

Sunday November 22nd 2015
Without a Parable
Part Nine

1). Mt 13:33 *Another parable He spoke to them: "The kingdom of heaven continues like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened." 34 All these things Jesus spoke to the multitude in parables; and without a parable He did not speak to 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 kept secret from the foundation of the world."*

a). We have seen in our previous weeks of study how the parable of the leaven builds on the parables that precede it and how in one short verse it gives us a complete history of the 'Church' with respect to that which is the central subject of these 7 parables, the subject given to us by the Lord in – Mt 13:19 *"When anyone hears the word of the kingdom,*

b). It is then into 'the word of the kingdom' pictured through the 3 measures of meal that 'a woman', a picture of those who had the potential to be a part of the Bride of Christ, hid leaven which then multiplied 'till it was all leavened'; thus providing commentary on the action of the tares sown amongst the wheat in the parable of the wheat and tares.

c). The hiding of the leaven and the description of those hiding it, the tares, are detailed for us in - 2Pe 2:1 ¶ *But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction.*

d). Those introducing the leaven into the word of the kingdom are seen to be false teachers, the very ones that Paul warned the elders of Ephesus about in - Ac 20:30 *"Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.*

e). And in 2 Peter Chapter 2 the leaven is identified as 'destructive heresies' – literally teachings that would lead those following them to

'destruction' with respect to the goal of their calling, which is to be a co-heir with Christ in His Millennial Kingdom.

f). And what we see here with respect to the 'Church' is exactly the same as seen with the Pharisees and Sadducees at the Lord's first advent –
Mt 16:6 Then Jesus said to them, "Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees." 7 And they reasoned among themselves, saying, "It is because we have taken no bread." 8 But Jesus, being aware of it, said to them, "O you of little faith, why do you reason among yourselves because you have brought no bread? 9 "Do you not yet understand, or remember the five loaves of the five thousand and how many baskets you took up? 10 "Nor the seven loaves of the four thousand and how many large baskets you took up? 11 "How is it you do not understand that I did not speak to you concerning bread? -- but to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees." 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.

g). Leaven is clearly and precisely identified for us here by Jesus as false doctrine, false teaching coming from Israel's religious leaders, those who sat in Moses' seat teaching the Law, directing the spiritual life of the nation. And as we have seen this false teaching coming from Israel's religious leaders was focused in one direction, to undermine and contradict the King and the offer of His Kingdom - *Mt 4:23 ¶ And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people.*

h). This facet of the Pharisees' false doctrine is exactly what we saw as we studied Matthew Chapter 12, the Chapter that set the stage for the parables in Matthew Chapter 13 - *Mt 12:22 ¶ Then one was brought to Him who was demon-possessed, blind and mute; and He healed him, so that the blind and mute man both spoke and saw. 23 And all the multitudes were amazed and said, "Could this be the Son of David?" 24 Now when the Pharisees heard it they said, "This fellow does not cast out demons except by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons."*

i). And we will remember what Jesus had to say to this group –

Mt 23:13 ¶ *"But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven in the presence of men; for you neither go in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in.*

j). All of this is essentially a replay of what had happened with the first generation of Israel to come out of Egypt at Kadesh Barnea –
Nu 14:36 ¶ *Now the men whom Moses sent to spy out the land, who returned and made all the congregation complain against him by bringing a bad report of the land, 37 those very men who brought the evil report about the land, died by the plague before the LORD. 38 But Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh remained alive, of the men who went to spy out the land.*

k). As we consider all of this it won't escape our attention that there is a pattern emerging – with the first generation of Israel to come out of Egypt there was an earthly land to be conquered by the power of God in order to establish rulership over the earth within a Theocracy. At the Lord's first advent there was a heavenly land to be conquered by the power of God with the opportunity for Israel to enter the heavenly realm of the Kingdom and along with Christ replace Satan and his angels. And yet on both these occasions it is the leaders of Israel who give a contrary message, a bad report, to the people causing the people to miss out on God's purpose for them.

l). And then when the Kingdom of the Heavens is taken from Israel and is being offered to a new nation producing the fruits of it, 'when anyone hears the word of the kingdom', what do we find? We find the introduction of a contrary message, a counterfeit to the word of the kingdom, a bad report, coming from those who would ultimately become 'Church' leaders causing those who would follow their destructive heresies to miss out on God's purpose for them - 2Pe 2:2 *And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. 3 ¶ By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words;*

m). Now, not only were there those with a false message, but also those who craved a message other than the truth who would have their desires fulfilled by the unscrupulous - 2Ti 4:2 *Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. 3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for*

themselves teachers; 4 and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. 5 But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

n). As we have seen our Lord Himself lays out the work of the false teachers for us, showing us what will happen to His Church because of them before the Church had come into existence. We then find this same truth concerning false teachers in the Book of Acts with example after example following in the NT epistles and culminating in the first 3 Chapters of the Book of the Revelation.

2). 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.

a). We had seen last week in these verses from the first Chapter of the Revelation, the complete Church – all the eternally saved from this dispensation, signified through the use of the number 7, standing before Christ in Judgment – this is then the Judgment Seat of Christ at which we must all appear.

b). And we had also seen last week, that beginning with the Church of Ephesus, the Lord through His servant John lays out the exact same dispensational history of the Church as we find in the first 4 parables in Matthew Chapter 13.

c). We had seen the Church in Ephesus corresponding to the 4th part of the parable of the sower, being on good ground having heard and understood the word of the kingdom, that which Paul calls the gospel of the glory of Christ and producing fruit, some 100, some 60, some 30 - Re 2:2 *"I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars; 3 "and you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name's sake and have not become weary.*

d). And then, in fulfillment of that spoken by the Lord through Paul in Acts 20:30, men had risen up within the church speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after themselves – the result of which we see in the next verse in Revelation Chapter 2 - Re 2:4 *"Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love.*

Ga 3:1 ¶ *O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified?*

e). Here then with the Church of Ephesus we find the 4th part of the parable of the sower and the parable of the wheat and tares. This is the Church at the beginning of this dispensation.

3). Re 2:8 ¶ *"And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write, 'These things says the First and the Last, who was dead, and came to life: 9 "I know your works, tribulation, and poverty (but you are rich); and I know the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. 10 "Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life. 11 "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death."*

a). As we look at that said here about the church in Smyrna we will again see works associated with producing fruit as seen in the 4th part of the parable of the sower and we are still historically in the early years of the Church, as with Ephesus. The persecution that we see takes us to that period of time when Christians were persecuted by the Roman Empire in a satanic attempt to destroy the Church. An attempt of course which failed, the Church growing numerically despite this. And here we can see that presented through the first part of the parable of the mustard seed, where the mustard seed germinated and began its natural growth - Mt 13:31 *Another parable He put forth to them, saying: "The kingdom of heaven continues like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field, 32 "which indeed is the least of all the seeds; but when it is grown it is greater than the herbs.....*

b). If we then continue with the parable of the mustard seed –
Mt 13:32.....*and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches."*

We would expect to see things associated with the mustard seed then growing abnormally as a result of the counterfeit message introduced by the tares – Re 2:12 ¶ *"And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write, 'These things says He who has the sharp two-edged sword: 13 "I know your works, and where you dwell, where Satan's throne is. And you hold fast to My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days in which Antipas was My faithful martyr, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells. 14 "But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality. 15 "Thus you also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.*

c). And this is exactly what we find here with the church in Pergamos. Once again we see works associated with fruitfulness in v13, but we also see this church ‘where Satan’s throne is’, ‘where Satan dwells’ and in connection with this we see those ‘who hold the doctrine of Balaam’ and ‘the doctrine of the Nicolaitans’.

d). Now the reference to Satan’s throne and the place where Satan dwells is less about geography than it is about authority. Within the present system of rulership Satan’s throne, the place from which he exercises his authority from the heavens is within Gentile world power, during the times of the Gentiles. And we will remember that Balaam’s teaching led to the assimilation of Israel into the pagan nations surrounding them causing the nation’s demise – and this is just what we see here with respect to the Church. The Church, as a result of the counterfeit message of the tares, those holding the doctrine of Balaam, is seen dwelling where Satan’s throne is, dwelling amidst the present system of rulership becoming a power within that system, pictured through the tree in the parable of the mustard seed.

e). But don’t forget that in the midst of this there are those producing fruit some 100, some 60, some 30 – this should be an encouragement!

4). Let's continue with the next church - Re 2:18 ¶ *"And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write, 'These things says the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet like fine brass: 19 "I know your works, love, service, faith, and your patience; and as for your works, the last are more than the first. 20 "Nevertheless I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols.*

a). What we now see with the church in Thyatira is further detail or commentary on that seen in Pergamos with the scope of false teaching now becoming more and more prevalent. Both Balaam and Jezebel are seen in connection with sexual immorality and eating things sacrificed to idols, but I would suggest that the reference to Balaam, because of his OT context is dealing with assimilation within a world system from which the church was supposed to be separate rather than seeing these two things in a literal sense. When we come to Jezebel, again because of her OT context, what we are seeing, conveyed through the figurative language that fills the Book of the Revelation is a reference to the nature and focus of the false teaching as the Church continues to become more enmeshed within the present world system and as such that which we see concerning Jezebel can take us to the verses we had looked at last week from 1 Timothy Chapter 4 – 1Ti 4:1 ¶ *Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, 2 speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, 3 forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.*

b). Figuratively, the sexual immorality taught by Jezebel, picturing the overthrow of the husband/wife relationship as seen at Thyatira equates with 'forbidding to marry' as seen in Timothy and figuratively the eating 'things sacrificed to idols' in Thyatira equates with 'giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons' as seen in Timothy.

c). All of this pictures the continuing corruption of the proclamation of the word of the kingdom within the Church which has become a power amongst the nations, enmeshed within the present world system.

5). Re 3:1 ¶ *"And to the angel of the church in Sardis write, 'These things says He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars: "I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead. 2 "Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found your works perfect before God.*

a). Following on from what we see in Thyatira we now come to Sardis where the progressive corruption of the word of the kingdom seen beginning in Ephesus results in the Church having 'a name that you are alive, but you are dead', dead to the proclamation of the word of the kingdom, whose works are not found 'perfect before God'.

b). But even in the midst of the unhappy picture presented to us here we can take heart - Re 3:4 *"You have a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy.*

c). There is one significant and glorious fact that we should always keep before us and that is that God ALWAYS rewards faithfulness and to underline this, to give extreme encouragement to those in the midst of an ever deteriorating situation we come to the church in Philadelphia - Re 3:7 ¶ *"And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write, 'These things says He who is holy, He who is true, "He who has the key of David, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens": 8 "I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name. 9 "Indeed I will make those of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not, but lie--indeed I will make them come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you. 10 "Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth. 11 "Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown. 12 "He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. And I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name. 13 "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."*

d). What is said here to Philadelphia contains only commendation and promise and reflects back on the faithful, fruit producing individuals that we have seen in the previous 5 churches and also reaches out to us in the place we find ourselves now to make certain that we understand that our faithful obedience, our labor of love in the Lord will not be in vain. And why does the Lord place Philadelphia as the 6th of the 7 churches? Because of what is coming next in the 7th.

e). That seen with regards to Philadelphia then is not seen directly in the Matthew 13 parables, but does take us to those in the 4th part of the parable of the sower and to all those on good ground who would come after them. In the midst of the work of the tares, amidst the abnormal growth of the mustard seed, faithful obedience to the word of the kingdom not only remains possible but is also accompanied by the promise of glorious reward.

f). As we move to the 7th of the 7 churches in the Revelation we find that which is totally commensurate with the parable of the leaven. The parable of the leaven initially takes us back again to the start of the dispensation and would be seen to be responsible for the Ephesians leaving their first love.

g). The corrupting work of the leaven introduced by the tares continues through that seen in the churches of Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira and Sardis, bringing the whole of the matter to its conclusion with the church of the Laodiceans.

h). By the time we come to the end of this dispensation, just prior to the entire Church appearing before the Lord in Judgment at the resurrection/rapture so the leaven is seen having completely corrupted the 3 measures of meal, picturing the complete corruption of the proclamation and offer of the word of the kingdom and with regards to the proclamation of the word of the kingdom this is what we find recorded about the church of the Laodiceans – Re 3:15 *"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—*

i). Because the counterfeit message has multiplied and thoroughly permeated that taught in the Churches, in effect replacing the word of the kingdom, so the church at large sees nothing wrong with itself as we see at the beginning of v17, but the real condition that exists relative to the teaching of

the one true message to the Church, the word of the kingdom, is seen in the second half of v17.

j). And what we see here is the answer to the question the Lord asks in – Lu 18:8b *Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find [the] faith on the earth?"*

k). No, He won't find 'the faith', the message of the word of the kingdom being proclaimed throughout the churches when He comes, rather Christians are seen to be lukewarm towards this message, a spiritual temperature that allows the leaven to flourish.

l). This then is the place in the dispensation that we now find ourselves, but even in the midst of this dark scenario our Lord remains full of compassion and extends the hand of hope to any Christian who will have ears to hear - Re 3:18 *"I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. 19 "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent. 20 "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice [concerning the word of the kingdom] and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. 21 "To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. 22 "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.""*

m). We are here today because we have heard His voice and we have opened the door and if we remain faithful that door can never be closed against us and if we overcome then we will sit down with Christ on His throne and we will rule and reign with Him for 1000 years - Re 3:8 *"I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name. 9 "Indeed I will make those of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not, but lie--indeed I will make them come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you. 10 "Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth. 11 "Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown. 12 "He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out*

no more. And I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name. 13 "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

n). We will continue with this next week – if the Lord is willing.