

THE GROWTH AND HARVEST OF THE APPEARANCE OF THE KINGDOM (II)

LEAVEN

In the Acts

Now we need to see **the evil things that are contained within the great Babylon. These things may be considered as leaven.** First, we need to read **Acts 5:1-11**: “A certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a piece of property and **put aside for himself some of the proceeds**, his wife also being aware of it. And he brought some part of it and laid it at the feet of the apostles. But Peter said, Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to deceive the Holy Spirit and to put aside for yourself some of the proceeds of the land? While it remained, was it not your own? And when it was sold, was it not under your authority? Why is it that you have contrived this thing in your heart? **You have not lied to men but to God.** And when Ananias heard these words, he fell down and expired; and great fear came upon all those who heard this. And the young men arose and wrapped him up; and carrying him out, they buried him. And it happened that after an interval of about three hours, his wife, not knowing what had happened, came in. And Peter answered her, Tell me whether you have sold the land for this much? And she said, Yes, for this much. And Peter said to her, Why is it that it was agreed between you two to test the Spirit of the Lord? Behold, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out. And she fell down instantly at his feet and expired. And the young men came in and found her dead; and carrying her out, they buried her with her husband. And great fear came upon the whole church and upon all those who heard these things.”

We may say that this is the first record of leaven creeping into the church life. What kind of leaven was this? This leaven may be considered as **hypocrisy, falsehood**, or simply a kind of **showing off**. They did something to make a show. Although they were not that consecrated, they made a **pretense of consecration**. This is the first leaven that Satan attempted to put into the church life. This account shows us that **in the church life we must be pure. We must be in the reality of the kingdom, and we must be pure in our doing good. If we would do good, we should not blow a trumpet or make a show. It is better for us to hide ourselves when we do good. We should not pretend.** We should **not seek after vainglory. We all must be careful today. Especially with the matter of money, there is a great temptation.** Either we would not give at all, or we would give in a way to seek glory. That is leaven. **We must be careful.** All the leading brothers must be alert to keep the door shut against this kind of thing. Sometimes when people donate something to the church, they have an attitude of seeking vainglory. This is the first leaven that crept into the church life.

Another account of leaven creeping into the church is found in **Acts 8:18-23**: “When Simon saw that through the laying on of the hands of the apostles the Spirit was given, **he offered them money**, saying, Give me also this authority that on whomever I lay my hands he may receive the Holy Spirit. But Peter said to him, **May your silver go with you into destruction**, because you thought that you would acquire the gift of God **through money**. You have no part nor lot in this matter, for **your heart is not straight before God**. Repent therefore from this wickedness of yours and beseech the Lord if perhaps the intent of your heart may be forgiven you; for I see that you are in the **gall of bitterness and in the bond of unrighteousness**.” For Simon to consider that the gift of God could be purchased with money indicated that **his heart was not right**. This too was a kind of leaven, related not only to money but also to **pride**. Simon wanted to be able to lay his hands on people for them to receive the Holy Spirit. **He wanted to be somebody.** This kind of leaven is very subtle, and it is within us all.

Acts 15:1 reads, “Certain men came down from Judea and began to teach the brothers, **Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.**” To teach in this way is a kind of leaven. It is the **leaven of a wrong teaching**. On the one hand, we do not care that much for the doctrines, but on the other hand, **we must be alert that no improper doctrines could come in to damage the church life.**

In 1 Corinthians

In **1 Corinthians 5:1-2** more leaven is mentioned: “It is actually reported that there is **fornication** among you, and such fornication that does not even occur among the Gentiles, that someone has his stepmother. And you are

puffed up? And have you not rather mourned, that the one who has done this deed might be removed from your midst?" Then **verses 6 through 8** say, "**Your boasting is not good.** Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? **Purge out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, even as you are unleavened; for our Passover, Christ, also has been sacrificed.** So then let us keep the feast, **not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and evil,** but **with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.**"

Verses 11 through 13 continue: "Now I have written to you **not to mingle with anyone who is called a brother, if he is a fornicator or a covetous man or an idolater or a reviler or a drunkard or a rapacious man, with such a one not even to eat.** For what have I to do with judging those who are outside the church? Do you not judge those who are within the church? But those who are outside, God will judge. Remove the evil man from among yourselves." **We must realize that the Lord will never allow this kind of wicked person to stay in the church life. They must be put away. In a sense, they must be chased away, even excommunicated.** Thus, we can see that there are two kinds of persons with whom we should not fellowship. First are the **antichrists** like those mentioned in **2 John**, who have gone beyond and do not abide in the teaching of Christ. **The antichrists do not believe that Christ is God or that Christ is the Son of God. They do not believe that Christ died on the cross to accomplish redemption, was resurrected, and today is enthroned in the heavens. These are the antichrists. We should not greet them, and we should not grant them hospitality.** The second are the **wicked persons** who are mentioned in **1 Corinthians**. We should **not allow them to remain among us unless they repent, because it is an insult to the testimony of God. If we allow such wicked persons to remain in the church life, it will become dirty, polluted, and insulted, and we will lose the testimony of God. We must be alert not to receive any antichrists and not to allow any wicked persons to remain among us. The church must be clear of all these dark things.**

In Galatians

We can see the seed of leaven developed also in **Galatians 1:6-9**: "I marvel that you are so quickly removing from Him who has called you in the grace of Christ to a **different gospel**, which is not another gospel, only there are some who trouble you and desire to pervert the gospel of Christ. But if even we or an angel out of heaven should announce to you a **gospel beyond** that which we have announced to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, now also I say again, **If anyone announces to you a gospel beyond that which you have received, let him be accursed.**" Surely that kind of gospel which was beyond the gospel that Paul preached is a kind of leaven.

In Ephesians

Ephesians 4:14 indicates that even teachings from the Bible may become a kind of leaven if **used improperly**. "That we may be no longer little children tossed by waves and carried about by every **wind of teaching** in the sleight of men, in craftiness with a view to a system of error." **We must realize that a wind of teaching can corrupt the church life.** It is not wise to emphasize teaching too much; if we do, we will become leavened.

In Philippians

Philippians 1:15a says, "Some preach Christ even because of **envy and strife.**" Even with the preaching of Christ, there could be some leaven. The preaching of Christ is good, but the envy and strife is a kind of leaven. Then **verse 17a** says, "The others announce Christ out of **selfish ambition**, not purely." Here is the preaching of Christ plus rivalry as a kind of leaven.

In Colossians

The book of **Colossians** also develops the matter of the leaven. In **2:8** it says, "Beware that no one carries you off as spoil through his **philosophy** and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the elements of the world, and not according to Christ." The philosophy of men is a kind of leaven. **Colossians 2:18-19a** says, "Let no one defraud you by judging you unworthy of your prize, in self-chosen lowliness and the worship of the angels, dwelling on the things which he has seen, vainly puffed up by his mind set on the flesh, and **not holding the Head.**" Even not holding the Head is a kind a leaven. We all must hold the Head, Christ.

Verses 20b through 23 continue: "Why, as living in the world, do you subject yourselves to ordinances: do not handle, nor taste, nor touch, (regarding things which are all to perish when used) according to the commandments and teachings of men? Such things indeed have a reputation of wisdom in self-imposed worship and lowliness and

severe treatment of the body, but are not of any value against the indulgence of the flesh.” **The self-imposed humility, the worship of the angels, and the appearance of wisdom are a kind of leaven.**

In 2 Thessalonians

We can also see the leaven in **2 Thessalonians**. In **2:2** we read, “That you be **not quickly shaken in mind nor alarmed, neither by a spirit nor by word nor by a letter** as if by us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come.” In the ancient times, **some pretended to be authorities in speaking or writing something concerning the Lord’s coming back**. This is a kind of leaven. “Let no one deceive you in any way, because it will not come unless the apostasy comes first and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of perdition” (v. 3). All the means of deceiving the Lord’s children are a kind of leaven.

In 1 Timothy

Paul wrote much to Timothy concerning leaven. **First Timothy 1:3-4** says, “Even as I exhorted you, when I was going into Macedonia, to remain in Ephesus in order that you might charge certain ones **not to teach different things** nor to **give heed to myths** and **unending genealogies**, which produce questionings rather than God’s economy, which is in faith.” **Here Paul considers different teachings, myths, and the genealogies as leaven**. Then **verses 6 and 7** say, “From which things some, having misaimed, have turned aside to vain talking, **desiring to be teachers of the law**, though they understand neither the things that they say, nor concerning what they confidently affirm.” Desiring to be a teacher is a kind of leaven. **If you teach something that you do not know, that teaching is also a kind of leaven.**

Then we go to **4:1-3**: “The Spirit says expressly that in later times some will **depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and teachings of demons by means of the hypocrisy of men who speak lies, of men who are branded in their own conscience as with a hot iron, who forbid marriage and command abstaining from foods**, which God has created to be partaken of with thanksgiving by those who believe and have full knowledge of the truth.” Surely all these items are leaven.

In 2 Timothy

In **2 Timothy 2:16-18** Paul says, “**Avoid profane, vain babblings**, for they will advance to more ungodliness, and their word will spread like gangrene, of whom are Hymenaeus and Philetus, who concerning **the truth have misaimed**, saying that **the resurrection has already taken place, and overthrow the faith of some**.” What a leaven this is! They were teaching that the resurrection had already taken place and that there would be no more resurrection. Then **verse 20** says, “In a great house there are not only gold and silver vessels but also **wooden and earthen**; and some are unto honor, and some unto dishonor.” No doubt, the wooden and earthen vessels unto dishonor are a kind of leaven.

Now let us read **2 Timothy 3:5-9**: “Having an outward form of godliness, though denying its power; from these also turn away. For of these are those who creep into houses and take captive silly women heaped with sins, who are led by various desires and are always learning yet never able to come to the full knowledge of the truth. And in the manner that Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these also oppose the truth; **men corrupted in mind, disapproved concerning the faith**. But they will not advance farther, for their folly will be completely manifest to all, as also the folly of those became.” Surely the corrupt minds, disapproved concerning the faith, are leaven. “But **evil men** and **impostors** will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived” (v. 13). The evil men and impostors are leaven. Then **4:3-4** says, “The time will come when **they will not tolerate the healthy teaching**; but according to their own lusts **they will heap up to themselves teachers, having itching ears**, and they will turn away their ear from the truth and will be turned aside to myths.” They will not tolerate the healthy teaching. The desire to hear some teaching is a kind of leaven. To have itching ears is a kind of leaven.

In Titus

We can see more leaven in the book of **Titus**. In **1:10-11** it says, “There are many **unruly men, vain talkers** and **deceivers**, especially those of the circumcision, whose mouths must be stopped, who overthrow whole households, teaching things for the sake of base gain, which they ought not to do.” Here unruly men and vain talkers and deceivers are mentioned. Surely these are a kind of leaven.

In Hebrews

The leaven is further developed in the book of Hebrews. **Hebrews 12:16** reads, “Lest there be any fornicator or **profane person** like Esau, who for one meal gave up his own birthright.” A profane person is leaven. Then Hebrews 13:9 reads, “Do not be carried away by **various strange teachings**, for it is good for the heart to be confirmed by grace, not by the food of sacrifices, by which those who walk were not profited.” Various strange teachings are surely the leaven.

In 3 John

Now let us read **3 John 9-10**: “I wrote something to the church; but Diotrephes, who loves **to be first among them**, does not receive us. For this reason, if I come, I will bring to remembrance his works which he does, **babbling against us with evil words**; and not being satisfied with these, neither does he himself receive the brothers, and those intending to do so **he forbids and casts out of the church**.” Diotrephes was a person who was desirous for a position of preeminence in the church. Such a person is a kind of leaven in the church life.

In Revelation

Now we come to the harvest of the leaven in the book of Revelation. First, let us read **Revelation 2:6**: “This you have, that you **hate the works of the Nicolaitans**, which I also hate.” **Nicolaitans refers to the clergy**. The works of the Nicolaitans are the works of the clergy. Their works are a kind of leaven. Then **verses 14 and 15** say, “I have a few things against you, that you have some there who hold the **teaching of Balaam**, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to **eat idol sacrifices** and to **commit fornication**. In the same way you also have some who hold in like manner the **teaching of the Nicolaitans**.” There are two kinds of teachings mentioned here: the teaching of Balaam and the teaching of the Nicolaitans. In **verse 6** there were the works of the Nicolaitans, but eventually, the works became a kind of teaching. **The leaven always comes into the church in this way—first by works and eventually as a kind of teaching**. These teachings are a kind of leaven that corrupts the church.

Verses 20 through 24 read, “I have something against you, that you tolerate the woman Jezebel, **she who calls herself a prophetess and teaches and leads My slaves astray to commit fornication and to eat idol sacrifices**. And I gave her time that she might repent, and she is not willing to repent of her fornication. Behold, I cast her into a bed, and those who commit adultery with her, into great tribulation, unless they repent of her works; and her children I will kill with death; and all the churches will know that I am He who searches the inward parts and the hearts; and I will give to each one of you according to your works. But I say to you—the rest in Thyatira, as many as do not have this teaching, who have not known the deep things of Satan, as they say—I put no other burden upon you.” **These verses are a real and accurate description of the Roman Catholic Church. It has the idols, the fornication, the teachings, and the deep things of Satan**. All these items are simply leaven. This woman Jezebel is the same woman in **Matthew 13** who hid the leaven in the fine flour.

Then we need to read **Revelation 17:4-5**: “The woman was clothed in purple and scarlet, and gilded with gold and precious stone and pearls, having **in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the unclean things of her fornication**. And on her forehead there was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF THE HARLOTS AND THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.” This woman held a golden cup, but within it were abominations and the unclean things of her fornication. What a leaven this is! And **this leaven is hidden in a golden cup**. Outwardly, it appears to have something of God. We know that gold always signifies God’s divine nature. Outwardly, there is the appearance of God, but inwardly, there is much leaven. Babylon the Great is herself a harlot and the mother of many smaller harlots.

No doubt the woman in **Matthew 13** is the woman in **Revelation 2 and 17**. **Matthew 13** says clearly that the woman took the leaven and hid it in the fine flour. **Fine flour signifies the Lord Jesus as our food**. Fine flour was used in making the meal offerings, which typify Christ’s humanity. The meal offering was food for both God and the priests. The meal is just Christ Himself. **Christ is the fine flour for God’s satisfaction and for our satisfaction**. But the Roman Catholic Church as that evil woman took leaven and put it into the fine flour. In other words, **the Roman Catholic Church took many evil things and added them into the truth of Christ**. For example, **the birth of Christ is the truth, but the Roman Catholic Church picked up the matter of Christmas and added it to the birth of Christ**. We must differentiate between the birth of Christ and Christmas. **The birth of Christ is the fine flour**, and

Christmas is the leaven. In **Matthew 1** there is the birth of Christ as the fine flour. Christmas was added as a kind of leaven.

The Roman Catholic Church has repeatedly picked up something evil, pagan, dirty, satanic, and demonic to put into the truth of Christ. It holds a golden cup that in outward appearance seems right, but many abominations and fornications are hiding within. **The great Babylon is gilded with gold, precious stone, and pearls. Its appearance is somewhat like the holy city, New Jerusalem.** However, **the holy city is not gilded with these things; it is actually built with these precious materials.** This means that the gold, precious stone, and pearls are not the substance and inward reality of the great Babylon but merely an outward covering. **The New Jerusalem, the holy city, is built with these materials as its substance and inward reality.** Both within and without there is the gold. But with the great Babylon **there is only the appearance of gold covering the inward impurity.**

In **Matthew** there is the **seed of the leaven**, in the **Epistles** there is **the growth**, and eventually in **Revelation** there is the **harvest of the leaven**. **The harvest of the reality of the kingdom is a city that is pure gold throughout.** **The harvest of the appearance of the kingdom is also a city, but it is only gilded with gold.** This means that the great Babylon is a counterfeit, false city. **We must be absolute for the reality of the kingdom and have nothing to do with the appearance of the kingdom.**

Which city are you in? I am afraid that you may still hold on to some leaven of the great Babylon. Please spend time to be impressed with all the different kinds of leaven. **Praise the Lord that we have seen something concerning the kingdom!** After reading all these chapters, can you say that you have never seen anything concerning the kingdom? Can you say that the chapters in Matthew are still a mystery to you? We have seen the reality of the kingdom, the appearance of the kingdom, and the manifestation of the kingdom. **Praise the Lord for the reality and for the manifestation of the kingdom! But be alert and be careful concerning the appearance of the kingdom. We are not for the leaven but for the reality. We are not for Babylon; we are for Jerusalem.** This is the pure word of the Lord, and it is so clear to us. **The reality of the kingdom issues in the New Jerusalem, and the appearance of the kingdom issues in the great Babylon, the consummation of falsehood.**

(The Kingdom, Chapter 44)