

Parable of the Leaven

Matthew 13:35

³³ Another parable spake he unto 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.

What is meant by the term, “The Kingdom of Heaven”?

Opinions include:

- A process: a course of events where God begins to govern as King.
- Some relate it to the growth and state of the church.
- Similar to the term the Kingdom of God where He begins to have control of your life.
- You can Google and research this yourself but in line with God’s plan as revealed through the Feasts, I like the idea of the Kingdom as a process with an expected end of greatness. This fits very well into my understanding of scriptures.
- The Holy Spirit, the super natural, Jesus, His promises, Heaven over earth, where God dwells, dominion, authority
- I liked the idea of the Kingdom being where God dwells. Where does God live, reference Isaiah 57:15.
 - He dwells in our hearts as well as in Heaven.
 - The Kingdom of Heaven is in us.

What is leaven?

- A substance like yeast used in dough to make it rise (1 Cor 5).
- Leaven represents sin in the Bible.
- Feast of Unleavened Bread
- Feast of Pentecost
 - Our works and labor on the foundation of Christ
 - Jews and Gentiles accepted and saved

Three Measures:

Some estimate this as being like 40-60 pounds of dough or five dozen loaves. 3 measures of meal is a lot, for something like 100 people.

Key Point: Why do you think the parable shows so much bread coming out of this story? Perhaps because this is much more than just about us or one person. The Kingdom of Heaven is not just about us. Instead, His plan is to expand the Kingdom and His rule in our lives so that others will benefit from our story and be fed.



The Gospel spreads throughout the world even as leaven does.

Key Point: There is a process involved as by degrees *the whole is leavened*. Likewise, the process works the same in us. God by degrees starts to gain more and more sovereignty over our lives until He is in full control. There may still be areas and strongholds in our life where God doesn't have complete control....but the process is as His influence increases, God will rule all aspects of our life for His glory.

It reminds me of the hymn, I surrender all.

Why is leavened use? Here are some opinions:

Jesus used a surprising picture here. Many, if not most, regard this as a beautiful picture of the kingdom of God working its way through the whole world. Yet leaven is consistently used as a picture of sin and corruption (especially in the Passover narrative of Exodus 12:8, 15-20). Again, both the content and the context point towards this being a description of corruption in the kingdom community. This certainly isn't a picture of the church gradually influencing the whole world for *good*. Rather, in the context of increasing opposition to His work, Jesus announced that His kingdom community would also be threatened by corruption and impurity. (Guzik)

G. Campbell Morgan wrote that the leaven represents "paganizing influences" brought into the church.

My opinion (listen also to the podcast/audio lesson from the website):

- I believe the Kingdom is designed to grow in the world and within us as described in the parable....like leaven spreading through a loaf and causing it to rise.
- At the same time, leaven (just like the parable of wheat and tares) involves sin or pride which can creep in.
- Let me take you quickly through the Feast of Pentecost which I think helps to explain leaven in the story.
 - Two loaves are waved before the Lord as part of the offering. Both loaves have leaven.
 - The thought is these loaves represent the Nation of Israel and the other the inclusion of the Gentiles. One represents Israel becoming a nation, the other represents the start of the New Testament Church.
 - Is there leaven or sin in the church and among Jews and Gentiles? Yes of course.
 - But here in this service of the Feast of Pentecost, God accepts both loaves as they are.
 - Using the seven feasts as a map, we know that accepting leaven is not the end of the process nor the desired end state for us or the church.

Application:

- I know many who will say they won't attend or accept the church because of hypocrites. I understand and agree, if there are people in the church then you may very well find some hypocrites and Pharisees in the midst. However, while calling out the leaven, I can't be against the church that God has accepted.
- I'm not greater than God, and if He accepts the church in its current form, then I too will support it while working against the leaven. While a hypocrite may attend, God will show up and



inhabit the praises and worship if it is true....I want to be in the mix with my Savior either in person or electronically. I don't want to be against what my God is for.

- The church will not always be like this....the leaven being eventually removed is part of the process.
- This should warn us to be watchful that as the Kingdom of Heaven starts to increase in us, that we are careful not to allow pride and self-righteousness (leaven) slip in.

Other observations from my favorite commentaries:

Matthew Henry: The leaven was *hid in three measures of meal*. The heart is, as the meal, soft and pliable; it is the tender heart that is likely to profit by the word: leaven among corn unground does not work, nor does the gospel in souls unhumiliated and unbroken for sin: the law grinds the heart, and then the gospel leavens it. It is *three measures of meal*, a great quantity, for *a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump*. The meal must be kneaded, before it receives the leaven; our hearts, as they must be broken, so they must be moistened, and pains taken with them to prepare them for the word, that they may receive the impressions of it.

JFB -- This parable, while it teaches the same general truth as the foregoing one, holds forth, perhaps, rather the *inward* growth of the kingdom, while "the Mustard Seed" seems to point chiefly to the *outward*. It being a woman's work to knead, it seems a refinement to say that "the woman" here represents *the Church*, as the instrument of depositing the leaven. Nor does it yield much satisfaction to understand the "three measures of meal" of that threefold division of our nature into "spirit, soul, and body," alluded to in 1 Th 5:23.