

The Power and Influence of Christ's Kingdom, Part 2

Scripture: Matthew 13:33

Code: 2302

INTRODUCTION & REVIEW

Matthew 13 describes the Kingdom of our Lord in the time between His rejection and His Second Coming. The two parables in Matthew 13:31-33 talk about the influence that the Kingdom will have on the world. We looked at the first parable in our last lesson, and will look at the second parable now. Let's read the two parables together, because they deal with the same theme: "Another parable put He forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field; which, indeed, is the least of all seeds; but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches of it. Another parable spoke He unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened."

Both parables speak of one theme: They speak about influence. They speak about small beginnings with great conclusions. If you throw a stone in a lake, its influence will touch every shore. The Lord is saying in the parables that the Kingdom will start small, but ultimately its influence will be global. He is saying that the Kingdom will grow to its fruition and fulfillment. Its power will become worldwide, just as God intended. We live in the time when that is being fulfilled. Never in the history of the world has Christianity had the global influence that it has today. It is amazing to think that Christianity began with a small group of disciples, and has become what it has today. But that is exactly what the parables in Matthew 13:31-33 prophesied would happen. The integrity of Jesus Christ and the truthfulness of the Word of God is at stake in the fulfillment of those parables.

A. The Anticipation

In the Old Testament, prophets predicted that the Kingdom of God would eventually come to the earth and encompass the entire globe. Jesus Christ was to be God's representative--the greater Son of David, the anointed, the Messiah, the King--who would sit on the throne in the city of Jerusalem and rule the world. In the prophesied coming Kingdom there would be worldwide peace, no crime, no poverty, and the alleviation of suffering and even death. There would be salvation among all the nations, as well as among the Jewish people. In this Kingdom Christ would be revered and honored as King; all rebels and blasphemers would be destroyed.

Micah, the prophet, wrote in chapter 4 of his book, "But in the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills, and people shall flow into it" (v. 1). Micah is describing here the Kingdom in the last days, when Christ is reigning on the throne and the nations are coming to Him to worship and give homage to His rule. Verse 2 continues, "And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, and to the house of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths; for the law shall go forth from Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And He shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree [everybody will have his own food and resources], and none shall make them afraid; for the mouth of the LORD of hosts hath spoken it. For all people will walk every one in the name of his god, and we will walk in the name of the LORD, our God, forever and ever"

(vv. 2-5). The world will come to the feet of the Messiah, and those who rebel will be rebuked by the Lord. Other prophets have said that God will rule through His Son in the Kingdom with a rod of iron, and that justice will be swift and immediate (Jer. 23:5; Rev. 19:15). The Jewish people lived in anticipation of that Kingdom. They expected it to come when Jesus came. But none of the things they expected to happen happened. Jesus didn't purge the rebels. He didn't sit on a throne. He didn't overthrow the Romans. There was still war: people weren't beating their swords into plowshares or spears into pruning hooks. There wasn't peace in the world, and there wasn't the punishment and condemnation of those who rejected God. Because the Jewish people didn't see the fulfillment of their expectations when Jesus came, they couldn't believe that He was the King He said He was. Even the people who believed in their hearts that Jesus was the Messiah struggled with doubts.

B. The Affirmation

There is no question in my mind at all that Jesus is a King. That's why He was born here on earth. Neither is there any question in my mind that we are living in the Kingdom now. It is not a Kingdom in the way that men understand kingdoms. It is a Kingdom from within the heart. That is why in Romans 14:17 Paul said, "For the kingdom of God is not food and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit." It is an internal Kingdom. In Luke 17:20, the Pharisees said to Jesus, "If you're a King, where is the Kingdom?" Jesus said, "...behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you" (v. 21). Even though they couldn't discern the Kingdom by human perception, He was still the King. Now, the disciples believed that Jesus was the King, but they still wondered where the Kingdom was. They were still looking for the outward display of the Kingdom, especially after having seen Jesus blasphemed and called satanic in Matthew 12. Jesus then said to the disciples, "I'm going to teach you now about this period of My reign and My Kingdom. The full glory of the Kingdom will come just as Micah and Zechariah prophesied, but for now, there will be the mystery form of the Kingdom [Mt. 13:11]. During this time, the Kingdom will be different than what it will become ultimately." Then throughout Matthew 13, in a series of seven parables, Jesus proceeded to describe what the mystery form of the Kingdom will be like.

1. The Nature of the Kingdom

The first two parables describe the nature of the Kingdom. The parable of the soils and the parable of the wheat and the tares say that good and evil will coexist in the Kingdom. The parable of the soils says there will be the soil that rejects the gospel, and there will be the soil that accepts it. In other words, there will be people who refuse the Kingdom, and there will be people who receive the Kingdom. The second parable says that the good and the evil should grow together until the final judgment. We're not to expect the rebels to be condemned, devastated, or consumed.

2. The Power of the Kingdom

In the parables of the mustard seed and the leaven, Jesus says that in spite of the coexisting of good and evil, and in spite of the tremendous power of sin and Satan, the power of the Kingdom is so great that it is going to grow. Just because three out of four soils will reject the gospel and Satan oversowed the wheat with tares, that doesn't mean the Kingdom will be overcome by evil. From a small beginning like a mustard seed, the Kingdom is going to grow. Like a tiny piece of leaven hidden in a massive pile of dough, it will permeate and influence everything.

Those two parables are a message of hope. The first two parables told us that evil will be allowed to continue on in the world. I hate sin. There are many times when I feel like David did: he often cried out for God to destroy sinners and destroy sin. I'm sure there are times when you wish you could act as God's executioner and purge sin. But the first two parables said no, we cannot do that. This is a time of God's grace, and judgment will come later. It is fearful and distressing to know that we have to tolerate evil. But the third and fourth parables are a message of hope: In spite of the evil, the Kingdom is going to grow and fill the earth. I believe that when the parables speak of the mustard bush becoming like a tree and being filled with birds, and of the leaven leavening the entire lump of dough, that they are talking about the beginning of the Millennium.

The next two parables also have a common subject. In them, Jesus talks about...

3. The Appropriation of the Kingdom

The first four parables take a general look at the Kingdom, and the next two parables take a specific look at the Kingdom. The first two parables speak of the nature of the Kingdom; the next two speak of the power of the Kingdom; the next two speak of the appropriation of the Kingdom. That is very important, because when you interpret the parable of the leaven, you want to interpret it in the homiletic consistency that our Lord uses as He progresses along in teaching the parables.

The parable of the leaven has been greatly misunderstood by many people. As we study it, I am going to share with you what I think should be made clear about the parable. We've already learned from the parable of the mustard seed that the Kingdom will start small, it will become large, and many nations will benefit from it. The parable of the leaven has a very similar lesson.

I. THE EXTERNAL POWER OF THE KINGDOM (vv. 31-32)

A. The Instruction

B. The Interpretation

1. The Commencement
2. The Culmination
3. The Custodianship

II. THE INTERNAL POWER OF THE KINGDOM (v. 33)

A. The Instruction

"Another parable spoke He unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened."

1. The Practice

Our Lord always told parables which portrayed things commonly done by the people He spoke to. While He was growing up, He would have seen His mother make bread many times. He would have seen her using leaven (or yeast, or sourdough) in the process.

The person making bread would take a batch of dough, prepare and knead it, then take a piece of sour, fermented dough from a former loaf of bread and place it in the new loaf. That leaven would cause the new loaf to ferment and bubble, and it would permeate the whole loaf, causing it to rise. Our Lord and the people He was speaking to probably saw that happen myriads of times.

2. The Portion

The size of the piece of leaven put into the new loaf of bread was very small. But you'll notice in the parable that it was "hid in three measures of meal." That is a massive amount of dough. Three measures of meal is equivalent to an ephah, and an ephah is equivalent to a bushel. That means the amount of dough being leavened was large. It was common at that time to prepare large amounts of bread because it was the staple of life, and there had to be enough to feed the large families and any servants the families had.

3. The Pattern

When I read about the leaven being put into three measures of meal, I was stunned because a bushel full of dough would make an almost inconceivable amount of bread. I did a little bit of research and found out that when the Lord and two angels visited Sarah and Abraham in Genesis 18, Sarah used three measures of meal in the bread that she made for them to eat. In Judges 6:19, when Gideon made some bread, he also used three measures of meal, or one ephah. In 1 Samuel 1:24, Hannah used three measures of meal for bread, too. Apparently, three measures of meal for bread was a common recipe.

4. The Power

The large amount of meal that a little piece of leaven can influence indicates the enormity of the task that leaven can accomplish. That is parallel to the small mustard seed resulting in a large mustard

bush. A tiny piece of leaven is capable of extending its impact to a massive amount of dough.

5. The Person

Notice that the parable says it is a woman who is making bread. It was the women who worked outside with the oven in those days, while the men worked in the fields. It is still very much the same there today.

6. The Particulars

Leavened bread is far superior to unleavened bread. Unleavened bread is flat, hard, dry, and unappetizing. Leavened bread is soft, spongy, warm, and tasty. There are two things to be noticed about leaven: one, a small amount can influence a massive amount of dough; two, it influences the dough in a positive way. It makes it the bread much better and more tasty.

7. The Placement

The parable says that the woman hid the leaven in the dough. The leaven has to be inserted in the bread; it can't sit on the counter and yell at the bread to rise. God didn't try to extend His influence in the world by standing on a cloud and hollering down at people. The leaven has to be injected into the bread before it can begin its permeating work. That was something that every Jewish person knew about, because everyone was familiar with the process of making bread.

B. The Interpretation

What are the lessons to be learned from the parable? It is a very simple story with very simple lessons, but of all the parables I've studied, it is the one most misunderstood. Many of you may have never heard the alternative view of the parable before. I will share it with you, though, so that you will know what to say in case you meet someone who doesn't agree with what I am about to explain.

The first lesson to be learned is that the Kingdom is...

1. The Influence of the Kingdom Is Great

a. The ClarificationThe power of the Kingdom is great. It's like a tiny bit of leaven that influences a whole mass of dough. The fact that the Kingdom begins small is not necessarily debilitating because it has the power to influence everything. The measures of meal (the dough) is like the world. When you plant the Kingdom of heaven in the middle of the world, it will eventually influence it because inherent in the Kingdom of heaven is a bubbling, fomenting, supernatural power. I believe the leaven represents the good influence of Christ's Kingdom--His gospel and His people--in the world.b. The ConfusionSome people think the leaven represents evil. They believe the parable is teaching that evil is going to be in the Kingdom and permeating it. But that interpretation doesn't fit with the flow of what Jesus is teaching. In the first two parables, He talked about the evil in the world, and then in the next two parables, He talks about the power of the Kingdom overcoming evil. The interpretation that the leaven represents evil is inconsistent with what our Lord is teaching.In the parable, Jesus says, "...The kingdom of heaven is like leaven...." It is obvious that the Kingdom of heaven is being likened to leaven in the parable--you don't have to be Phi Beta Kappa to figure that out. I believe that Jesus is talking about the Kingdom of heaven in a positive way. He is saying that its influence is what makes the world better, in the same way that leaven makes bread better.1) The Perverse

ArgumentThose who believe the leaven to represent evil in the parable base their argument on this: Every other time leaven is mentioned in the New Testament, it always refers to evil; therefore, to be consistent, it must refer to evil here. They will say that Jesus even used leaven to refer to evil. I want to take issue with that: Leaven is not intended to refer to evil. You say, "But in Luke 12:1, Jesus said, '...Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.'"When Jesus said that, He was not making leaven represent the hypocrisy of the Pharisees; He was making it represent the influence of the Pharisees' hypocrisy. The use of leaven in an analogy is appropriate only when it is used to refer to permeating influence. The point of using leaven to describe the hypocrisy of the Pharisees was to show that their hypocrisy permeated everything that they did, much in the same way that leaven thoroughly permeates bread.Leaven is not an illustration of sin; it is an illustration of permeation. That is very important. If you take the analogy any further than that, then you will destroy it. When

evil is being referred to in the Bible, it is called darkness, blackness, or the absence of light. But when leaven is used to illustrate something in the Bible, it is referring to something that permeates.²⁾ The Proper Application You can't take analogies and absolutize them into theological terms. In other words, leaven is only used to illustrate something; it does not have an absolute, theological meaning. You can't say that whenever the word leaven appears in the Bible, it refers to sin. Leaven is only used as an analogy. If you make it refer to sin, you'll have a lot of trouble. Did you know that in the Old Testament, the Jewish people were commanded to offer God leavened bread at the Feast of Pentecost (Num. 28:26; cf. Deut. 16:9-12)? If you say leaven refers to evil, then you are saying that the Jewish people offered evil to God. That shows us that leaven cannot be used as more than a simple illustration. The basic use of leaven in the New Testament is to illustrate permeation. It is used to refer to the permeating effect of different sins, not just hypocrisy. In Galatians 5:9, it is used of legalism. It is used of immorality in 1 Corinthians 5:6-8. Leaven can also be used as an analogy for something that permeates with a good influence. Even though it has never been used anywhere else in the New Testament other than Matthew 13:33 as an analogy for a good influence, that doesn't mean the Lord can't use it to mean that. You can't extrapolate from the other uses of leaven in the New Testament.³⁾ The Prime Appropriation a) In Relation to Salvation First Corinthians 5 can give us some insight about leaven referring to permeating influence. In that passage, Paul is indicting the Corinthian church for their sin, and uses leaven in his illustration: "...Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?" (v. 6). That is simply a proverbial statement: Paul is saying, "A little thing can have a lot of influence." We have a similar proverbial statement that the Bible doesn't use: One rotten apple spoils the barrel. That analogy goes further, because it starts with a rotten apple, which symbolizes evil influence. But leaven is neutral: you can apply it any way you want. Leaven really makes bread better, but it can be used to speak of anything that begins small and has a massive, permeating influence. Verse 7 shows how Paul uses the analogy: "Purge out, therefore, the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump..." In other words, He's saying to the Corinthians, "You're Christians now. You're each a new lump of dough. Don't put leaven into your new lump." Leaven for a new loaf of bread comes from an old loaf. It would be saved from an old loaf, put aside to ferment, and then put into a new loaf. Paul is telling the Corinthians that because they are new creatures in Christ, they are not to allow their former lives to influence their new lives. It's a beautiful illustration. Paul is telling them to cut the continuity. They are not to pull a little piece of leaven from the old loaf of bread and use it to start the next loaf of bread. They are to cut everything off from their former lives and start with a brand new loaf of bread. Verse 7 continues, "...For even Christ, our passover, is sacrificed for us. Therefore, let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness [the things of our former lives], but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (vv. 7b-8). Every Jewish person who read that would know what Paul was talking about. What did he mean by saying that Christ is our passover? b) In Relation to Separation In Exodus 12, God told the Israelites that He was going to release them from their four-hundred-year captivity in Egypt. He told them that at the time of their leaving, they were to have a Passover feast. They were to put the blood of a lamb on their doorposts so that when the angel of death came by their home, they would be safe (vv. 3-13). When the angel saw the blood on the doorposts of an Israelite's home, then that home would be passed over. God then commanded them to keep the Passover Feast to remember the time when the God of grace passed over their homes, and spared them in mercy. Now, when the Israelites celebrate the Passover Feast, they use unleavened bread. Because the Feast is celebrated over a period of seven days, they have unleavened bread for seven days. Why? Exodus 12:39 says that it was symbolic of their having to leave Egypt in haste. But it was also symbolic in the same way as it is in 1 Corinthians 5. God was saying, "You're leaving Egypt. You are a new people going to the Promised Land. Therefore, don't make leavened bread, because if you do, the leaven is going to come from the bread you made while you were in Egypt." Unleavened bread was to be a symbol of the Israelites' disconnection from Egypt. After the seven days of the Passover Feast

passed, then they were allowed to make leavened bread again. In Leviticus 23:15-21, God told them to offer to Him the leavened bread. If leaven was symbolic of sinfulness, then God would not have had them offer leavened bread to Him. He wouldn't have limited the making of unleavened bread to the seven-day Passover period. If leaven was symbolic of evil, then the Israelites went through the rest of their lives demonstrating God's tolerance for evil every time they made bread. The only reason the Israelites were to cut off that leavening process was to symbolize that they were starting all over again with no Egyptian influence. They had a tough time letting go of Egypt, too. Once they got out in the wilderness, they started complaining, "We remember the fish which we did eat in Egypt freely...and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlic" (Num. 11:5). They wanted to go back to Egypt to enjoy all the former provisions they had received. But the Lord wanted them to cut the cord with Egypt. Now we can understand what Paul meant in 1 Corinthians 5. He's saying that in a spiritual sense, Christ is our Passover--He has delivered us. Now that we have been delivered out of our old life into a new life, we are not to carry any of the leaven from the old life with us. Thus, in 1 Corinthians 5, leaven does not refer to sin itself; rather, it refers to the permeating influences that come from our past life.

The Jewish Perspective of Leaven

Jewish rabbis used to talk about the fact that leaven was not necessarily negative, but could be used in a positive sense. One rabbi said, "Great is peace in that peace is to the earth as is the leaven to the dough" (Barclay, p. 61). Leaven was proverbial and could be used in either a negative or positive sense.

There was an interesting tradition involving leaven: When a Jewish mother's daughter was getting married, the mother would give her gifts. One of the gifts that a mother gave was a little piece of leaven from the last batch of dough she made before the wedding. The daughter was to start her first loaf of bread in her new marriage with that leaven started from her mother. That symbolized that all the blessedness of the daughter's former family was to be carried on into her new family. The passing of a righteous seed on to the next generation was symbolized in that custom of passing on leaven to the daughter. It speaks of continuity.

c. The Conclusion The way that leaven is used symbolically in the Bible is very broad. It is an excellent analogy of permeating influence. Our Lord uses it to mean that in Matthew 13:33. It is true that leaven is used in the New Testament to speak of evil and its permeating influence, but that doesn't mean that God can't use it to speak of a good influence. He must be using it to mean a good influence when He likens the Kingdom of heaven to leaven, and when He uses it in one of two parables that are meant to show how the Kingdom's power is extended as over against the influence of evil mentioned in the first two parables of Matthew 13. William Arnot has a marvelous and insightful word on this. He said, "Boldly, as a sovereign may, this Teacher seizes a proverb which was current as an exponent of the adversaries' successful stratagems, and stamps the metal with the image and superscription of the rightful King. The evil spreads like leaven; you tremble before its stealthy advance and relentless grasp; but be of good cheer, disciples of Jesus, greater is He that is for you than all that are against you; the word of life which has been hidden in the world, hidden in believing hearts, is a leaven too. The unction of the Holy One is more subtle and penetrating and subduing than sin and Satan. Where sin abounded grace shall much more abound." William Arnot is saying Jesus knew that the disciples understood the analogy of leaven related to evil. They perceived the massive, moving spread of evil, and Jesus spoke to them using something that would convey how fast, unstoppable, and penetrating the spread of the Kingdom would be: leaven. Jesus was a marvelous genius for explaining the truth about the spread of the Kingdom. The leaven is the Kingdom in the world, and the massive amount of dough is the world in which the leaven begins to bubble and boil.

The Influence of the Leaven

In a sense, Christianity troubles the world. It influences the world for good, but sometimes it's painful for the world to endure it. I am reminded of when Ahab met Elijah and said, "...Art thou he who troubleth Israel?" (1 Kgs. 18:17b). The world has always reacted that way to the prophets of God. In Thessalonica, a number of Jewish people said of Paul and Silas, "...These that have turned the world upside down are come here also" (Ac. 17:6b). In Philippi, Paul and Silas were accused of disturbing the city (Ac. 16:20). Christians have been disturbing people for two thousand years, with incredible results. From a start of about 120 disciples banded together in Jerusalem (Ac. 1:15), millions of people across the face of the earth have been influenced by Christianity. All of the social advances, legal and jurisprudence systems, welfare, education, art, music, and many other things reflect the influence of Christianity. All of the caring and benevolent societies that help the poor and aid those that are downtrodden and depressed come out of the Spirit of Christ in the hearts of His people who are leaven in the world. Notice how people are treated in the countries of the world that have never been touched by Christianity. The world has been leavened and influenced dramatically.

What a parable of hope for the discouraged disciples that had expected the Lord to bring the Kingdom immediately! They were worried about what evil would do to their little group, but Jesus said, "You're like leaven, and your going to bubble and foment and eventually permeate the whole world." Let's look, now, at the second lesson of the parable:

2. The Influence of the Kingdom Comes from Within

The positive influence of the Kingdom comes from within the world. God planted His leaven inside the world. The reason He is letting the tares grow with the wheat is so that we can influence the tares. This is the time for Christianity to do its work, and reach out for men to be saved. You can think of it this way: The world has been injected with eternal life and it is spreading. The tiny piece of leaven that was planted in the incarnation--the little babe in Bethlehem--will someday dominate the world. Ultimately, every knee will bow to Christ. We are extensions of Christ--He dwells in us. The life I live, I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me. It is not I who lives, but Christ living in me (Gal. 2:20). The life of Christ in me leavens the world, and His influence permeates the world more and more. We don't need to be a politician, a president, or have the government help us to influence the world. We don't have to make laws and have guns and soldiers help us dominate the world with Christianity. I remember the first tape we ever made of one of my sermons. Later on, we had two little machines to make the tapes one at a time. It took a whole hour to make each tape. Now, we are making nearly one million tapes a year. All of that started from a small beginning.

In Matthew 24:14, the Bible says that before the Lord returns, "this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations." It's going to permeate everything. After that happens, the Lord will finally come and set up His Kingdom.

A. The Statistics

Do you know where Christianity has gone from its small beginning? It's true that not everybody who names the name of Christ is a Christian, but the gospel has spread. There are people hiding in the branches of Christianity, and they are sanctified by the very presence of Christianity in the world (1 Cor. 7:14). The latest statistics indicate there are more people who call themselves Christians than there are people who belong to any other religion in the world. There are 1.15 billion people in the world who identify themselves as Christians. Islam is second, with 750 million people. Nearly one person out of every three claims to be a Christian. The influence is incredible. It is true that Christianity is distorted here and there, but nonetheless the Kingdom has moved throughout the world.

There are eighty thousand Christian missionaries in the world. China has recently started opening up

to missionaries again. It is estimated that right now there are a half a million house churches meeting in Red China, made up of between twenty-five to fifty million Christians. Cuba, despite being under Castro's communist rule, has forty-six Christian denominations. The church is alive in Cuba. Some have estimated that there are sixty-three thousand people embracing Christianity each day and sixteen hundred new churches started every week. Do you realize that from the time when the church first met in Jerusalem, seven years went by before the first mission church was established in Antioch? Ninety-five percent of the population of the world have all or part of the Bible in their own language, and ninety percent of all the tribes on the face of the earth have had the opportunity to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ. Isn't the influence of Christianity amazing?

B. The Specifics

In spite of the weeds, the birds that snatch the seed, and the scorching sun, there is some good soil. In spite of the world being oversown with darnels, the wheat is growing. In the face of all the evil opposition, the mustard seed grows and the leaven influences. That sums up what our Lord said in Matthew 16:18: "...I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Christ is building His Kingdom. The day is coming when it will all climax: "And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdom of this world is become the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever" (Rev. 11:15).

That is what will happen ultimately. Christianity will win, Jesus will reign, evil will be destroyed, evil men will be sent to eternal hell, and the Kingdom will come in its eternal fullness. What a parable of hope!

Focusing on the Facts

1. What is the theme of the two parables in Matthew 13:31-33?
2. Where is the Kingdom now? Support your answer with Scriptures.
3. What is the message of hope in the third and fourth parables in Matthew 13?
4. Describe the way bread was made during Jesus' time. What was the purpose of inserting leaven in the bread?
5. What size was the "three measures of meal" that the leaven was hidden in? Why was that amount of bread needed?
6. What evidence indicates that using three measures of meal to make bread was a common recipe?
7. Describe the differences between unleavened and leavened bread. What two things are true about leaven?
8. What has to be done to the leaven before it can start its permeating work? What did God not do in extending His influence in the world? What does that imply?
9. What is the first lesson to be learned from the parable? What do the measures of meal represent? What does the leaven represent?
10. What do some people believe the leaven represents in Matthew 13:33? Explain why that doesn't fit in with the flow of what Jesus was teaching.
11. What does Jesus liken the leaven to in the parable?
12. What is the argument of those who believe the leaven in Matthew 13:33 represents evil?
13. What did Jesus mean for the leaven to represent in Luke 12:1? What was the point that Jesus was making?
14. What is leaven an illustration of? What terms does the Bible use when it is referring to evil?
15. What can you not do with an analogy? Explain the problem we run into if we say that leaven represented evil, in light of the fact that God commanded the Jewish people to make offerings of leavened bread to Him.
16. What was Paul telling the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 5:6? What was Paul telling them in 1 Corinthians 5:7?
17. What kind of bread do the Israelites use when they celebrate the Passover Feast? What are the

two symbolic reasons for that?

18. Based on what we know about the second reason for the use of unleavened bread by the Jewish people, what did Paul mean when he said that Christ is our Passover (1 Cor. 5:7)?

19. What did a Jewish mother give to her daughter shortly before the daughter's wedding? What was that gesture to symbolize?

20. Christianity has been a good influence in the world, but sometimes the people of the world react negatively to Christianity. What three Scriptures support that fact?

21. What is the second lesson to be learned from the parable? Through what vehicle does Christ leaven the world?

22. What does Matthew 24:14 say about the influence of the Kingdom in the world?

23. Mention at least three statistics that show the tremendous influence Christianity has had in the world.

24. Will the evil present in the world overcome the Kingdom? Use Scriptures to support your answer.

Pondering the Principles

1. According to the parable of the leaven, a small piece of leaven is capable of influencing at least three measures of meal to rise. That is a large amount of dough. The leaven represents the good influence of Christ's Kingdom--His gospel and His people--in the world. As a Christian, how much are you allowing Christ to influence the world through your life? Do your moral standards reflect God's teachings in the Bible? Are there some people you know who don't know that you are a Christian? In what ways are you allowing Christ to influence the world through your life now? In what ways would you like to allow Christ to influence the world through your life? Pick one area of your life that you would like to improve in, and keep track of your growth in that area. Don't give up before you reach your goal!

2. Read 1 Corinthians 5:6-7. How much influence did Paul say a little bit of leaven can have? Have you purged all of the old leaven from your life? Are you holding onto an attitude or action in your life that is sinful? How much influence on your life does that sinful attitude or action have? What kind of influence could that sinful attitude or action have on your brothers and sisters in Christ? Based on those questions, why is it so important for you to keep your life pure?

3. The positive influence of the Kingdom comes from within the world. The reason God is letting the tares grow with the wheat is so that the wheat can influence the tares. How much exposure to non-Christians do you have? How much time do you spend with your non-Christian relatives or friends? Do you spend enough time with two or three non-Christians to be able to be a positive influence in their lives? If you find yourself not spending enough time with your non-Christian relatives or friends, make a commitment to keep better contact with them. Don't make evangelism the sole purpose of your contact with non-Christians, but do make it more possible for them to see Christ in your life and for you to share Christ with them!

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