ *And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming:*

How difficult will it be after the church is taken away in the Rapture?

Matthew 24:24

²⁴ *For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.*