

God, in the Old Testament, commands His followers, “*Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns*” (See Jeremiah 4:3 and Hosea 10:12). “*Fallow ground*” refers to *idle, uncultivated, unproductive, untilled soil*. God’s command has to do with breaking up the fallow ground of the hearts. God’s Word also commands us to, “*Take away the thorns growing therein so as to be ready to receive the word of Kingdom in order to produce righteousness.*” What God’s Word is telling us is that “*We can’t sow seeds of **the word of the Kingdom**’ in unfit soil.*” We must prepare the soil of our heart properly before we can receive the seed of the word of the Kingdom. This must be regarded a serious matter that requires forethought and anxious labor. Jesus gives us, in Matthew 13, seven Kingdom parables explaining the Kingdom of God.

The first parable, of the Kingdom parables, shows Jesus as the Sower, sowing “*the word of the Kingdom*” in the hearts of believers. There are four different categories of responses: **(1)** The Hard-hearted, like planting seeds on pathways. There will not seek to understand “*the word of the Kingdom*” -- and Satan steals the seed out of their heart. **(2)** Shallow-hearted, like planting seed in very shallow soil with bedrock just an eighth of an inch below the surface. Their Christian life is built upon emotions – superficial feelings -- when troubles come they “*fall away*” from Kingdom living (Christ’s rule and reign in their life). **(3)** The Half-hearted, taken up with the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and lust of other things. Like weeds, these crowd out the word of the Kingdom. **(4)** The Whole-hearted -- giving the word of the Kingdom fertile soil to grow the seeds of the word of the Kingdom. Some produce 100 fold, some 60 fold and others 30 fold.

The second parable reveals Satan at work, sowing his “*tares*” with the good seed of the word of the Kingdom -- looking very much like wheat (Christianity) but is false.

The third parable is that of the Mustard seed – growing all out of proportion into something that is a grotesque monstrosity. “*Professing Christianity*” becoming something abnormal to what God intended it to be. It would like saying that the dandelion on your lawn grew into a huge tree with birds building their nests in its branches.

We now come to the fourth parable!

4. THE PARABLE OF LEAVEN



Someone has said, “*The key in understanding the New Testament is the book of Matthew, the key in understanding the book of Matthew is chapter 13 and the key in understanding chapter 13 is the Parable of Leaven.*”

Jesus gives this parable to us in one sentence. There is not a period until we come to the end of the verse.

“He told them still another parable: ‘The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into a large amount of flour until it worked all through the dough’” (Matthew 13:33).

One is not left to his own opinion as to the meaning of this fourth parable. Christ, Himself, explained the first two, and the seventh, parables, therefore there can be no

doubt as to their meanings. It seems obvious that the intervening remaining four parables must be interpreted in strict accord with the parables, which Jesus did explain.

There is a noticeable connection between the first two parables as to the *beginning* of the kingdom of heaven.

Christ's Kingdom Established & Satan's Hindrance



Planting of Early Church



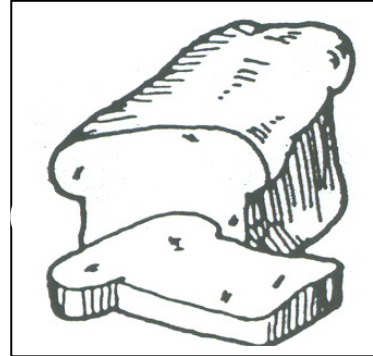
Satan's Counterfeit

Now we see a close relation between the third and the fourth parables, which treat the *extension* and *corruption* of the kingdom. In the third parable we saw the EXTERNAL aspect . . . or OUTWARD growth . . . of the kingdom, now, in this fourth parable, we see revealed the INTERNAL aspect, or the *secret corruption*, within the kingdom.

Difficulties faced throughout the Church Age



Great growth, but outward corruption



Rise of internal false teaching - inward corruption

Interestingly, looking into the Old Testament, when God was giving Israel the commandments for bringing sacrifices unto Him, He told them that the loaves must be made "*without yeast*," however they were to "*put oil and incense on the grain, as an offering unto the LORD*" (Leviticus 2:11,16).

This "*woman*," of the fourth parable, does the very thing, which God forbids, and she leaves out the very things, which Scripture commands her put in.

The point of this parable is built around the introduction of "leaven," or "yeast," into the loaf. In Scripture, "leaven" symbolizes the corrupting of God's truth by the introduction of evil, or false, doctrine.

In Matthew 16 the Pharisees and Sadducees were tempting Jesus, saying, "Show us some spectacular sign from heaven." Jesus answers, "Just look around you, if sky is red in the evening you know it will be fair weather. You hypocrites, you can tell the weather by looking at the sky but you don't have the slightest idea of what is happening in the Kingdom of God. You are a faithless and immoral people, **THEN** Jesus leaves them and departs" (verses 1-4). Jesus takes His disciples and goes to the other side of the Sea of Galilee.

Jesus said to His disciples, "Beware of the 'leaven' of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees." The disciples say, "Whops, we forgot to bring any bread!" [That's Mitchell translation, but that's what it means]. Jesus said, "You have such little faith, don't you remember how I feed 5000 with just 5 loaves of bread, and I fed 4000 with just 7 loaves? How came you don't understand that I am not talking about 'physical' bread? I'm speaking of being on your guard against the 'leaven' (false teaching) of the Pharisees and Sadducees!" Now we come to verse 12, "**Then they understood that He (Jesus) was not telling them to guard against the yeast used in bread, but against the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.**"

In this passage of Scripture, Jesus states that "leaven," or "yeast," was a type of the false teachings of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

1 Corinthians 5:6-8, "**Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? 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. 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.**"

This passage is the King James translation of what Jesus was teaching His disciples concerning what "leaven" represented. It represents evil and error, and Jesus teaches them to "purge out therefore the old leaven . . . the leaven of **malice** and **wickedness**" and Jesus speaks of "the **unleavened** bread of sincerity and truth."

It seems quiet clear that the "meal," or "flour" in this parable represents the truth of the Word of God, however, the woman "mixed **yeast** into the flour," meaning that she mixed error, or falsehood, with the Word of God.

The International Translation of 1 Corinthians 5:6-8 states:

"Don't you know that a little yeast works through the whole batch of dough? Get rid of the old yeast that you may be a new batch without yeast - as you really are. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. 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."

In Scripture, pure "meal" or "flour" represents the Word of God. [See, for instance,

2 Kings 4:41.] God's Word is likened unto Bread in Matthew 4:4; John 6:32-58. In the Old Testament, the "*Shewbread*" (unleavened bread) of the Tabernacle was a type of God's Word.

The flour was a type of God's Word

However, in this fourth parable which Jesus tells of the woman who is mixing "*yeast*" into this flour. What is yeast?

Yeast is fermentation, corruption or bacteria in action! Jesus gives the process of corruption within the realm of *professing* Christendom. Here is a picture of the intermixture of forces that will enfeeble the kingdom of God.

The primary importance of this parable is not the yeast, or even the woman, but, rather, it is the "*flour*" and what happens to it!

As in all of the seven parables there is a **PROPHETIC REVELATION**, which we have dealt with in the first lesson, and there is also a **PRIMARY INTERPRETATION**, which is simply that professing Christendom would be corrupted with false doctrines. However, our main purpose of this study is the **PRACTICAL**, and **PERSONAL**, **APPLICATION** of these parables to our Christian living.

These verses, I have referred to above, teach that a little . . . (and it only takes ever so little) . . . *malice, bitterness, hatred, unkindness*, if it is not stopped quickly, will penetrate one's entire make-up and rob him of the reign of Christ in his life. [Read again 1 Corinthians 5:6-8.]

If one's goal, as a Christian, is just to get to heaven when he dies, and he is not concerned with letting Jesus Christ rule and reign by His kingdom and authority in his life now, then he misses the real purpose and "*joy*" God intended believers to have in this life! [Lord willing I will begin a series on, "*Motivation from Frustration to Joy*," starting Tuesday, October 31]

Like "*yeast*" which "*works through the whole batch of dough*," just a little insubordination to God's rule, will bring a penetrating depravation that will rob the believer of all the fulfillment God wishes to bring into his life.

"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" - 1 Corinthians 5:7.

To enable one to understand, or interpret, any expression in Scripture, it is important that he finds that same word in other Scriptures wherever it is found and ask the question, "*What does God mean by this word?*"

The first time the word "*meal*," or "*flour*" is mentioned in Scripture is in Genesis, where God was manifesting Himself to Abraham by a supernatural angel.

Many Bible scholars recognize "*The Law of First Mention*" in Scripture, that is, the first time a word, or subject, is mentioned in Scripture, gives a key to the Biblical meaning of that word, or subject, wherever else it is found in the Bible.

That is to say, the first time a word, or subject, is mentioned one finds the most complete meaning of that word in the Bible.

Here in Genesis 18:6, where "*meal*" is mentioned for the first time in the Bible, Abraham hastens to entertain the Supernatural manifestation of Almighty God, and he brings "*three measures of fine meal*" to offer in hospitality.

Then, when God was giving His commandments for the "*offerings*" to Israel, He included "*The Meal Offering*." This meal offering was a result of the cultivation, manufacture and preparation of one who came to worship God. The meal offering signified the dedication of a person's work. It also was an offering of hospitality. The worshipper retained a portion of this meal offering -- and a portion was also to be used at the disposal of the priest. *Here was perfect communion between the worshipper and God* - upon the basis of the worshippers service.

God takes a symbol from the simple rites of home life and makes it a symbol of dedication of service - *as grounds of perpetual communion with Him!*

It is interesting, in examining our own lives, to note that, in the New Testament, "*leaven*" is listed in:

Matthew 16:6 as: "*hypocrisy*," that is, acting a part, or profession without possession.

Mark 8:15 as: "*rationalism*," or denying God's supernatural power and ability

Luke 12:2 as: "*materialism*." One sees material splendor and the display that awes those who ignore true greatness and, adopting the world's standards, failing to lay emphasis upon *eternal* magnificence.

1 Corinthians 5:6-8 as tolerance, or acceptance, of "*malice and bitterness*."

Galatians 5:9 as: the influence of false teachers and "*form without reality*."

Looking at the **PRACTICAL APPLICATION** of this parable, one realizes that any of these things, mentioned in these verses constitute a "*ferment*," or "*disintegration*" that will spoil God's rule in the believer's life.