

when she dedicated Samuel to God (1Sa 1:24). The three measures of meal in Jesus' parable picture **fellowship with God**.

- 6) Leaven in the meal or flour broke it up, expanded it with air, and changed its original form. "**Fermentation implied a process of corruption... To the Jews, then, leaven was a symbol of evil.**" Lockyer, *All the Parables*, p. 191-192

c. Next, we must identify the main truth He taught.

- 1) It would be an inconsistent interpretation of **leaven** to say that it referred to the advancement, spread and enlargement of God's kingdom. All the other uses of leaven in the Bible picture it as evil.
- 2) The main thought is that the leaven of false religion has been kneaded into the three measures of meal (i.e., true fellowship with God) and thus corrupting it.
- 3) The first four parables work together. The sower sows good seed. When it lands on good ground, it produces fruit. Tares sown by the wicked one growing with the good wheat will be burned on harvest judgment day. The mustard seed growing small to large becomes a lodging place for evil birds of false religion. The leaven hidden in the three measures of meal offered to God, spreads and corrupts the meal.

d. Finally, note applications for our lives.

- 1) We live in a world that seeks to penetrate and corrupt true fellowship with God.
- 2) Knowing this, we must seek to separate from evil to maintain sweet fellowship with God.

Conclusion: What should you do? Make sure that you have truly repented of your sin and trusted Christ to save your soul. Then realise that living in Christ's kingdom you will constantly face opposition. False doctrine will constantly seek an inroad into your life. You must stay true to the Lord though living among tares (false believers), invaded by birds (evil teachers), and surrounded by leaven (evil influences).

Song: Stand Up For Jesus, **378**

Mustard & Leaven Parables

24 January 2021 AM – Matthew 13:31-35 – Parables21 – Scott Childs

Introduction: The parables before us today have been interpreted in many ways; therefore, we must proceed carefully. We must interpret the terms consistently with the other parables in this chapter as well as similar terms elsewhere in the Bible. Commentator G. Campbell Morgan gives this wise advice, "**Whatever the popular interpretation may be, it is not therefore necessarily the correct one. It may be correct, but popularity is not any guarantee of accuracy.**" Some have taken these parables to teach that Christ's kingdom will grow and make the world better and better. That certainly has not happened.

Transition: Thus, I want us to examine the terms used in these real-to-life stories, find the main truth taught, and make personal applications.

1. The Parable of the Mustard Seed

a. Let's examine the true-to-life story

- 1) Jesus said that the kingdom of heaven (i.e., His reign in the lives of Christians during the church age) is like a grain of mustard seed.
- 2) Mustard seeds are very small. Farmers and gardeners in Palestine often planted it.
- 3) Though not the smallest seed to exist, it was the smallest planted in that time.
- 4) The mustard plant grew larger than other herbs. Some say up to three metres tall.
- 5) Birds, seeking shelter and seeds came and lodged in the branches of the mustard plant.

b. Now let's examine the terms Jesus used.

- 1) We find the word **mustard** in the Bible only in this parable recorded by Matthew, Mark and Luke. It is an herb.
- 2) The **kingdom of heaven** was not the mustard seed, but the seed planted in the field. Jesus was focussing on the plant that represented the church age.
- 3) The **birds** came and **lodged in the branches**. In the parable of the Sower, Jesus identified the birds as the wicked one, Satan or the devil. Therefore, the birds that

lodge in the mustard branches must be associated with Satan.

- 4) The seed started very *small* but *grew* into a very large plant. Jesus' emphasis is on both the tiny beginning and the abnormal growth compared to other plants.
 - a) The kingdom of heaven in the hearts of true believers had a small beginning. When Jesus ascended back into heaven, 120 faithful followers led by 11 faithful disciples were the core of that tiny beginning.
 - b) Within a few weeks, the kingdom of heaven grew quickly until Christ's subjects numbered in the thousands.
 - c) By the end of the first century, Christianity had spread into most parts of the known inhabited world.
 - d) Today, there are true Christians all over the world.
- 5) Like the birds that ate the seeds and like tares in the wheat, these birds are Satan's unbelievers. They lodge in the mustard plant that represents believers in the church age. They are not part of the tree, but lodging in it as if they belonged.
- 6) Since the first century, Satan has been deceiving multitudes with various forms of "works" religions. Today, millions of unregenerate religious people, like the birds, lodge in the branches of Christ's kingdom.

c. Next, let's identify the main truth He taught.

- 1) The rapid growth of Christianity must have been a great encouragement to first century believers.
- 2) The main truth seems to be that though Christ's kingdom started small and grew large, it is filled with unregenerate birds, unbelievers who are children of the devil.

d. Finally, note applications for our lives.

- 1) We must beware of the many religious unbelievers who pose as Christians and yet are the devil's birds. They do not belong in God's kingdom, yet they lodge their as if they do belong.
- 2) People often ask, "Why are there so many religions?" The answer is that religion is a manmade substitute for biblical

Christianity. The Scripture tells us, (Ephesians 2:8-9) "*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.*" (Acts 3:19) "*Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out ...*"

2. The Parable of the Leaven

a. Let's examine the true-to-life story

- 1) Jesus spoke of a woman putting leaven into three measures of meal to leaven the whole lump of dough.
- 2) Making bread was a task with which every woman in Jesus' audience was very familiar.

b. Now let's examine the terms Jesus used.

- 1) The *kingdom of heaven* again refers to the church age where Christ reigns in Christian's lives.
- 2) Jesus said that *the kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened*. He did NOT say that the kingdom of heaven is like leaven. The whole statement must be read.
- 3) *Leaven* in the Bible always pictures evil. (Matthew 16:6) "*Then Jesus said unto them, Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.*" (Mark 8:15) "*And he charged them, saying, Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and of the leaven of Herod.*" (1 Corinthians 5:8) "*Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.*" Speaking of a hindrance to the truth, Paul wrote, (Galatians 5:9) "*A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.*" God rejected all leaven in offerings made to Him (Lev 2:11).
- 4) Perhaps the *woman* pictures false religion.
- 5) The woman hid the leaven in *three measures of meal*. Three measures of meal (i.e., one ephah) was what Sarah prepared from Abraham's divine visitors (Gen 18:6). This was "*a meal of fellowship, of hospitality.*" ^{Morgan} Gideon offered an ephah of flour in his offering to the heavenly visitor (Judg 6:19). Hannah offered an ephah of flour