

Sunday September 25th, 2005

Matthew 13 Part 7
The Leaven

1). Let's remember that the word parable literally means to 'draw alongside' - that which has previously been said in order to add more detail to our understanding.

a). Remember the way God has given us His word - Isa 28:9 ¶
"Whom will he teach knowledge? And whom will he make to understand the message? Those just weaned from milk? Those just drawn from the breasts? 10 For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept, Line upon line, line upon line, Here a little, there a little."

2). So let's get the picture of how this builds together thus far.

- a). The Sower
- b). The Wheat and Tares – Paul warned the church in Ephesus every day for three years with tears
- c). The Mustard Seed

3). This is now the fourth and last parable Jesus speaks by the seaside before going back into the house and is the last He speaks concerning events relating to the church during the course of this dispensation. And as such it provides the conclusion to that begun by the enemy of our souls in the parable of The Sower. And these four parables give us a complete panorama of church history – in relation to the word of the kingdom – from the beginning to the end of this dispensation. And was given at a time before the church was brought into existence.

4). Let's read the parable - Mt 13:33 *Another parable He spoke to them: "The kingdom of heaven is like (the proclamation and offer of the kingdom of heaven continues to be like) leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened."*

5). Notice that there are three measures of meal into which the leaven is introduced. Three is the number of divine perfection and the meal is a reference to the ground grain that was used to make bread. Within our context the bread would represent the Word of God

a). Joh 6:35 *And Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst*

b). Mt 4:4 *But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'"*

c). And also within our context this is not the word of God in a general sense, but specifically as it relates to the word of the kingdom.

Remember what Jesus says at the start of this whole parabolic sequence - Mt 13:19 *"When anyone hears the word of the kingdom,"*

d). So then we have a picture of the divinely perfect word in relation to the proclamation and offer of the kingdom of the heavens. Now into this divine perfection a woman has taken and hidden leaven with the result that all three measures of meal have been totally permeated by it.

e). Why a woman? – Presumably because this is something done by those comprising the church who had been destined to be the Bride of Christ.

6). This being so it would be good to know what the leaven is.

a). But I would encourage you not to look at the notes in your Bible if you have them. The notes in mine say this – ‘At present the kingdom is not fully manifest, but at the consummation in the age to come it will be known to all. Meanwhile it does its work of permeating human society, penetrating evil and transforming lives’

b). Not only does this explanation completely ignore the content and the context it also fails to do that which scripture admonishes us to do in Isaiah 28 and 1Co 2:13 *These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.*

7). To understand the leaven we only need to see leaven in scripture

a). Ex 12:19 *'For seven days no leaven shall be found in your houses, since whoever eats what is leavened, that same person shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether he is a stranger or a native of the land.*

b). Exodus 12 is the first time in all of scripture that the word leaven is used, thereby giving us a first mention principle. Within this context in Exodus leaven represents sin, that which is corrupt and vile in the sight of God. And notice how the presence of leaven is directly connected to being

disinherited in the land of their calling - *that same person shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel*

c). If what we say here is true we would expect to see leaven used the same way in the NT outside of Matthew 13.

d). Mt 16:6 *Then Jesus said to them, "Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees."*

Mt 16:12 *Then they understood that He did not tell them to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees.*

I/ Note here the connection between that which is corrupt and vile and the teaching of the Jewish religious leaders.

Mt 5:20 *"For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.*

e). In each of these instances it is Jesus using leaven in a symbolic sense in the same way we find it used in Exodus

f). The Holy Spirit through Paul does exactly the same - 1Co 5:6... *Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? 7 ¶ Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. 8 Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.*

8). Scripture then is very clear for those who have eyes to see – leaven is symbolic of sin, that which is corrupt and vile in the sight of God – whether in action or in teaching – they are really one and the same thing.

9). So what does this do for our parable? We see the woman, representing the church, who introduces corruption to the divinely perfect word of the kingdom, resulting in the whole of that word being corrupted by the time we reach the end of this dispensation.

a). That quoted from my Bible notes is a perfect example of this very thing

10). And it is exactly what we have seen in our earlier parables – the work of the Tares – the apostates who gave heed to deceiving spirits and followed the doctrine of demons. It was this corrupted message of the kingdom that was introduced at the start of this dispensation that is the leaven of our current parable. And Christ foretold that by the time we are in now the divinely perfect message of the kingdom would be totally corrupted throughout His Church

11). This is exactly borne out by Christ some 60 years into church history when He again reveals the dispensational history of the church to the Apostle John in Revelation.

12). John on the Isle of Patmos is by the power of the Spirit moved through time and space, from Man's Day to the Lord's Day; from the earth to the heavens, to witness the events that take place at Christ's Judgment Seat

a). *Re 1:10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet, 11 saying, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last," and, "What you see, write in a book and send it to the seven churches which are in Asia: to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamos, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea." 12 Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands, 13 and in the midst of the seven lampstands One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band. 14 His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire; 15 His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters; 16 He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength.*

13). Seven is the number of God's completeness. The seven churches showing the complete church – all born again believers from throughout this dispensation – is in Christ's presence.

a). He begins with the church at Ephesus – (Teach this)

b). A church with a sound grasp of the kingdom message, but here at the start of the dispensation - *Re 2:4 "Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love. - And here we see the beginning influence of the leaven as it starts to do its destructive work.*

c). Then when we see the 7th church we find it in this condition

Re 3:14 ¶ "And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, 'These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God: 15 "I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. 16 "So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. 17 "Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing' --and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked—

d). In relation to the proclamation and offer of the kingdom of heavens the church in Christ's presence is completely corrupted. Not only is this message corrupted so as to be virtually nonexistent, but, what has replaced it has deceived believers to the point that the church see itself as *'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing'*

e). And such is exactly what we see – the church throughout Christendom grows and flourishes and becomes richer. But we will remember from the Mustard Seed that this growth is unnatural. Not what it was supposed to be at all. In many ways it is just like the fig tree at Christ's first coming – full of leaves, but absolutely no fruit.

14). Lu 18:8b *Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find (the) faith on the earth?"* - Teach this

15). So where does that leave us? Hopefully in a place of rejoicing.

a). Re 3:20 *"Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.*

16). What we find is the Lord standing outside of that which claims to be His church waiting for whichever individual will hear His voice and open the door.

a). The striking parallel with the oldest servant waiting by the well of water for the one who will draw deeply from it is too good to miss. The one drawing on this occasion being Rebekah who married Isaac – a type of Christ.

b). God's dealing in this dispensation will always be on the basis of the individual. The very picture given to us in the Book of Ruth. In Ruth's day it was the time of the judges - Jg 17:6 *In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.*

c). We find a gentile woman who has become part of a Jewish family that has experienced a death making a choice to leave the land of her birth to go with Naomi to the land of her calling.

d). And throughout this dispensation there has been no king in Israel and everyone does what is right in his own eyes. And every Christian has a choice to hear His voice, leave the land of their birth and go on to the land of their calling – like Ruth. Or to keep the door shut like Orpah.

17). You, my beloved brethren, have heard His voice, opened the door and are committed to the journey. And God in His grace and mercy has permitted us to gather together as a group in accordance with His word Heb 10:25 *not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.*

18). What God has granted us here is so precious that we must protect it with every fibre of our being – guarding our hearts and our minds lest the enemy deceive us - Ga 5:7 *You ran well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth? 8 This persuasion does not come from Him who calls you. 9 A little leaven leavens the whole lump.*

19). As we saw at the start we are not just here for ourselves but for the sake of all those God has given us - 1Th 1:6 ¶ *And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit, 7 so that you became examples to all in Macedonia and Achaia who believe. 8 For from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place. Your faith toward God has gone out, so that we do not need to say anything. 9 For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, 10 and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.*

a). This fellowship is a testimony and a witness and an inspiration to those in the midst of Laodicea who are looking to the blessed hope.

b). What happens here is a beacon of light in the darkness that surrounds them

20). Many who have come by way of this kingdom truth turn their thoughts and their attention inwards. That must never be us.

a). We have a responsibility to the saved, wherever they are, to proclaim this word to them. I think of the five who come on a Thursday who are not yet a part of this group. And the two who come on Wednesdays. Those whom God has brought because they have opened the door to Him. Think of the January Conference.

b). Our responsibility to the saved

c). Not neglecting our responsibility to the lost

d). The great commission is still ours – and we will understand this is not talking of salvation by grace through faith.

Mr 16:15 And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. 16 "He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.