

PARABLES OF THE KINGDOM - PART V
The Parable of the Leavened Meal

Text: Matthew 13:33

Key Word: Corruption

Key Thought: We Need to Beware of the Underhanded Work of the Devil

Today we're going to consider the 5th in a series of sermons on the Parables of the Kingdom of God. The Parable of the Leaven (Yeast) in the Meal is another of those which was never explained by our Lord. The symbolism was very clear to the Hebrew mind. It's unfortunate that we do have not the same clarity today. This is why **this is another of the parables that is often misinterpreted.**

This is the 4th of the series of parables that is recorded in the Matthew 13. These four parables are progressive in thought.

- 1. Parable of the Sower** - we have the **rejection** of the **Divine Word**.
- 2. The Parable of the Wheat/Tares** - we have the **opposition** to the **Divine Work**.
- 3. Parable of the Mustard Seed** - there is the **overgrowth** of the **Divine Design**.
- 4. Parable of the Leaven/Meal** - there is the **corruption** of the **Divine Agency**

This parable cannot be understood by taking it apart unless we build one thought upon the previous one. There Are Essentially 3 Main Parts to this Parable.

I. THE LEAVEN

II. THE WOMAN

III. THE THREE MEASURES OF MEAL

I. THE LEAVEN

Here is where some interpreters (in my opinion) go wayward on Biblical interpretation. They see the leaven as something that,

"represents the complete victorious influence of Christ in this wicked world."

Another somewhat similar misinterpretation is that yeast represents continuity with the past. Thus their emphasis is NOT on the Nature of the Yeast (that represented evil) but rather on the way that yeast works once it introduced into a mixture.

I. THE LEAVEN (Contd.)

I prefer a totally different interpretation that keeps more in line with how leaven was used throughout Scripture. Leaven is consistently used throughout Scripture to symbolize something which disintegrates, breaks up, and corrupts what it is placed in.

Here is where Eastern culture is incredibly helpful in understanding this parable.

*** When a housewife mixes yeast into her ingredients that make bread, she essentially begins a process that becomes irreversible and will continue to work pervasively, persistently, unseen to the eye until the bread is ready for the oven to be baked over the fire.

Israel's leaven played a great part in their religious teaching as well as their bread-making. A piece of fermented dough was always kept over from the former batch. That lump of dough was either dissolved in water in the kneading-trough before the flour was added, or "hid" in the flour and kneaded along with it.

Bread made with yeast was known as "leavened bread," while bread without yeast was known as "unleavened bread."

Leaven and unleavened are used 71 times in the O.T. and 17 times in the NT. The word "leaven" itself is used 13 times in the NT. This is always a number dealing with evil and the work of Satan. In every instance leaven denotes something which is evil.

The Jewish Rabbi had a familiar saying,

"Trust not a proselyte till twenty-four generations, for he holds his leaven."

The Jewish Talmud noted that leaven represented

"Evil affections and the naughtiness of the heart."

Even the Greek Historian Plutarch wrote,

"Leaven is both itself generated by corruption, and also corrupts the mass with which it is mingled."

I. THE LEAVEN (Contd.)

A. **LOT** - When Lot entertained angels unawares he made for them "unleavened bread" (Genesis 19:3). The angels ate the bread. **Leavened bread was a common food for the doomed and wicked citizens of Sodom and Gomorrah.** Lot knew better than to offer a meal that was "*common or unclean*" to the angels. The appetite of our wicked generation will never be appropriate to serve to God's representatives. Angels' food must have no resemblance of evil. **Those in God's kingdom need to be careful what they feed (spiritually) those who are hungry.**

B. **EXODUS** - The children of Israel were given strict orders of what they could eat before leaving Egypt to enter their promised land.

"For seven days you are to eat bread made without yeast. On the first day remove the yeast from your houses, for whoever eats anything with yeast in it from the first day through the seventh must be cut off from Israel.

16. On the first day hold a sacred assembly and another one on the seventh day. Do no work at all on these days, except to prepare food for everyone to eat - that is all you may do.

*17. **Celebrate the Feast of Unleavened Bread,** because it was on this very day that I brought your divisions out of Egypt. Celebrate this day as a lasting ordinance for the generations to come.*

*18. In the first month you are to eat bread **without yeast,** from the evening of the fourteenth day until the evening of the twenty-first day.*

*19. For seven days **no yeast is to be found in your houses. And whoever eats anything with yeast in it must be cut off from the community of Israel, whether he is alien or native-born.***

20. Eat nothing made with yeast. Wherever you live, you must eat unleavened bread."

Exodus 12:15-20

Why is it, if leaven is a type of that which is good, were the Israelites told to rigidly purify their homes of it before partaking of the Passover meal which included the sacrificial lamb?

I. THE LEAVEN (Contd.)

C. LAW - There were strict laws that prevented leaven from being used in many types of offerings and sacrifices.

1. Blood/Leaven

"Do not offer the blood of a sacrifice to me along with anything containing yeast."

Exodus 34:25

2. Fire

"Every grain offering you bring to the LORD must be made without yeast, for you are not to burn any yeast or honey in an offering made to the LORD by fire."

Leviticus 2:11

Honey was a type of men seeking their own glory. Perhaps that is why Jesus said,

"I do not seek my own glory"

John 8:50

It also undictated that we cannot bring our sweetness to God as an acceptable offering. God is sweet - not us.

D. JESUS' TEACHING

"Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy."

Luke 12:1

This leaven was hypocritical formality or religiousness, which was a binding legalism that changed the outward action without a change of the heart.

"Be careful," Jesus warned them. "Watch out for the yeast of the Pharisees and that of Herod."

Mark 8:15

I. THE LEAVEN (Contd.)

The leaven of Herod was that of **debasing sensualism or worldly lusts**. He had a leaven of power and greatness based upon his possession of material things.

E. PAUL'S TEACHING

“Your boasting is not good. Don't you know that a little yeast works through the whole batch of dough?

7. Get rid of the old yeast that you may be a new batch without yeast - as you really are.

8. Therefore let us keep the Festival, not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and wickedness, but with bread without yeast, the bread of sincerity and truth.”

I Corinthians 5:6-8

Paul was telling the church at Corinth that they should make the necessary steps to **remove** a man who had committed incest (without being repentant) from their midst because his sinful attitude would spread amongst the church if not dealt with immediately.

II. THE WOMAN

Commentators often seem to neglect to concentrate their study on the woman. Yet she is an important part of understanding this parable. We now turn from the agricultural setting to that of a domestic setting.

When we think of a woman in the traditional sense, we think of the one who represents the authority and management in the hospitality part of our homes.

The Bible uses the figure of a woman symbolically in three ways:

A. As a Kingdom - Isaiah 47:5

B. As a City - Jeremiah 6:2

C. As a Church

1. True Church - Galatians 4:26

2. False Church - Revelation 2:20

II. THE WOMAN (Contd.)

It's interesting that this 4th parable of Jesus in Matthew 13 corresponds with the 4th Church mentioned in the Book of Revelation. When John was given the Revelation of the Church of Thyatira the wicked wife of king Ahab was symbolized.

"Nevertheless, I have this against you: You tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess. By her teaching she misleads my servants into sexual immorality and the eating of foods sacrificed to idols."

Revelation 2:20

God never committed His Gospel into the hands of women alone. Its interesting that we have many examples of what happens when women take the place of authority in the Church (Christian Science; Theosophy; Spiritism; Unity; Seventh Day Adventism). We also have a new problem that is attempting to feminize our men.

The Bible says (in the KJV) that she **"hid"** the leaven in the meal. **If it is something good, why hide it?** It also says that she **"took"** the leaven - she did **not receive it!** Jesus never **"hid"** the Word of God. He spoke openly on every issue - NOT in secret (John 18:19-21).

This woman represents those who secretly attempt to introduce their evil lifestyle and doctrine that will eventually corrupt, disintegrate and break up God's Church.

III. THE THREE MEASURES OF MEAL

Many explanations have arisen in an attempt to explain this symbol (ie. - faith, hope, love; body, soul, spirit; 3 sons of Noah). One of the valuable tools of Biblical interpretation is that of **"the law of first mention."** To do this we must return to the Book of Genesis.

"So Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah. 'Quick,' he said, 'get three seahs (22 litres) of fine flour and knead it and bake some bread.'"

Genesis 18:6

Here Abraham wanted to share a **Fellowship Meal of Hospitality** with his 3 visitors. The smallest amount that could be offered as a meal-offering was an omer (2 litres) or 1/10 of an ephah (Exodus 16:36). A typical offering was 3/10 of an ephah (or a seah - 7.3 litres). The **"measure"** that Abraham asked Sarah to prepare was therefore a typical offering or 1/3 of an ephah or 1 seah or 7.3 litres and **she was to prepare 3 of these or 1 full ephah.**

III. THE THREE MEASURES OF MEAL (Contd.)

According to the Law no yeast was to be added to any Fellowship Meal. Abraham knew the importance of having fellowship with God without the leaven. Lot on the other hand pitched his tent toward Sodom; lived in Sodom; and finally lost his influence upon Sodom.

Gideon - According to Judges 6:19, Gideon prepared a Fellowship Offering of 1 ephah (22 litres) of flour without adding yeast to share as a Fellowship Offering with the angel of the LORD.

Hannah - According to I Samuel 1:24, Hannah brought an ephah of flour to Shiloh when she dedicated Samuel to the Lord. No leaven could be added to this offering.

Ezekiel - According to Ezekiel 45:21,24 the Jews will again observe the Passover along with the 7 days of eating unleavened bread with a Fellowship (Grain) Offering of 1 ephah.

In no case was leaven to be added to a Fellowship (Grain) Offering. It was always forbidden. **The woman in the parable was therefore deceitfully doing what God had prohibited.** Today the meal-offering symbolizes our hospitality with God and God with us. Jesus is our Bread of Life and in Him is no guile. **He has passed onto us a pure and Holy Word of Doctrine. It is not to be corrupted with leaven.**

The three meals may well represent the Church itself. Leaven would therefore cause us to "swell" up. It is just the opposite that happens when a soul is touched by the message of the true Gospel. **The Gospel causes us to humble ourselves before God and each other and not become great before one other. Has the Church allowed itself to be deceived by the leaven of our day?**

THEREFORE, THIS PARABLE IS ANOTHER WARNING TO BEWARE OF WHAT WILL HAPPEN IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD. We need to beware of the underhanded work of those who appear to be godly but simply have a form and not the power thereof. We need to stay away from that type of spiritual meal.

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Date: Apr 28/19

Place: FCA

Time: 10:30 Am

Songs: Holy Ground (And I know that there are Angels) - G; When I Look into your Holiness - G

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John 18:19-21

III. THE THREE MEASURES OF MEAL - *Genesis 18:6; Exodus 16:36*

Gideon - *Judges 6:19*

Hannah - *I Samuel 1:24*

Ezekiel - *Ezekiel 45:21,24*