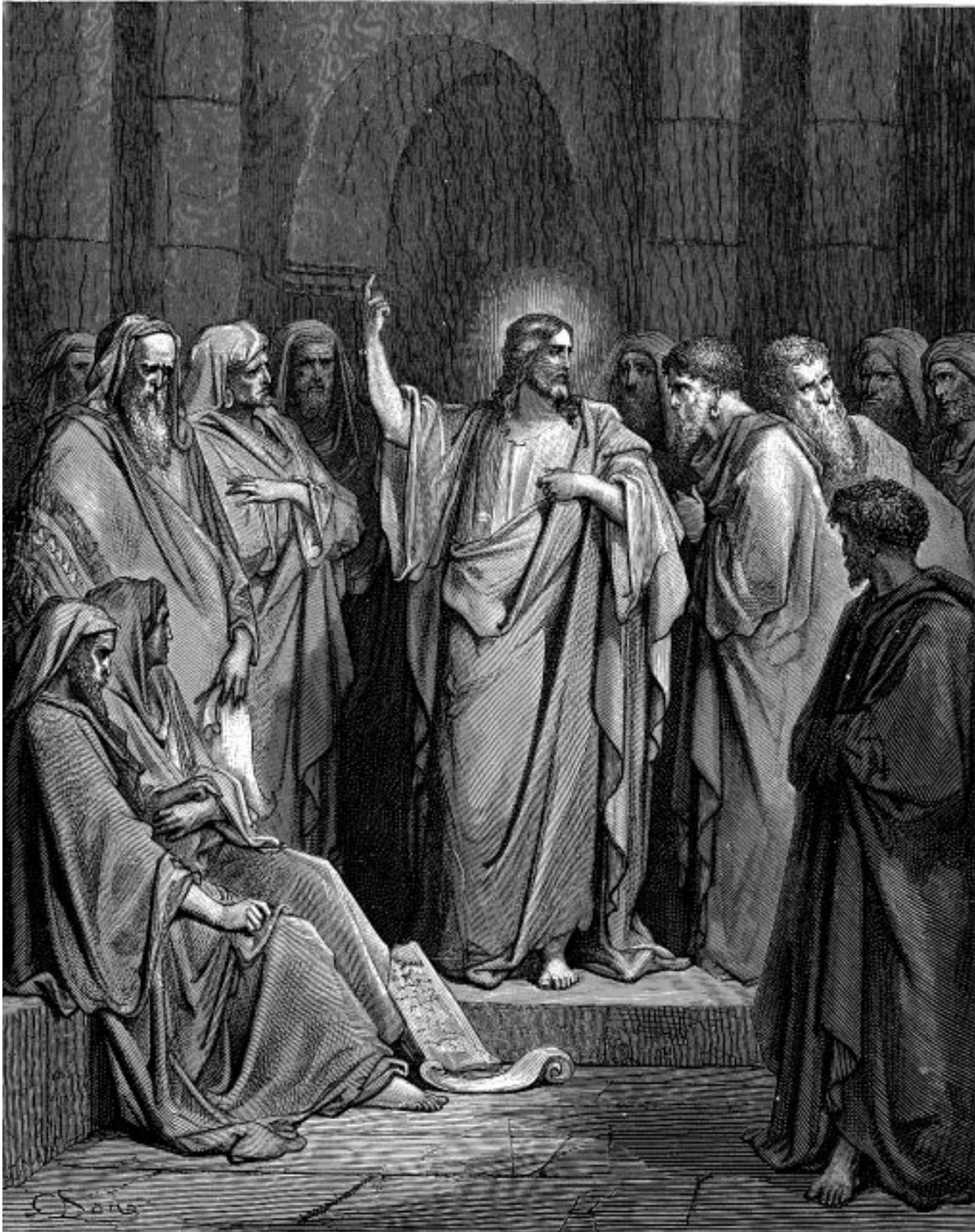


"Christ in the Synagogue" by Gustave Doré



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Mat 13:54 ...he taught them in their synagogue, insomuch that they were astonished, and said, Whence hath this *man* this wisdom, and these mighty works?

Beware the Leaven (yeast) of the Pharisees!

For the past several weeks I have not been able to escape Jesus warning concerning “*the leaven of the Pharisees.*” The following couple of postings contain the kinds of things, thoughts, insights and revelations that have surfaced, as I have had opportunity to look more deeply into this matter.

For the sake of completeness, I will include a brief piece of an exchange with a very dear saint, “Bearded Bill From Asheville.” We have a kind of ongoing dialogue as to whether The Kingdom of God is now or later or both. I guess you could say that there is some “both” in both of us, but Bill tends to lean toward later, the Millennium, and I lean toward now, the Millennium. Well, that will perhaps help put a little context on the following piece of our exchange.

Thanks for your patience in working through this. In its present form, it is kind of like, “concentrate” probably needs to be mixed with some other stuff to make it more digestible. I don't know yet where we will wind up, but I think it could get kind of heavy between here, and there.

On 12/3/04 I responded to my friend Bill concerning the “*Parable of the Sower*”:

"... And to think us English guys are stuck with only one ‘sprung.’ (Matthew 13:5 KJV)

So if you can indulge/humor me a little longer, let's go there: ‘sprung’ (Not being the language scholar that Bill is, I had to go to my strong's and Webster's. so we're talking Strong's numbers here.)

Matthew 13:5:

#1816: “...from #1537, and # 393; to start up out of the ground, i.e.. germinate: spring up.”

#1537: “...point whence motion or action proceeds...”

#393: “from #303, and the base of #5056... at the rising of, spring (up), be up.”

#303: “...up...”

#5056: “...(to set out for a definite point or goal);..”

So much for 13:5 now 13:6:

#305: "...from #303, and #939...(go, grow, rise, spring) up, come (up)."

[Yeast comes to mind. You don't suppose that what's calling itself 'church' could have a yeast infection, do you??]..."

Well that was how this started: For the several months just prior to this exchange, Diotrophes has been in my sights, and more recently, it had been "*the leaven of the Pharisees.*" That leaven is well defined for us by both Matthew 16:12, and a certain condition of heart indicated in Luke 7:30, and held in common with the "*experts in the law.*"

Apparently it's an attitude not much given to repentance, Matthew 3:11, Mark 1:4, Luke 3:3, Acts 19:4, John's baptism is a baptism of repentance.

Before going much further, we will need a few more definitions:

At this point I will begin with "Pharisees, and lawyers":

Pharisee: #5330: "...; a separatist, i.e. exclusively religious;.."

Lawyers: #3544: "...; from #3551; according (or pertaining) to law, i.e. legal (cer.); as noun, an expert in the (Mosaic) law:-about the law, lawyer."

#3551: "...; from a prime. ... (to parcel out, espc. food or grazing to animals); law (through the idea of prescriptive usage) gen. (regulation), spec. (of Moses [includ. the volume]; also of the gospel), or fig. (a principle):-law."

This would also be a good time to define "leaven."

Leaven: #2219: "...; prob. from #2204; ferment (as if boiling up):-leaven."

#2204: "...; a prime verb; to be hot (boil, of liquids; or glow, of solids), i.e. (fig.) be fervid (earnest):- be fervent."

Armed with those fragments in my hopper I met with a pastor recently. During the course of our conversation, as if to give me some reassurance about the way things are going for both "church" and "ministry," he noted

how many leaders are beginning to “smell the coffee” and move on from what has been calling itself “church” to new places.

The thought that occurred to me was “rats abandoning a sinking ship.” It was not in my heart to be quite that hard on the individuals involved, but rather to identify, and understand the implications of the present “ministerial movement.” In that moment I had no Biblical confirmation for the “rats – ship” thing, that would only come about a week later, Matthew 3:7,8, Luke 3:1-9.

The thought caught me at a time when I was still trying to get a clear bead on Diotrefes as well as leaven. To that point I was pretty well convinced that leaven, at the very least, is a substitute for the experience of love. In my understanding it already included such things as institutions, programs, lingo, slogans, movements, associations, networks, living rooms, “healing rooms,” special buildings, days, times, meetings, formats, liturgies, walks, steps, centers, principles, teachings, doctrines,.. in short, just about anything that might help in communicating Jesus without risking the death of the witness/communicator/programmer.

Even in my correspondence with Bill it had already occurred to me that, what has been calling itself “church,” might possibly have a “yeast infection.” Every now and then I get a thought like that, and it very quickly drops off my screen, but this one stayed there long enough for me to give it some serious consideration and investigation.

Before going further, we need to see what Strong's has to say about the Hebrew definitions of leaven:

Leaven: #7603: “..; from #7604; barm or yeast-cake (as swelling by fermentation):-leaven.”

#7604: “..; a prime. root; prop. to swell up, i.e. be (cause. make) redundant:-leave, (be) left, let, remain, remnant, reserve, the rest.”

One thing is very clear from looking at the Hebrew references: leaven is not to be part of the mix, no matter what kind of food or nourishment we are talking about. Exodus 12:15, just for openers!

If, in the first instance, this is talking about the old creation kind of loaf; now that we have gotten beyond wondering about the sandwiches, let's see what

we can learn about the nature of religiously sectarian leaven; let's explore the implications of leaven for the new creation kind of loaf: 1 Corinthians 10:17

To do that, we have to go to Webster's and get a little better idea about the nature of leaven, by that and any other name, in order to see what the root problem is:

Leaven: "...1. a) a small piece of fermenting dough put aside to be used for producing fermentation in a fresh batch of dough b) same as leavening (sense 1) 2. same as leavening (sense 2) -vt. 1. make (batter or dough) rise before or during baking by means of a leavening agent 2. to spread through, causing a gradual change."

Yeast: "... 1. a) any of various single-celled ascomycetous fungi (esp. genus *Saccharomyces*) in which little or no mycelium develops and that ordinarily reproduce by budding: they live on sugary solutions, ferment sugars to form alcohol and carbon dioxide, and are used in making beer whiskey, etc. and as leavening in baking b) same as BREWERS YEAST Also yeast plant 2. a) the yellowish moist mass of yeast plants occurring as a froth on fermenting solutions b) this substance dried in flakes or granules or compressed into cakes for preservation 3. foam; froth (Jude 13 comes to mind.) 4. a) something that agitates or causes ferment; leaven b) ferment; agitation - vi [Rare] to froth or ferment"

Even "rare" it still seems well within the scope of Jesus' warning.

Ferment: "... 1. a substance or organism causing fermentation, as yeast, bacteria, enzymes, etc. 2. same as fermentation 3. a state of excitement or agitation - vt. 1. to cause fermentation in 2. to excite ; agitate - vt. 1. to be in the process of fermentation 2. to be excited or agitated; seethe."

Mold: "...mold, mildew... 1. a downy or furry growth on the surface of organic matter, caused by fungi, esp in the presence of dampness or decay 2. any fungus producing such a growth..."

Mildew: "... 1. any fungus (esp. families *Peronosporaceae* and *Erysiphaceae* (I wonder if in the Hebrew these families would be numbered among the *Fungusites*.) that attacks various plants or appears on organic matter, paper, leather, etc. (Leviticus 13:51), when exposed to damp, resulting in a thin, furry whitish coating (Leviticus 13:10) or discoloration 2. any such coating

or discoloration 3. any plant disease caused by such a fungus- vt., vi. to effect or become affected with mildew –”

Fungus: “...1. any of a large group of thallophytes, (I bet there were even some of those in the land of Canaan.) including molds, mildews, mushrooms, rusts, and smuts, which are parasites on living organisms (Once again, Jude comes to mind.) or feed on dead organic material, lack chlorophyll, true roots, stems, and leaves, and reproduce by means of spores 2. Something that grows suddenly and rapidly like a fungus -...”

Enzyme: "... leavened <Gr. en-, in + zyme, leaven] any of various proteinlike substances, formed in plant and animal cells, that act as organic catalysts in initiating or speeding up specific chemical reactions and that usually become inactive or unstable at high temperatures -..”

Just two more for the present:

Virus: “... 1. orig., venom, as of a snake 2. a) same as FILTERABLE VIRUS; specif., any of a group of ultramicroscopic or submicroscopic infective agents that cause various diseases in animals, as measles, mumps, etc. or in plants, as mosaic diseases: viruses are capable of multiplying only in connection with living cells and are regarded both as living organisms and as complex proteins sometimes involving nucleic acid enzymes, etc. b) a disease caused by a virus 3. anything that corrupts or poisons the mind or character; evil or harmful influence”

Leprosy: “... a chronic infectious disease caused by bacterium (*Mycobacterium legrae*) that attacks the skin, flesh, nerves, etc.; It is characterized by nodules, ulcers, white scalp scabs, deformities, and wasting body parts, (I guess we have seen a lot of wasted body parts over the centuries.) and is apparently communicated only after long and close contact”

While we are on diseases, we might as well cover one more: 2 Timothy 2:17:

Canker: #1044: “...(to gnaw); ulcer (“gangrene”):-canker.”

Gangrene: “..< gran, to gnaw,, decay of tissue in a part of the body when blood supply is obstructed by injury, disease, etc...”

Leviticus chapters 13, and 14 go into quite some detail as to how to deal with these kinds of things. There we find one of the problems has this idea of “to gnaw” at its root.

In any case, it looks like, at root, if we ignore Jesus' warning about the Leaven of the Pharisees, we are going to suffer from a fungus infection.

Gangrene seems to be related, in that it suffers from an inadequate blood supply.

Where venom is concerned, even Paul warns: “*the poison of asps is under their tongues.*” Romans 3:13

In the beginning God had said, “... *Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat.*” Genesis 1:29

The serpent, offering them another kind of food, said something else: “...*Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.*” Genesis 3:4, 5

In this case, one difference between good food, and bad food is, good food has seed in it. Bad food apparently reproduces some other way.

There is no experience of death required in the offering of the Pharisees. There is, in the offering of Jesus. Seeds have to die to multiply. John 12:24

This alone would account for the continuing popularity of “*the leaven of the Pharisees*” They come out of their old loaf and bring their leaven with them into the new batch. It's well and good to come out of an old batch, and into a new one, but not without repentance. Luke 7:30

It is in this sense that fungus as disease presents itself in “*rats abandoning the sinking ship.*” I'm reminded of an “athlete's foot bath.”

In Leviticus 14:33-55, we find the “... *law for all manner of plague of leprosy, and scall, and for the leprosy of a garment, and of a house...*”

We find there, not only the disease but the test and the treatment. Even there, it is not unlike Paul's counsel concerning leaven: 1 Corinthians 5:6-8.

There is only one thing to do with leaven, if the stones that contain it are deeply infected, (*"fretting"* - K.J.V.) they must be properly disposed of, Lev. 14:40, and anything surrounding those stones must be scraped clean, and the scrapings properly disposed of. 14: 41. The displaced stones and mortar must then be replaced with other stones and new mortar. If in time, it becomes apparent that that still doesn't get rid of it, then the whole house is taken away and disposed of. The Church at Ephesus comes to mind, *"their problem was, they had "left their first love."* Revelation 2:4,5

Come with me for a moment for a brief look at the point of demarkation between the old loaf, and the new loaf, the old creation, and the new creation, even the Old Covenant, and the New Covenant. The written Old Covenant or Old Testament ends with this problem, the apparent breakdown in relationship, love and intimacy between Fathers/parents, and children. The New Covenant, Matthew 26:28, Mark 14:24, and Luke 22:20, fixes this problem, but not without repentance. In other words, we can't get from the old to the new without repentance. We can't get from the old ship to the new ship without repentance. We can't get from the bad tree to the good tree without repentance . We can't get from the work of man's hands to the work of Christ without repentance. Information alone is not enough!

Fretting: #3992: "..., a prime root; to be bitter or(causat.) to embitter, i.e. be painful:-fretting, picking... See #3974."

#3974: "... from #215; prop. a luminous body or luminary, 1.2 (abstr.) light (as an element); fig. brightness, i.e. cheerfulness; spec. a chandelier:-bright, light. #3975: ...fem. pass part, of #215; something lighted, i.e. an aperture; by impl. a crevice or hole of a serpent):-den." Isaiah Chapter 27, particularly verse 11, is very interesting in this connection.

#215: "...; a prime root; to be (cause. make) luminous (lit. and metaph.): - X break of day, glorious, kindle, (be, en-, give, show) light (-en, ened), set on fire, shine."

We need to discern the difference between the bread from heaven and sour dough. One requires the death of the seed. The other multiplies without seed. It reproduces without death to itself, and only brings death to its object. The

Bible presents us with two kinds of knowledge: one “*puffs up*,” the other results in true pregnancy.

If it is not served with that same love with which Jesus demonstrated His love for us, beware it's probably “*the leaven of the Pharisees*,” still around even after all these years. It is a plague on the house. A key sign of what a person has been eating is relationship, and a willingness for intimacy. A person with a yeast infection has no desire for intimacy.

Of course the best remedy for all of this is exposure to the Son light!

P.S. In the time frame of this revelation I got a confirming yeast infection due to a long regime of anti-biotic treatment for Lymes disease. I was very tempted to publish my writing at that point in a new venue, Monistat Publishing.