

Seeking My King & His Kingdom

#22 Tares, Birds & A Wicked Woman

Matt. 13:33 Another parable He spoke to 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."

1. The woman is an opponent of Christ and infuses His church with corrupting ideas and damnable heresies.

2. In Scripture, a woman is used symbolically to represent a spiritual or religious entity.

"Wickedness" Zechariah 5:7-8

"Jezebel" Revelation 2:20 Woman In Church of Thyatira

The "Great Harlot" Revelation 17:1

She foreshadows the "False Wicked Religious System" referred to in Rev. 17:5 as the "Mother of Harlots & Abominations of the Earth."

3. False religious elements, LEAVEN, will be introduced into the Mystery Kingdom resulting in spiritual fornication; inward doctrinal corruption.

a. Leaven is always seen as an evil and wicked ingredient that continues to corrupt.

[I Cor. 5:6; Gal. 5:9; and Mark 8:15; Pharisees, Sadducees, Herod, Corinth & Galatia]

4. The woman HIDES Leaven in the meal. Hid is translated from the Greek word *enkrupto*, from which comes the English word "encrypt." The root word, *krupto*, means "to conceal" or "to keep secret." Stealth is involved here; something underhanded is going on.

This woman is surreptitiously [kept secret, especially because it would not be approved of] placing the leaven of false doctrine in the Pure Word of God.

Note: The meal started out unleavened and became leavened—the pure has become impure.

Where have we seen something before that started out one thing and became something else?

The Parable of the Mustard Seed Jesus taught that the small, powerful, and simple faith that He planted would grow into a large and corrupt institution.

The Parable of the Leaven focuses on the CORRUPTION.

The Parable of the Leaven is a behind-the-scenes look at how the mustard seed became a tree.

It was morphed by being Covertly Corrupted By A False Religious System. The symbols have been changed to fit what we need to see, but we are still looking at the same thing:

The Corruption Of The Original Faith Was Transformed Into Something Else.

Question: What led to the church's corruption and spiritual darkness which lasted almost 10 centuries? When Constantine became Emperor of the Roman Empire in 313 AD, paganism was "baptized" and Satan joined the church. Pagan practices and idol worship began their poison corruption of the church.

In the church of Pergamos, the apostasy was symbolized by Balaam, a prophet whose bad influence came only from the outside. But in the church of Thyatira, the apostasy is now symbolized by Jezebel, a queen governing from the inside, leading the people to commit evil. It is an example of results when believers or churches are led astray and accept or tolerate a false system of worship. The stage had been set for the complete development of the

papal system, the "Dark Ages," which dominated western civilization for almost 950 years, from 590 to 1517. During this time, persecution, under the guise of Christianity, committed more enormities than ever disgraced the annals of paganism.

The Roman Catholic Church nearly strangled the life out of Christ's true church.

As two millennia have unfolded, this apostate "church" has increased in number and wickedness.

Spirit of Jezebel: Deliberate falsification of the Truth in order to lead astray.

MANY compromised and accepted the falsehoods.

We truly have come to the entire leavening of the institutional church. It has taken two thousand years to get to this point. The leavened flour or meal in the public, global context is apostate Christianity, proclaiming another gospel, another Jesus, and another Holy Spirit.

The Characteristics of Apostasy and Apostates

Jude outlines how to recognize apostasy and strongly urges those in the body of Christ to contend earnestly for the faith (vs. 3). [But] I found it necessary *and* was impelled to write you and urgently appeal to *and* exhort [you] to contend for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints [the faith which is that sum of Christian belief which was delivered verbally to the holy people of God].

a. The Greek word translated "contend earnestly" is a compound verb from which we get the word "agonize." It is in the present infinitive form, which means the struggle will be continuous;

b. Every Christian is called to this fight so it is critical all believers sharpen their discernment skills so they can recognize and prevent apostasy in their midst.

c. Jude 1:4 points out 3 traits of apostasy and apostate teachers.

1. For Certain Men Have Crept In Stealthily [gaining entrance secretly by a side door].

- Crept is found in no other book of the Bible.
- Apostasy rarely begins in an overt and easily detectable manner.
- A.W. Tozer: "So skilled is error at imitating truth, the two are constantly being mistaken for each other. It takes a sharp eye to know which brother is Cain and which is Abel."
- II Cor. 11:13-14 Such people are false apostles, dishonest workers who are masquerading as apostles of the Messiah.¹⁴ And no wonder, since Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. [outward pleasing behavior]
- They don't deny truth outright; twist it to fit their own agenda.
- R.C. Lensky: "The worst forms of wickedness consist of perversions of the truth."

2. Their Doom Was Predicted Long Ago, Ungodly Persons Who Pervert The Grace Of Our God Into Lawlessness And Wantonness And Immorality [use God's grace as a license to sin]

3. Apostates "Disown And Deny Our Only Master And Lord Jesus Christ."

a. Titus 1:15-16 Everything is clean to those who are clean, but nothing is clean to those who are corrupt and unbelieving. Indeed, their very way of thinking and their consciences have been corrupted.¹⁶ They claim to know God, but they deny him by their actions. They are detestable, disobedient, and disqualified to do anything good.

b. Unrighteous behavior reveals the true self.

A few years ago in Washington, D.C., a minister said, "We liberal churchmen are no longer interested in the fundamental modernist controversy. We do not believe we should even waste our time engaging in it. So far as we are concerned, it makes no difference whether Christ was born of a virgin or not. We don't even bother to form an opinion on the subject."

An Arlington, Virginia, minister said, "We have closed our minds to such trivial consideration as the question of the resurrection of Christ. If you fundamentalists wish to believe that nonsense, we have no objection, but we have more important things to preach than the presence or absence of an empty tomb twenty centuries ago."

c. Rom. 6:1-2 What should we say, then? Should we go on sinning so that grace may increase? ² Of course not! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?"

A true Christian desires to be free from sin, not to sin freely.

Jude describes eighteen unflattering Traits Of Apostates:

- | | | | |
|---------------------------|--------|----------------------------------|--------|
| 1. Ungodly | vs. 4 | 10. Grumblers | vs. 16 |
| 2. Morally perverted | vs. 4 | 11. Fault Finders | vs. 16 |
| 3. Deny Christ | vs. 4 | 12. Self-satisfying | vs. 16 |
| 4. Defile the flesh | vs. 8 | 13. Arrogant Words | vs. 16 |
| 5. Rebellious | vs. 8 | 14. False Flattery | vs. 16 |
| 6. Revile angels | vs. 8 | 15. Mockers of God | vs. 18 |
| 7. Ignorant about God | vs. 8 | 16. Cause Divisions | vs. 19 |
| 8. Proclaim false visions | vs. 10 | 17. Worldly minded | vs. 19 |
| 9. Self-destructive | vs. 10 | 18. Devoid of the Spirit/unsaved | vs. 19 |

Apostates' False Teaching Shows Their True Nature

II Pet. 2:1-2a But there were False Prophets also among the people, even as there shall be False Teachers among you, who privily [like hiding the leaven in the meal] shall bring in Damnable Heresies, even Denying The Lord That Bought Them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And Many Shall Follow Their Pernicious Ways:

II Tim. 4:3 For the time will come when they will Not Endure Sound Doctrine, but according to their Own Desires [Lusts], because they have Itching Ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; ⁴ and they will turn *their ears* away From The Truth, and be turned aside to Fables. Ultimately, the sign of an apostate is that he eventually falls away and departs from the truth of God's Word and His righteousness.

I John 2:19 "They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, so that it would be shown that they all are not of us."

Jesus Christ commended the Church of Pergamos [Rev. 2:13] for "holding fast to His name, and did not deny His name." During the time of the Church of Pergamos, major theological heresies arose which involved the Trinity and the Deity of Jesus Christ. One such heresy, "Arianism," questioned whether Jesus was truly God in the flesh or a created being.

The Bible warns about people like Arius (A.D. 250 - 336), a Christian priest from Alexandria, Egypt. About A.D. 318, Arius denied the Trinity and introduced what appeared on the surface to be an inconsequential difference between the Father and Son.

Arius argued that Jesus was not *homoousios* (of the same essence) as the Father, but was rather *homoiousios* (of similar essence). Only one Greek letter - the iota (i) - separated the two. Arius described his position in this manner: "The Father existed before the Son. There was a time when the Son did not exist. Therefore, the Son was created by the Father. Therefore, although the Son was the highest of all creatures, he was not of the essence of God."

Arius was very clever and did his best to get the people on his side, even going so far as to compose little songs that taught his theology. His winsome nature and revered position as a preacher and one who lived in denial of himself contributed also to his cause.

Result: The controversy spread throughout the empire. Christians could be heard singing a catchy tune that championed the Arian view: "There was a time when the Son was not."

In every city, wrote a historian, "bishop was contending against bishop, and the people were contending against one another, like swarms of gnats fighting in the air."

Meet Athanasius, a champion of the faith who rose up to defend the Divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ. He fought against Arius, arguing his view denied the Trinity.

Christ is not of a like substance to God, but the same substance.

To Athanasius this was not splitting of theological hairs. Salvation was at issue: only one who was fully human could atone for human sin; only one who was fully divine could have the power to save us. To Athanasius, the logic of New Testament doctrine of salvation assumed the dual nature of Christ. If Christ does not share an eternal Godhood with the Father, then our salvation would be impossible for creature cannot redeem creature. "Those who maintain 'There was a time when the Son was not' rob God of His Word, like plunderers."

Constantine Gets Involved: Word of the dispute made it to the newly converted Emperor Constantine the Great, who was more concerned with seeing church unity than theological truth. "Division in the church," he told the bishops, "is worse than war." He feared the church dispute would cause disorder within his empire. To settle the matter, Constantine called the Council of Nicea, first general council of the Christian church, in 325 AD.

Of the 1800 bishops he invited, about 300 came (all expenses paid).

Constantine's Charge To the Council: Define the nature of God for all of Christianity and eliminate confusion, controversy, and contention within the church.

The Bishops argued, fought, and eventually wrote out an early version of the Nicene Creed.

Enter: Athanasius attended the Council of Nicea at 27 years of age. His quotes:

"Jesus that I know as my Redeemer cannot be less than God."

"He became what we are, so He might make us what He is."

The Arian view was presented by Eusebius of Nicodemia, who was quite confident that once the Arian view was clearly and logically stated, the Council would overwhelmingly vote for them.

He stated how the Son was created out of nothing from the Father and different in nature and essence from the Father. The reaction was not acceptance; it was considered blasphemous.

"Eusebius was shouted down ... his speech snatched from his hand, torn to shreds, and trampled underfoot."

Ruling of the Council: (1) The Lord Jesus Christ, as the Scriptures teach, was the same substance as the Father, God of very God.

(2) They affirmed the apostles' teaching regarding the person of Christ > the one true God and the Second Person of the Trinity, with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

(3) Arianism was condemned > false doctrine

(4) The council, led by Alexander, condemned Arius as a heretic, exiled him, and made it a capital offense to possess his writings.

Constantine was pleased that peace had been restored to the church.

However, it was short-lived.

Controversy was widely discussed in the early church from A.D. 318 to 381

Required 18 councils before it was fully settled > Council of Nicaea in A.D. 325 and ended with the Council of Constantinople in A.D. 381.

Challenge From: Athanasius - Fought for Deity of Jesus Christ

Athanasius, a renowned Christian theologian, Church Father, the chief defender of Trinitarianism against Arianism, was the 20th bishop of Alexandria, and served 45 years (June 328 - May 373).

"Black Dwarf" (short, dark-skinned Egyptian) was the tag his enemies gave him. Over 17 years were spent in 5 exiles ordered by 4 different Roman emperors. There were 6 more incidents when he fled Alexandria to escape people seeking to take his life. He became known as "Athanasius contra mundum" > Athanasius against the world.

Yet in the end, his theological enemies were "exiled" from the church's teaching, and it is Athanasius's writings that shaped the future of the church. In one letter, Athanasius listed what he believed were the books that should constitute the New Testament.

"In these [27 writings] alone the teaching of godliness is proclaimed," he wrote.

"No one may add to them, and nothing may be taken away from them."

It is Athanasius's list the church eventually adopted, and it is the one we use to this day.

Athanasius, whose treatise On the Incarnation laid the foundation for the orthodox party at Nicaea, was hailed as "the noble champion of Christ." The diminutive bishop (Black Dwarf) was simply pleased that Arianism had been defeated. >>>>> But it hadn't

1. Within a few months, supporters of Arius talked Constantine into ending Arius's exile.

With a few private additions, Arius even signed the Nicene Creed.

2. The emperor ordered Athanasius to restore the heretic to fellowship.

3. When Athanasius refused, his enemies spread false charges against him. He was accused of murder, illegal taxation, sorcery, & treason—which led Constantine to exile him to Trier.

Constantine died two years later, and Athanasius returned to Alexandria as Archbishop.

1. In his years of absence, Arianism gained the upper hand.

2. Now many church leaders were espousing Arianism, and banished him again.

3. Athanasius fled to Pope Julius I in Rome. He returned in 346 AD, but would be banished three more times before he came home to stay in 366. By then he was about 70 years old.

a. In 356 AD, while In 356, while Athanasius was conducting a service with his congregation, 5,000 armed soldiers stormed the church building. Calmly, he began reading Psalm 136 and asked his congregation to respond. When He Read: "O Give Thanks Unto The Lord; For He Is Good," His Congregation Responded: "For His Mercy Endureth Forever."

b. He went into the desert to spend time with the monks and wrote articles in defense of the great truth that Christ is fully God. He stated Arians were idolaters who worshiped strange gods, no different from the heathen.

c. In 362 AD He was recalled to his flock, but was almost immediately driven away by those who were stung by his attacks against them. He left his weeping congregation, but comforted them with the words: Be of good cheer; It Is Only A Cloud, Which Will Soon Pass On.

d. He escaped hired assassins on an imperial ship on the Nile and found refuge once again in the desert. He returned & was driven away again. He spent 4 months in the tomb of his father. Athanasius, who championed the fight for Christ's name would not permit fellowship around the Lord's Table to anyone who was of the Arian persuasion. He was so strict in this regard the new emperor, Theodosius, commanded him to admit these Arians to partake of the bread and the cup.

Athanasius refused the emperor who reproved him sternly. 'Do you not realize that all the world is against you?' Athanasius' answer: 'Then I am against the world'.

Athanasius died in 373; he never saw the final victory of his lifelong cause. The church will always be indebted to the good fight he fought in protecting The Christological view of Scripture.

The Forms of Apostasy

There are two main types of apostasy

1. A falling away from key and true doctrines of the Bible into heretical teachings that proclaim to be "the real" Christian doctrine: salvation, Jesus Christ, Scripture, etc.
2. A complete renunciation of the Christian faith, which results in a full abandonment of Christ. It begins with a falling away.

Arius represents the first form of apostasy—a denial of key Christian truths (such as the divinity of Christ) that begins a downhill slide into a full departure from the faith, which is the second form of apostasy. A heretical belief becomes a heretical teaching that splinters and grows until it pollutes all aspects of a person's faith, and then the end goal of Satan is accomplished, which is a complete falling away from Christianity.

A recent example of this process is a 2010 study done by prominent atheist Daniel Dennett and Linda LaScola called "Preachers Who Are Not Believers." Dennett and LaScola's work chronicles five different preachers who over time were presented with and accepted heretical teachings about Christianity and now have completely fallen away from the faith and are either pantheists or clandestine atheists. One of the most disturbing truths highlighted in the study is that these preachers maintain their position as pastors of Christian churches with their congregations being unaware of their leader's true spiritual state.

Ideas Have Consequences

Does God take apostasy and false teaching seriously? Every New Testament book except Philemon contains warnings about false teaching. Remember: Satan did not come to the first couple in the Garden with an external armament or supernatural weapon; instead, he came to them with an idea. And it was that idea that condemned them and the rest of humankind, with the only remedy being the sacrificial death of God's Son.

Great tragedy: The apostate teacher dooms his unsuspecting followers. In Matt. 15:14, Jesus spoke about the religious leaders of His day, He said, "Let them alone; they are blind guides of the blind. And if a blind man guides a blind man, *both will fall into a pit.*"

Christian philosopher Soren Kierkegaard put it this way: "For it has never yet been known to fail that one fool, when he goes astray, takes several others with him."

In A.D. 325, the Council of Nicaea convened primarily to take up the issue of Arius and his teaching. Much to Arius's dismay, the end result was his excommunication and a statement in the Nicene Creed that affirmed Christ's divinity. Since that time, Arianism has never been accepted as a viable doctrine of the Christian faith. It has continued throughout the centuries in varying forms. The Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons of today hold a very Arian-like position on Christ's nature and deny Christ's true essence and person.

Sadly, until Christ returns and every last spiritual enemy has been removed, tares such as these will be present among the wheat [Matthew 13:24-30].

In fact, Scripture says apostasy will only get worse as Christ's return approaches.

Matt. 24:10 And then many will be offended *and repelled and will begin to distrust and desert* [Him Whom they ought to trust and obey] *and will stumble and fall away and betray one another and pursue one another with hatred.*

II Thess. 2:3 Let no one deceive *or* beguile you in any way, for that day will not come except the apostasy comes first [unless the predicted great falling away of those who have professed to be Christians has come], and the man of lawlessness (sin) is revealed, who is the son of doom.

II Tim. 3:1-5 But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: ² For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, ³ unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, ⁴ traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, ⁵ having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away! "

It is critical, now more than ever, that every believer pray for discernment, combat apostasy, and contend earnestly for the faith that has once and for all been delivered to the saints.

Jesus warned us that "false Christs and false prophets" will come and will attempt to deceive even God's elect [Matthew 24:23-27; II Peter 3:3 ; Jude 17-18].

The best way to guard yourself against falsehood and false teachers: II Tim. 2:15

1. Know The Truth - Correctly handle the Word Of Truth
2. Study The Real Thing and judge ALL teaching by what the Word of God says.

B.B. Warfield: The real question, in a word, is not a new question but the perennial old question, whether the basis of our doctrine is to be what the Bible teaches, or what men teach.

Spurgeon: Discernment is not knowing the difference between right and wrong.

It is knowing the difference between right and almost right.

3. Matt. 12:33: Jesus said "a tree is recognized by its fruit."

a. What does this teacher say about Jesus?

In Matt. 16:15-16, Jesus asks, "Who do you say I am?" Peter answers, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God," and for this answer Peter is called "blessed."

II John 1:7, 9-11 For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist. Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into *your* house, and do not give him a greeting; for the one who gives him a greeting participates in his evil deeds.

I John 2:22 Who is a liar but the person who denies that Jesus is the Messiah?

The person who denies the Father and the Son is an antichrist. [against Christ]

b. Does this teacher Preach The Gospel? The gospel is defined as the good news concerning Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection, according to the Scriptures [I Corinthians 15:1-4].

Paul warns in Gal. 1:7, 9 "Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned!"

c. Does this teacher exhibit character qualities that glorify the Lord?

Speaking of false teachers, Jude 11 says, "They have taken the way of Cain; they have rushed for profit into Balaam's error; they have been destroyed in Korah's rebellion."

In other words, a false teacher can be known by his Pride (Cain's rejection of God's plan), Greed (Balaam's prophesying for money), and Rebellion (Korah's promotion of himself over Moses).

Jesus said to beware of such people and that we would know them by their fruits.

The Challenge: William Booth (1829-1912), founder of the Salvation Army, was a man with a great zeal for the Lord, a passion for lost souls and a man of vision. On the eve of the 20th Century when Christendom was caught up in euphoria about how the Church would soon take the world for Christ, Booth predicted that the Gospel would not fare well in the new century.

Note: Our Lord Jesus never did predict phenomenal success for His church.

He did say: .. When the Son of man cometh, shall he find the faith on the earth? [Luke 18:8]

Booth prophesied that by the end of the 20th Century, much of the Church would be preaching:

Christianity without Christ

Forgiveness without repentance

Salvation without regeneration

Heaven without Hell

Christians are faced with unparalleled challenges from the decay of society and the apostatizing of the Church.