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.*"

This parable is given by Jesus 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 parable as to the *beginning* of the kingdom of heaven. 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.

Interestingly, 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.

Matthew 16:12 states, "***Then they understood that He*** (that is, 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* ***un****leavened 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 I 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 which 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 on the first study, pages 5 and 6, and there is also a **PRIMARY INTERPRETATION**, which is simply that professing Christendom would be corrupted with

false doctrines, however, the 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!

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.

> 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.

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. A portion of this meal offering was retained by the worshipper and a portion was given 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 a toleration for "***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.