

- PRAY
- READ Matthew 5:13-17

Theme of Matthew: "Behold your King is coming to you" (Zech.9:9; Mt.21:4-5)

Theme of the Beatitudes: Christ's Portrait of His People (John Stott)

Theme of the Sermon on the Mount: Life Styles of the Rich and Famous

CHARTING THE COURSE FOR THIS EVENING:

- Review
- Salt

peacemakers (v.9; 26:47-56; **1 Chron.22:8-10**; **James 3:17-4:2**; cf. Psalm 34:14; 37:37; Isa.9:5-6; Zech.9:9-10) – "Given Matthew's keen interest in the subject of reconciliation (18:21-35), especially within the Sermon itself (5:21-26; 6:14-15), one suspects that the interpretation that emphasizes interpersonal relationships (cf. Prov.10:10; Mark 9:50) comes closest to the authorial intention" (Allison 54f). Peace is harmony among men (Christian and non-Christian).

SALT & LIGHT: CHRIST'S PORTRAIT OF HIS PEOPLE LIVING IN THE WORLD (Matthew 5:13-48)

Why does Jesus call His disciples the salt of the earth and the light of the world (vv.13-16)? Hint: look at the earlier context!

Salt Idioms: not worth his salt, rub salt in the wound, true to his salt, salt an invoice, take it with a grain of salt, salt of the earth, salty wit, salty dog, salty personality, back to the salt mine, go pound salt, salt away, to eat a man's salt, to sit above the salt.

✓ Being called "salt" by Jesus is a great compliment! The following facts about salt were taken primarily from the website: <http://www.salt.org.il>

Common Salt and its short supply had catastrophic influence on the development of ancient civilizations. Traditionally, the study of man has been based on the study of his tools and artifacts, ideas and religion. It has failed to take into account those items essential to man's survival. Such an item is Salt, neglected almost totally by both historians and archaeologists.

The establishment of early settlements, the rise and decay of civilizations, demographic shifts of populations and the development of agriculture, were intimately related to the immediate availability of salt... The power to control a population's salt supply was power over life and death (http://salt.org.il/news_arch.htm).

- Salt is a biological necessity of human life. Without enough of it, muscles won't contract, blood won't circulate, food won't digest, the heart won't beat.
- We need about 5-10 grams of salt per day or 2-3 kg per year for mere survival. A community of 500 would need about 1 ton per year.

Arab society to this day retains such expressions as "there is salt between us" or "I love you as I love salt."

SALT IN THE TIME OF ROME

- Salt was as important a commodity in the time of Jesus as oil is for us today.
- Romans abroad seemed to have concentrated their infrastructure near salt sources, or on salt routes between those sites and Rome [Via Salaria].

Did you know?

Spilling salt was held to be an unlucky omen by the Romans, and the superstition has descended to ourselves. In Leonardo da Vinci's famous picture of the Lord's Supper, Judas Iscariot is known by the salt-cellar knocked over accidentally by his arm.

- The Romans founded a city at the mouth of the Tiber, primarily to guarantee its supply of salt, the most basic of all commodities equal in importance to water, and **as critical as water, for any community development** (emphasis added).
- Continuous and reliable supplies of Salt, were a matter of such importance that the establishment of early settlements, the rise and decay of civilizations... The power to control a population's salt supply, was power over life and death.
- The Latin phrase *salarium argentum*, "salt money," referred to part of the payment made to every Roman soldier, and the word has been carried down the ages into the English word "salary". Perhaps the word 'sal dare', soldier, comes from the Latin meaning to give salt.
- Salt was a medium of exchange in the commerce of the Mediterranean, Aegean, and Adriatic seas.
- A far-flung trade in ancient Greece involving exchange of salt for slaves gave rise to the expression, "not worth his salt."

It is still not uncommon to put salt into a coffin, and Moresin tells us the reason; Satan hates salt, because it is the symbol of incorruption and immortality. (*Papatus*, p. 154.) (*The Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*)

SALT IN LATER CENTURIES

- The highly organized salt trade of China was observed by Marco Polo, who recorded that the major item of trade on the Yangtze River was salt. Modern oil-drilling traces its technological roots back to Chinese methods originally evolved for salt production (<http://www.saltinstitute.org/38.html>)
- The first patent issued by the British crown to an American settler gave Samuel Winslow of the Massachusetts Bay Colony the exclusive right for ten years to make salt by his particular method.
- The famed Erie Canal, opened in 1825, was known as "the ditch that salt built" because salt, a bulky product presenting major transportation difficulties, originally was its principal cargo (...the State of New York financed the Erie Canal with its salt tax!).
- Syracuse, NY, is to this day proud of its nickname: "Salt City."

Did you know?

There are more than thirty references to salt in the Bible. For hundreds of years Roman Catholic priests would place a pinch of salt on a baby's tongue during baptism and say, "Receive the salt of wisdom."



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Mountains of NaCl (salt) await processing at Utah's Great Salt Lake

SALT & WAR

- Such was the importance of salt that the words, ‘war’ and ‘peace’ originate from the word for salt & bread in Ancient Hebrew and Arabic and the first war that mankind initiated was most probably over ‘salt’ (<http://www.salt.org.il/main.htm>)
- In the late 1700's hogs and cattle began dying in Britain for lack of salt. Farmers couldn't afford the high salt taxes. Angry mobs rioted. Finally, the Parliament abolished the tax.
- In December, 1864, Union forces made a forced march and fought a 36-hour battle to capture Saltville, Virginia, the site of an important salt processing plant thought essential to sustaining the South's beleaguered armies (see the website of The Museum of the Middle Appalachians) [The historian Ella Lonn devoted an entire book to the problem of salt in the Confederacy during the Civil War.]
- In 1930, Gandhi undertook a 200-mile march to the sea to protest Britain's salt tax and the prohibition against gathering one's own sea salt.
- In short, the innocuous looking, white granular substance we know today as “salt” historically has been so essential to all life as to be of the utmost value. (<http://www.saltinstitute.org/38.html>)

SALT AS A PRESERVATIVE

- Methods of preservation going back thousands of years: drying, smoking, and curing with salt.
- Egyptians used a salt mixture called natron in the preservation of mummies

SALT IN THE BIBLE

A. Everyone will be salted with fire... (Mark 9:49-50)

B. Salt was a seasoning (Job 6:6; Colossians 4:6)

C. Covenant of Salt (Leviticus.2:13; Numbers 18:19; 2 Chronicles 13:5; Ezekiel 43:24; cf. Exodus 30:35)

The salt ...was a memorial to the eternality of the covenant. Salt, after all, does not burn. It doesn't turn into gas; it survives fire intact. Nothing harms salt, just as nothing harms the covenant” (Longman, *Immanuel in Our Place* p.88).

D. Salt was sown on cities in ancient times symbolically representing the city's desolation and that it was now a wasteland (Deuteronomy 29:23; Psalm 107:34; Jeremiah 17:6; Zephaniah 2:9).

E. 2 Kings 2:15-25 – salt may be used in this passage to symbolize a “complete bread with the past.” Some commentators suggest that Elisha's use of salt to purify the water of Jericho was a ritual of separation: it separated the city from the curse of Joshua (Josh. 6:26).¹ The salt may have indicated a new beginning (cf. Ezek.16:4)

“A later Jewish story illustrates how first-century hearers would have grasped Jesus' point. An inquirer reportedly asked a late-first-century rabbi what to salt tasteless salt with; he responded, “The afterbirth of a mule.” In that society everyone knew that mules are...sterile...the point is: ...Salt can't stop being salt!” (quoted in Keener 173).

¹Bromiley, G. W. (1988; 2002). *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Revised* (Vol. 4, Page 286). Wm. B. Eerdmans.

SUMMARY

What does it mean that we are the salt of the earth and what are the implications for our society?

Verse 13 is important because it gives flavor to the rest of the Sermon on the Mount. The rest of the Sermon on the Mount explains how we are the salt of the earth and the light of the world.

Harvard scholars just came out with a research paper appearing in the October 2003 issue of American Sociological Review. After analyzing and collecting data in 59 countries between 1981 and 1999 they came to the conclusion that religion is more important to the economic well being of a nation than investment, savings rates, worker productivity, and wage scales. "Our central perspective is that religion affects economic outcomes mainly by fostering religious beliefs that influence individual traits such as honesty, work ethic, thrift and openness to strangers,"

Citation: Felicia R. Lee, New York Times, "Research links religion to economic development" Published February 8, 2004

thrown out and trampled under foot by men (v.13; Luke 14:34-35) – examples of what happens when Christians lose their salt abound in the media when Christian leaders are caught in sin. An unrighteous life destroys our witness to the world. What good are Jim Bakker or Jimmy Swaggart for the kingdom? I'm not saying that these men cannot repent. What I am saying is that their witness for Christ will never recover. They will always be "trampled under foot by men" no matter how many tears of repentance they shed.

All of us should be on guard against sin; none of us is above being tempted and sinning like these men. What happened to the salt and light of these men on a large scale is what would happen to us on a smaller scale if we lost our saltiness. Thankfully, the truth of Christianity does not depend upon our lives, but the words and deeds of the Lord Jesus Christ.

LIGHT OF THE WORLD (vv.14-16)

“IN THE WORLD BUT NOT OF THE WORLD”

Deuteronomy 14:2 (KJV)

For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God, and the LORD hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself, above all the nations that are upon the earth.

1 Peter 2:9 (KJV)

But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:

What is "worldliness"?

How did the people of God struggle being "unique" in the Old Testament?

FOR NEXT WEEK: REREAD MATTHEW 5

