

# THE PARABLES OF THE MUSTARD SEED AND THE LEAVEN.

A review by Arnold Kennedy.

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The traditional view held that the parables of the Mustard Seed and of the Leaven are about the Kingdom of Heaven coming to progressively fill the whole earth is herein contested.

*Matt. 13:31-33 “The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: Which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof.*

*Another parable spake he unto them; The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened”.*

In the parable of the Mustard Seed, it is a “field” in which a man “took and sowed” the mustard seed, it is NOT the whole earth. In the Parable of the Leaven, the leaven is taken and hidden likewise only in the three measures of meal, it is NOT hidden in everything else. The “field” is that of the Israelites, and the meal is what they are given for food.

Meal is a symbol of God's word. This is what the woman leavens. It is leavened meal that comes to fill “the whole” of the meal, rather than the Kingdom of Heaven coming to fill the whole earth as tradition teaches. “Meal” is a symbol of God's provision of His Word as something that cannot be used up if a prophet of God is involved. We see this in 1 Kings 17:14, “*For thus saith the Lord, the barrel of meal shall not waste*”, where a widow was fed “according to the word of the Lord by Elijah”. The meal was continually being renewed. In 2 Kings 4:40, meal was used by Elijah to destroy deadly poison in a pot of food. We find more about three measures of barley meal in Genesis 18:6 and Rev. 6:6.

In the first parable, it is a man (*anthropos* = man or woman) that initiates the action and in the second it is a woman initiating the action, that is, in both parables, it is what is “taken” that does the action within the whole. The mustard seed that comes to fill the “field” is pictured as becoming a great tree. What lodges in its branches? It is the “birds of the air”. What does that symbolize—Is it not of evil connotation”? What do these birds (fowls) do? “*A sower went out to sow his seed: and as he sowed, some fell by the way side; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it.* Now, as this is so, the mustard tree is something used to spoil the “field” by enabling the action of the fowls of the air. In the parable of the leaven, a similar action occurs. The three measures of meal are leavened or altered by the action of the woman.

These parables are about progressive things and therefore are about something that is happening before the end of days. In the parable of the Leaven, the yeast is working insidiously behind the scenes to permeate all the meal over a period of time. In the beginning, the woman takes leaven and hides it in the three measures of meal, and it is the meal that is altered by becoming progressively leavened. The woman is not open about what she is doing because she “hid” the leaven, and she is the one the active verb refers to. Jesus makes it clear that leaven is a symbol of bad doctrine. This bad doctrine comes to leaven the “whole” of the meal. As women are not to teach (doctrine), then this wrong doctrine from the “woman” cannot be of God. What corrupts the whole “food” of God's people therefore is the doctrine of the woman.

Yes, the Kingdom of Heaven does come when the King returns to rule with a rod of iron, but there is a sequence in prophecy that indicates an anti-Christ overpowering of the Israelite nations comes first.

We have:

Firstly: Rev. 13:7, “*And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations. And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him*” (except those written in the Book). Is not this the end result of what the woman planted? Does this not show the “whole” has been leavened at this time?

Secondly: After this there is another war, Rev. 17:14, “*These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful*”.

So we first have the bad filling the “whole”, where, “*For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled*”. Their Kingdom is given unto the beast, until a time to follow.

Then we see the next step, "And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God"- (Rev. 19:1).

One thing we find about the Kingdom of Heaven's appearing is that it comes with a mighty shout...a last trump...a rider on a white horse. This is not the unseen working of leaven, for "every eye shall see Him". The "brightness of His coming" is as quick as a lightening flash, and there is a resurrection that accompanies it.

There are two different white horses in the Book of the Revelation... the first is armed with a bow to take peace from the earth... the second is armed with a different weapon, a sword of judgment to righteously judge the earth. Here again are the two sequences, as we can see elsewhere - first one white horse, then the other.

#### NOTES ON "LEAVEN".

Bullinger's note on Matt. 13:33 says about leaven, "Always used in a bad sense as meal is in a good sense; therefore the common interpretation as to the Gospel's improving the world is the exact contrary of the leaven corrupting the whole of the meal. The same is true of the symbol of the woman". Then he gives examples to show the use of leaven is always in the bad sense.

The Dictionary of Bible Symbolism says of leaven, "*False doctrines deliberately taught by corrupt and wicked men are symbolized by leaven*". The rest of the notes demonstrate how the woman's doctrines are leaven. Is this then going to permeate everything to bring in a leavened Kingdom? Or is it a step along the way to the unleavened Kingdom?

Robert Phillips of Sydney, Australia says, "*The leaven of the Pharisees is only a small deviation from the truth which, if believed, causes doubt and leads to total disbelief of the truth. For example, the serpent only altered one word of Eve's recollection of what was said in the Garden of Eden – but one was enough. Leaven was forbidden in anything placed on the altar because it represented something that could change in the context of a ceremony in which no change was allowed. On the other hand, the 12 loaves of Shewbread representing the 12 tribes of Israel contained leaven because Israel was always changing. Leaven was allowed in sacrifices where the bread was not burnt but was to be eaten by men because men are always changing or are expected to change. Therefore, in the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Israelites are sharply reminded of the unchanging nature of God and of the need to obey Him in every matter and manner. Paul states in 1Co 5:7 that unleavened bread is representative of sincerity and truth. So the woman putting in the leaven is putting in corruption*".

The fact that we tend to agree with tradition about the interpretation of parables is because we have been preconditioned to do so. This idea about the Kingdom of Heaven being as leaven that fills the earth in these two parables is the wrong story that is taught in commentaries, and in seminaries and Bible Colleges; it is found in all Bible notes as well. Tradition says leaven is used in both the good sense and the bad sense, but it simply is not true. It is said to be used in the good sense only because of the wrong traditional interpretation of the parable of the leaven.

The obvious conclusion is that it is safe to say that virtually every organized denominational church is functioning with leavened doctrine, especially in regard to "three measures of meal":

1. **THE IDENTITY OF ISRAEL.** This is done by spiritualising the "Seed of Abraham" which comes from Abraham's loins -(Heb. 7:5+10).
2. **MULTICULTURISM.** Nehemiah 13:35, "Ye shall not give your daughters unto their sons, nor take their daughters unto your sons, or for yourselves. Did not Solomon king of Israel sin by these things?" is denied in the leavening process. This in turn leads to interracial marriage and universalist doctrines. These are still sins.
3. **LAWLESSNESS.** Rev. 22:14, "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life", is actively denied by all churches for those people already justified by faith. Thus the leaven in this measure of meal gives meaning to:

Luke 11:52 "Woe unto you, lawyers! for ye have taken away the key of knowledge: ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered".

