

YOU ARE THE SALT OF THE EARTH

The kingdom ethic, which is to be lived out in the lives of the repentant, is reflected in the beatitudes of Matthew 5:3-12. This reality is then fleshed out in the remainder of the Sermon on the Mount.

The Beatitudes – Matt. 5:3-12

Blessed - “Kingdom Ethics”...

- Acknowledge spiritual poverty – “poor in spirit” – v. 3
- Godly sorrow – “those who mourn” – v. 4
- Humble submission to God’s reign – “the meek” – v. 5
- Pursue godliness – “hunger and thirst for righteousness” – v. 6
- Concern for others – “merciful” – v. 7
- Passion for holiness – “the pure in heart” – v. 8
- Strive for unity – “peacemakers” – v. 9
- Stand for what is right – “persecuted for righteousness” – v. 10...

This is what is to characterize **“kingdom citizens”**. And those who live like this function as **“salt”** and **“light”** in the world. Christ now uses two metaphors (namely salt and light) to describe the influence His kingdom people will have in the world.

Matthew 5:13 (NKJV)

13 “You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men.

“You” is emphatic referring to Christ’s disciples (Mt. 5:1-2). It is Christ’s PEOPLE themselves who are the SALT of the earth. They function as “salt” when they live out the beatitudes. The power of the “kingdom citizen” is seen in their metaphorical influence of being salt and light.

Note Christ does not say His disciples should become salt, but rather that as repenters this is what they already ARE! It is expected that true disciples will live out the beatitudes to one degree or another, and as such, they are the salt of the earth.

Salt in the ancient world served a number of constructive purposes in relation to food. It added flavor, and it served as a preservative (cf. Mk. 9:50; Lk. 14:34-35).

As the “salt of the earth,” Christ’s disciples bring seasoning to an otherwise “tasteless” world. They make life “palatable”. It is believers who bring a special kind of grace and pleasantness to a world full of unattractiveness – spiritually speaking.

However, salt in the time of Jesus was mainly used as a preservative, and many commentators feel this is perhaps the main emphasis here (cf. Ex. 30:35; Lev. 2:13; 2 Kg. 2:21; Ezek. 16:4). Rubbed into meat, salt would slow the decay. God’s people serve as a preserving agent in the context of a perverse and corrupt world.

If you think things are BAD now, just remove God’s people from the equation, and things deteriorate very quickly into utter ruin. 2 Thessalonians 2 speaks of the restrainer, which is even now restraining the Antichrist from coming into position. I take it this restrainer is the Holy Spirit working through the Church (cf. 2 Thess. 2:6-8). When this restraining influence is removed, all hell will break loose on planet Earth.

Very early in the Tribulation Period, after the restrainer is removed, when the second seal is opened instantly, you have worldwide calamity.

Revelation 6:3–4 (NKJV)

3 When He opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, “Come and see.”

4 Another horse, fiery red, went out. And it was granted to the one who sat on it to take peace from the earth, and that people should kill one another; and there was given to him a great sword.

Jesus said of those days, ***“because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold.”*** (Mt. 24:12). The people of God are gone – the love is gone out of the world. The preserving element of “salt” is gone, and it is not a pretty picture.

In the meantime, God’s “kingdom citizens” slow the process of society’s decay and corruption. We don’t stop it, but through the Holy Spirit, we serve as a restraining, preserving influence. It’s not politics, social reform, or legislation that is the SALT! Rather, it is God’s people themselves!

“By the moral and ethical standards of God’s people [as seen in the beatitudes], by their higher value system, higher regard for all human life, Christ’s servants offer the flavor and preserving factor of their presence.” – **Ed Glasscock**

Christ then went on to address the condition of when the salt loses its flavor. Technically, pure salt cannot lose its flavor. But this is the point, the salt in the time of Christ, mainly from the Dead Sea area, was often contaminated and therefore could lose its effectiveness. None of us as “salt” is totally pure in practice. We still have a few flesh contaminants that remain. Hence, the warning that we endeavor to remain a salty influence.

When Christ says, “***if the salt loses its flavor,***” the word “***loses***” (Gk. moraine) can literally be translated as “***foolish***”. So, this could be translated, “***If the salt be made foolish***”.

“In the only other New Testament uses of the word, Romans 1:22 and 1 Cor. 1:20, the context is the foolishness of human reasoning in comparison with God’s plan.” – ***Ed Glasscock***

The Rabbis metaphorically connected the idea of salt to that of wisdom.

Colossians 4:5–6 (NKJV)

5 Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time.

6 Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.

The beatitudes are full of “salty” truth, denoting the preserving wisdom of kingdom ethics. “***But if the salt loses it flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men.***”

Salt that lost its flavor was “***good for nothing***” relative to food and therefore was thrown out on pathways to harden it as a walkway. If a disciple loses their “***saltiness***” they are no longer fit for kingdom work. If the beatitudes are not on display in a person’s life, that person is no longer serving God’s kingdom purposes. It is very sad to come to the place of being “***good for nothing***” in terms of kingdom usefulness. There is a WARNING here! It can happen!

“This was not a threat of losing one’s salvation but of being useless and cast aside in the ministry of Jesus Christ. The consequences of such failure does not involve loss of salvation but loss of reward at the Bema of Christ (1 Cor. 3:11-15; 2 Cor. 5:10).” -***Ed Glasscock***