

The Parable of Leaven: Matthew 13:33

Steve Durham—February 1, 2025

Jesus tells a story to illustrate that the ‘Kingdom of Heaven is like leaven. The woman takes yeast—or leavening—and mixes it into the dough, and eventually the whole dough is leavened.

That’s what leavening does, it permeates and goes into something and raises it. That’s the definition of leavening, as we know, to raise something with leavening or to mingle or permeate.

- What does this parable mean?
- Why did Christ give this parable?

Let’s examine this today. I think it’s a timely thing that we do with Passover and Unleavened Bread coming up.

He gave this parable—Matt. 13:33—to the religious community, and I believe that they were not happy with it because He was advocating that leaven be used in this.

Leviticus 2:11^[transcriber’s correction]: “Any grain offering which you shall bring to the LORD shall not be made with leaven, for you shall burn no leaven, nor any honey, in any offering of the LORD made by fire.”

We know that Paul says to take the sin out of our lives, to purge out the leaven from our lives.

1-Corinthians 5:6: “Your glorying *is* not good. Don’t you know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Therefore, purge out the old leaven, so that you may become a new lump, *even* as you are unleavened. For Christ our Passover was sacrificed for us. For this reason, 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” (vs 6-8).

Matt. 13:33—here Christ uses leaven as symbolically of the Kingdom of God, illustrating the power of the Gospel message to change lives. That’s what leavening does. It changes things and the Holy Spirit in us changes our lives.

Matthew 13:33: “Another parable He spoke to them: ‘The Kingdom of Heaven is compared to leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of flour until all was leavened.’”

Notice the word **power** in Acts 1:8: “But **you yourselves shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you...**”

The power of the Gospel, the Holy Spirit is the power of God to affect change. So, this parable—Matt. 13:33—shows the good use of leaven, not the bad. It is given as a teaching from Christ who never sinned. He was sinless and our perfect Passover. So, it’s a good parable!

The Pharisees at that time were not happy with it because they thought it was advocating the use of leaven in the offering, which we’ll see later in Lev. 23 and Lev. 2 with the firstfruits that it does.

But this parable is for us today. It was for them and it’s for those in the future. It’s far reaching, a far reaching lesson for all of us. We learn by it and we grow by it.

Matthew 13:33: “Another parable He spoke to them: ‘The Kingdom of Heaven is compared to leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of flour until all was leavened.’”

If we take this verse apart, phrase or word-by-word, and put it back together, we’re going to be able to see some of the meaning between the lines in these words of what Christ was saying:

- they are leaven
- a woman
- she hid it
- three measures of flour
- until all was leavened

This is 29 words, one verse, but we’re going to be able to take it apart and put it back together and see what it means. So we’ll do that today.

We’ve already seen the impact of leaven had in the offerings. It was an offering that represented the firstfruits; leaven represented the firstfruits. It causes growth and permeates whatever it touches. This parable shows the characteristic of leaven upon the whole world.

This is the meaning of the parable, ***how the Kingdom of God will reach out and include and encompass the entire world!*** Let’s look at those parts:

Leaven:

- it’s doctrine
- it’s teaching
- it’s God’s Word
- it’s God’s Truth

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Leaven is also likened to bad doctrine, but we're not going to talk about that. Rev. 17 shows bad doctrine, false doctrine, and all that. We're going to talk about *the good doctrine* in:

John 7:16: "Jesus answered them and said, 'My doctrine is not Mine, but His Who sent Me. If anyone desires to do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it is from God, or *whether* I speak from My own self'" (vs 16-17).

He did nothing of His own. He did everything the Father said to do. *His will was Christ's will, and Christ's will was His will!* **The doctrine was the Father's!**

Colossians 1:9: "For this cause we also, from the day that we heard *of it*, do not cease to pray for you and to ask **that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.**"

Filled with the doctrine and the teaching backed by the Holy Spirit, which gives understanding. Here's the effect that it causes in our lives:

Verse 10: "That you may walk worthily of the Lord, unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work and growing in the knowledge of God."

Every good work through the Holy Spirit in us! Not our works.

2-Peter 3:18: "Rather, be growing in *the* grace and *the* knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ...."

So, once we receive the Holy Spirit in the doctrine, we continue to increase in:

- character
- understanding
- Holy Righteous character

The Woman:

A woman pictures a religious entity. In this case, it's the Church of God. In this Parable of the Kingdom, *the woman represents the true Church of God!* She is the mother of Jerusalem above; she is the mother of us all.

Ephesians 5:27: "That He might present it to Himself *as* the glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it might be Holy and without blame."

She has no spot and wrinkle, because she has God's Holy Spirit, which makes her Holy and blameless through the blood of Jesus Christ. *That's how we are blameless!* The Church is a light to the world; *we are to be lights to the world!*

It tells us in Matthew that we 'salt set on a hill'; we're to be a light set on the hill so the entire world can see us. See that example and glorify the Father.

Three Measures of Meal:

Meal mixed together and baked makes bread—that's God's Word!

John 6:31^[transcriber's correction]: "'Our fathers ate manna in the wilderness, as it is written: 'He gave them bread to eat *that came down* from heaven.'" Then Jesus said to them, 'Truly, truly I say to you, Moses did not give you the bread from heaven; **but My Father gives you the true Bread** from heaven. For the Bread of God is He Who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.'" (vs 31-33)—*the Way, the Truth and the Life!*

Verse 34: "Therefore, they said to Him, 'Lord, give this bread to us always.' Jesus said to them, '**I AM the Bread of Life**; the one who comes to Me shall never hunger; and the one who believes in Me shall never thirst at any time'" (vs 34-35).

Remember what Jesus said to the woman at the well in John 4: 'I give you water, this water will I give you will never end. You will never be thirsty of rivers of living water.'

- Christ is the Word
 - He's the Bread of Life
- with the Holy Spirit and the Word*
- we grow
 - the Word increases

So, these three measures of meal, three parts to the bread—or the Word—three equals *completeness*. You have the entire Word of God. On a physical note, there's the tripartite division of the Law—the Law, the Writings and the Prophets—happen to be three.

Gen. 18 is where Abraham entertained the three men, probably Christ and two angels. There are the three angels in Revelation that take the Gospel and go out and preach it to the to the innumerable multitude. There are three angels that preach the Word. They take it out. They go out to the world, which we are told to do, as well. Also, Sarah brought three measures of meal to them to eat.

Now, the woman hid the leavening in the meal and in fine flour. She talks about fine flour. So, *the Gospel is hidden! It's a mystery* from the world right now.

2-Corinthians 4:3^[transcriber's correction]: "But if our Gospel is hidden, it is hidden to those who are perishing; **in whom the god of this age has blinded the minds of those who do not believe,** lest the

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Light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ, Who is the image of God, should shine unto them”(vs 3-4).

You can think about the veil over Moses, *there's a veil been put over their eyes!* When Christ spoke to them, He didn't tell them point blank, *He spoke to them in parables!*

Mark 4:11: “And He said to them, ‘To you it has been given to know the mystery of the Kingdom of God; but to those who are without, all things are done in parables.’” *There's a reason for that; it wasn't their time!*

So *the three measures of flour made with fine flour*—represents a refined flour, *pure! The purity of the saints!*

The purpose of the grain offering was to worship God and acknowledge that He was their Provider. This fine flour, as we grow, we realize that more and more!

Genesis 18:18: “Since Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?”

We remember that the Lord took Abraham out at night and he saw the stars and he saw the sand of the sea:

- the physical and the spiritual blessing
- the birthright and the scepter
 - we are blessed by that
 - we are still recipients of those blessings
 - the whole world has been blessed through those nations of Israel

They have received the blessings of Abraham!
From a spiritual standpoint:

Galatians 3:29^[transcriber's correction]: “And **IF** you are Christ's, **THEN** you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to *the* promise.”

Romans 8:14: “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are *the* sons of God”—*we are heirs!*

It talks about being coheirs with Him and all those in Heb. 11 who looked for a city. Still, they have not received that promise. They're looking for that, and Abraham is included in that group.

Until All was Leavened

She mixed it until all was leavened and it says *encrypted!* In other words, you can't find it in there without the Holy Spirit, and without that calling:

- you're not going to know the Gospel
- you're not going to know the Truth

Christ told the disciples and us *to go to all the world, to take this out to all the world* : the Gospel, the Kingdom of God.

Matthew 28:18: “And Jesus came *and* spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. Therefore, go *and* make disciples in all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit; teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you.... [the Word and the doctrine] ...And lo, I am with you always, *even* until the completion of the age.’ Amen” (vs 18-20)

There are many other places in the Bible to talk about the three measures of meal and the thanksgiving, the offering of thanks and offering of provision. And each one of them gave an ephod, which was much, much more than they had to. It shows their gratitude in giving more than just the ‘seah,’ which the smallest amount that you could give.

So why was this sacrifice made with leavening?

Leviticus 2:12: “As an **offering of the firstfruits**, you shall bring them to the LORD. But they shall not be burned upon the altar for a sweet savor.”

We can also think about Pentecost. Those two loaves were made with leaven and then they were they were waved on the 50th Day.

Leviticus 23:17: “You shall bring out of your homes two wave loaves of two tenth parts. They shall be of fine flour. They shall be baked with leaven; *they are* the firstfruits to the LORD.”

We don't have time to go into all of the two loaves and the symbolism there, but they represent the firstfruits to God. They're made with flour. They're refined and pure at that time, *the purity of the saints!*

Fine meal is a major component of these offerings. The offerings of bread and grain. Fine meal makes up the character, *the Holy righteous character of the firstfruits* to God, *who are the saints.*

Once they've been baked, they are set; *they have their character set!* That's what will happen! That's *become you there for perfect! At the resurrection we are made perfect!* We have our character set at that time.

1-Peter 1:22: “Having purified your lives by obedience to the Truth unto unfeigned... [sincere] ...brotherly love through *the* Spirit, love one another fervently with a pure heart.”

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That's how you do it. You do it with God's Holy Spirit leading and guiding us. Putting out the leavening of sin and putting in this unfeigned brotherly love through the Spirit. Obedience to the Truth, being purified.

Verse 23: "For you have been begotten again, not from corruptible seed, but from incorruptible *seed*, by the living Word of God, which remains forever."

Likening leaven to the Kingdom of God, leavening—when it is finished—permeates and rises within the loaf. Then when the bread is baked, it becomes permanent. It can't be changed anymore. It is what it is. The character is set. Holy righteous character of the saints is set through the Holy Spirit you become spirit.

This could not be possible without the Holy Spirit, which is a gift from God. We know the process.

Revelation 17:14: "...and those who are with Him are **called**, and **chosen**, and **faithful**."

Acts 2:38 gives us more information: "Then Peter said to them, 'Repent and be baptized each one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, **and you yourselves shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit**.'"

The Holy Spirit works within us! Leavening works from the inside out. It helps us to see our faults and sins and purge them out of our lives—The days of Unleavened Bread **through the inner working of the Spirit!**

Ephesians 1:16—Paul tells us about that: "Do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; **that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him**" (vs 16-17). *It's giving us that Truth through the Spirit!*

Verse 18: "And may the eyes of your mind be enlightened..."

- How does that happen?
- What does that mean?

It means that you're given the Spirit and you begin to see!

"...in order that you may comprehend what is the hope of His calling, and what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the inner working of His mighty power" (vs 18-19)—*the Holy Spirit!*

- burning up the dross

- becoming therefore perfect
- growing in grace and knowledge
- becoming perfect at the resurrection
- having our character set.

God continues the purification process ***until we all come to the fullness of the measure of the stature of Christ, unto a perfect man!***

- that's the symbolism of a fine flour
- that's the purpose of the parable in Matt. 13:33

We're going to come to a time when the process will be finished and character will be set.

Revelation 22:11: "Let the one who is unrighteous be unrighteous still; and let the one who is filthy be filthy still; and let the one who is righteous be righteous still; and let the one who is Holy be Holy still. 'And behold, I am coming quickly; and My reward is with Me, to render to each one according as his work shall be. I am Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last. Blessed are those who keep His commandments, that they may have the right to eat of the Tree of Life, and may enter by the gates into the city'" (vs 11-14).

So we see that keeping the Word of God and His doctrines, the commandments of Christ is essential to our future in His Kingdom.

This parable pictures a time in the future when all the world will receive the redemption and the restitution of all things. That redemption that comes from Christ and aided by the firstfruits will receive:

- salvation
- sonship
- glorification of our bodies

in the first resurrection!

Eventually, as leaven continues to expand, it's going to include all of mankind, and eventually all will be in the Family of God.

I end with this Scripture, because it doesn't stop there:

Isa. 9:7 tells us that it continues, the leavening process continues.

Isaiah 9:7: "Of the increase of His government and peace ***there shall be no end***, upon the throne of David, and over His Kingdom, to order it and to establish it with judgment and with righteousness from ***henceforth, even forever***. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this."

Scriptural References:

- 1) Leviticus 2:11
- 2) 1-Corinthians 5:6-8
- 3) Matthew 13:33
- 4) Acts 1:8
- 5) Matthew 13:33
- 6) John 7:16-17
- 7) Colossians 1:9-10
- 8) 2-Peter 3:18
- 9) Ephesians 5:27
- 10) John 6:31-35
- 11) 2-Corinthians 4:3-4
- 12) Mark 4:11
- 13) Genesis 18:18
- 14) Galatians 3:29
- 15) Romans 8:14
- 16) Matthew 28:18-20
- 17) Leviticus 2:12
- 18) Leviticus 23:17
- 19) 1-Peter 1:22-23
- 20) Revelation 17:14
- 21) Acts 2:38
- 22) Ephesians 1:16-19
- 23) Revelation 22:11-14
- 24) Isaiah 9:7

Scriptures referenced, not quoted:

- John 4
- Hebrews 11

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