

THE PARABLES OF JESUS, #01 **A Chronological Study**

"To Him who opened His mouth in parables and uttered things hidden since the creation of the world."

Psalm 78:2



"You Are the Salt Of The Earth" **Mt 5:13; Lk 14:34-35; Mk 9:50**

INTRODUCTION

Important to the background of all of the lessons Jesus taught and all the dialogues that He had with the Jewish leadership of His time, is the remembrance of the angels of heaven. We know from the Scriptures that at some distant time in the long ago past there was a war in heaven. One third of God's angels sided with the evil one and were cast down from heaven with no chance of forgiveness or salvation – ever. Why, because of their extreme high calling – to stand in the very presence of God almighty. The breaking of this extreme calling and honor warranted a no forgiveness ever status.

Then... enter the human race through Adam and Eve. Selected as the creatures to be made in the image and likeness of Almighty God, and selected as the creatures that could stand before God by Faith in Him and become physical family members of the household of God. Consider, like the position of God's chosen Angels, the extreme honor of being called to that position. The Fall of mankind was introduced to bring about a situation whereby mankind had the opportunity to choose Almighty God – who walked with him in the Garden – or choose not God. That choice would mark every human being for all of time and eternity.

Then... enter the nation of Israel bound by a covenant of Law at Mount Sinai. They were a nation chosen and covenanted (contracted) by God for the purpose of bringing a God relationship to the world around them. It was their responsibility to be holy under the Law of God. Their sacrificial system was to teach them and their world that man cannot be holy... but can be forgiven through the grace of God and the blood of the Lamb. If they were successful at God's calling, then He would establish an earthly kingdom for them, and they would be His forever. But, as a nation, they failed. They failed not just once, but continually. They dishonored God, failed to keep His commandments, turned His grace into the worship of the Law, and turned away from Him to every foreign idol and god. Of course, like the Angels of heaven, many would choose Him as their God. Then many would receive their holy position before God through substitutionary sacrifice – that was effective through a long prophesied final sacrifice.

Following the pattern of how God dealt with the warring angels, we should expect that God would, at least temporarily, forsake the Nation of Israel because of this. Six hundred years before

Jesus' birth Almighty God and His glory departed from the Jerusalem temple and never returned. **God no longer dwelling among men – until Jesus came.**

Coming to these parables we find Jesus speaking to the chosen and covenanted people of God bringing them their last opportunity as a nation to see and understand the grace and loving heart of God in an offering of the establishment of their promised kingdom. He made it clear in His teachings that this promised kingdom would not only be on earth, and it would also be heavenly and eternal. He was there to bring forgiveness for sins and not to destroy the kingdom of Rome.

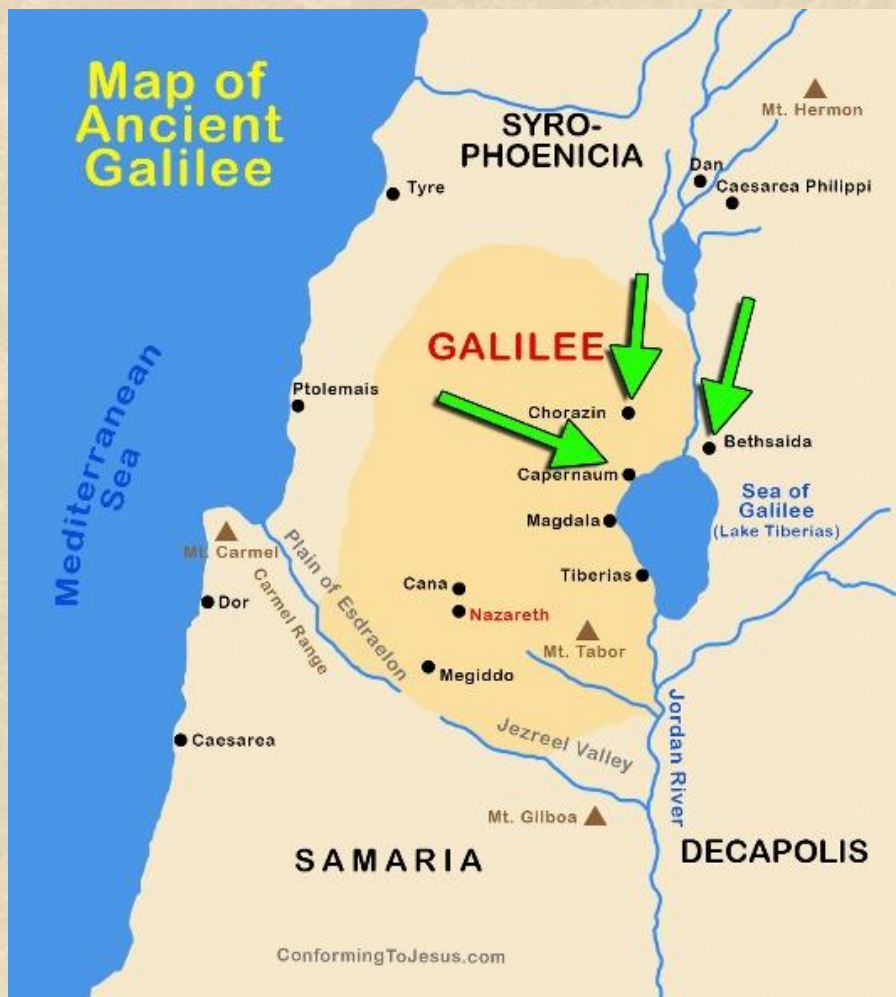
As we begin our look at the Parables of Jesus, first, we need to remember that Jesus was not addressing Christians and the Church. He was addressing Jews who were part of the Nation of Israel that was in a **covenant relationship** with their God – they were under the Law of God. They were also a conquered and occupied people and land. They had been through a series of conquering nations – Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Greece, Persia, and now Rome. They had lived lives that were mostly under the discipline of God for their failure to Love, Honor, Obey, with all their hearts, souls, and minds, their Loving and faithful God.

Over the earlier centuries the religious leadership of this nation had taken the LAW given to Moses at Mt. Sinai, and rewrote and converted it to that they called the "Oral Law." This Oral Law was written in such a way to put a clear distinction between the religious leadership (Power and Money) and the ordinary citizen. Jesus tells us that they perverted the law in such a way that the religious leadership, and those with money and power, could sin under the law with its approval. Most ordinary people were just referred to as "sinners."

At this moment, in the text, we find that Jesus has gathered His following and begins to address them. In the background of our parable is the educated "teachers of the Law," (Scribes, Pharisees, and Sadducees) who would stand and lecture their listeners on the importance of keeping the Law (as rewritten by them), and faithfully following the demands of formalistic ritual in every exact detail putting them under enormous cultural pressure.

Jesus now stands on the mountainside, slightly above His disciples -- as was the practice for a teacher of the Law in that day -- but instead of explaining the Law of God to them, He opens up His heart and begins to explain **the Grace of God**, and **His kingdom**, to them. The Gospel writer John reports, "No one has ever seen God. The only begotten God [Jesus], who is in the bosom of the Father, He [Jesus] unfolds Him [the Father]" (John 1:18, Lit.)."

In order to understand Jesus' position and His opening words... picture yourself, as a Jew, seated upon the ground at the feet of your Rabbi as he explains the Law of God to them. They are ready for this Rabbi to begin explaining the "Oral Law" to them. Just a few verses into this sermon on the mount, Jesus, as the expected teacher of that Law turns to His followers and says, **"But I say to you...."**



Why Was Jesus' Ministry Centered In Galilee?

Jesus largely focused much of His ministry in one small place in Israel: Galilee, around the three cities of **Chorazin** (about 3 miles North of the Sea of Galilee), **Capernaum** (on the Northwest coast of the Sea of Galilee), and **Bethsaida** (about 2 miles Northeast of the Sea of Galilee). Although many people today assume that Galileans were simple, uneducated peasants who lived in an isolated area, the truth is they interacted more with the world than the Jews of Judah and Jerusalem. The Via Maris trade route which connected Egypt with the northern empires of Syria, Anatolia (Turkey), and Mesopotamia (Iran-Iraq), passed

through Galilee, exposing them to many different peoples and cultures.

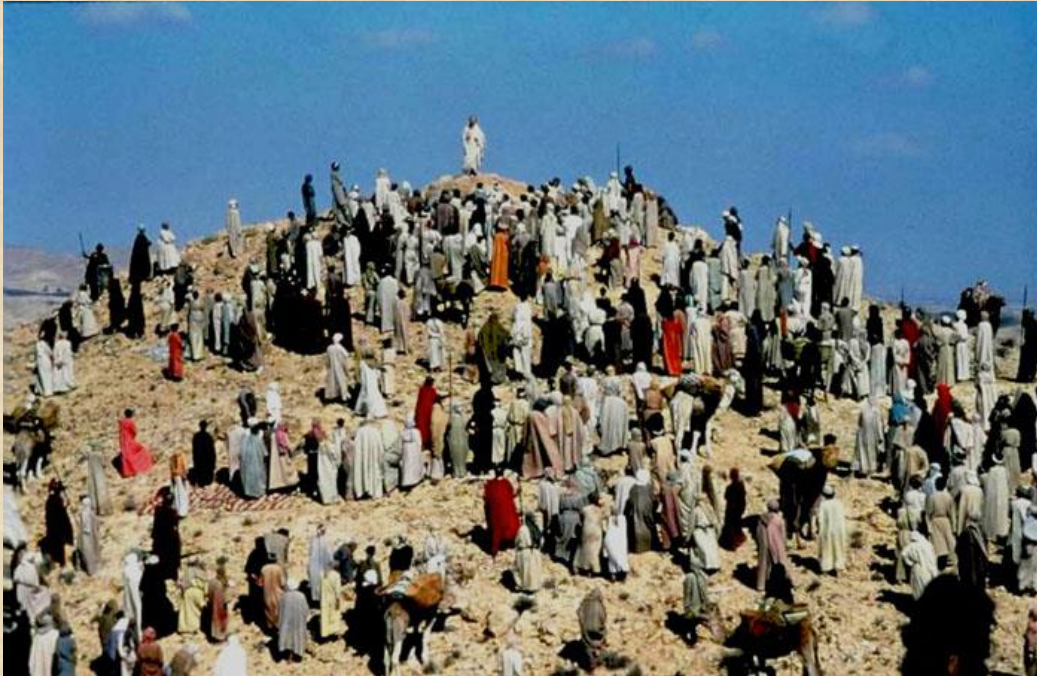
The Galileans were also the most religious Jews in the world during Jesus' time. They revered and knew the Scriptures well. They were passionately committed to living out their faith and passing their faith, knowledge, and lifestyle to their children. This led to the establishment of vibrant religious communities; a strong commitment to families and country; and active participation in the local synagogues; the community centers of that day. In fact, more famous Jewish teachers came from Galilee than anywhere else.

The Galileans resisted the pagan influences of Hellenism [under Greek culture and influence] far longer than their Judean counterparts, and when the great revolt against the Romans and their collaborators finally occurred (AD 66-74), it began among the Galileans. In fact, most of those who followed Jesus everywhere He went fully believed He was the Messiah, the chosen and anointed One of God.

Clearly God carefully prepared the environment in which Jesus was born and reared so that he would have exactly the context he needed to effectively present his messages of "*The Gospel*," and "*the kingdom of heaven*," so that people would understand and join His new movement. He was born in Bethlehem, Judea. He moved to Nazareth to minister to those who would "hear" what He had to say.

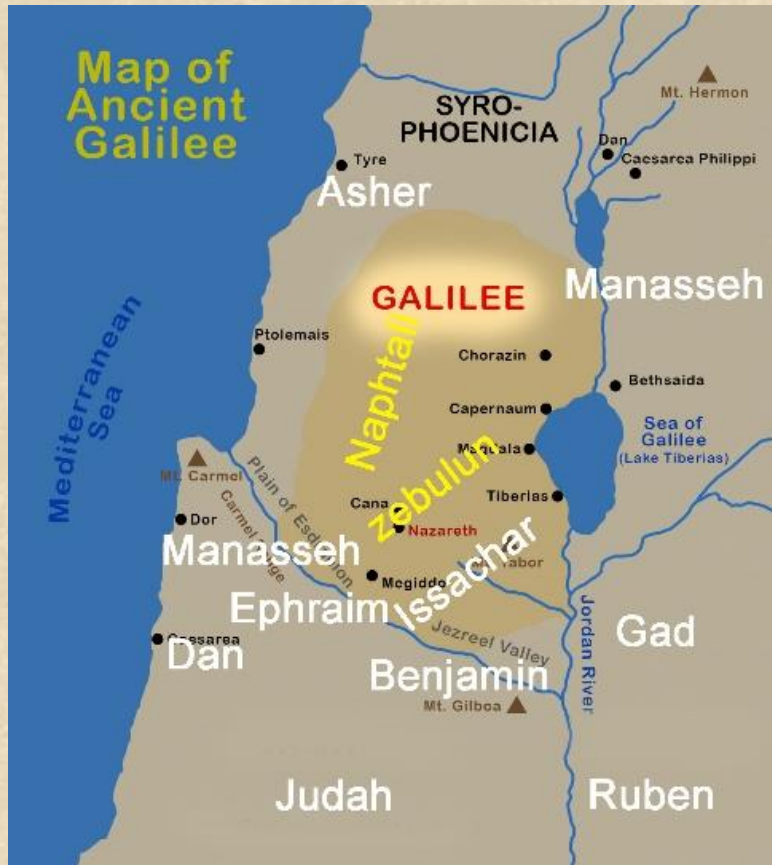
A deeper knowledge of Galilee, and its people, help us understand the great faith and courage of Jesus' disciples, who left Galilee and shared the "*good news*" with the world (Evidence indicates that Judas Iscariot was apparently the only non-Galilean among

Jesus' twelve, closest disciples). The disciples' courage, the message they taught, the methods they used, and their complete devotion to God and his Word were born in Galilee's religious communities.ⁱ



Our Prime Context

Our prime context will come from the book of Matthew where Jesus has begun His "Sermon on the Mount." We find Him among a great crowd of Galileans in the town of **Capernaum**. Matthew tells us the **who** (Jesus, the Disciples, and some Pharisees and Scribes), the **where** and the **why** come from Isaiah Ch-9, and the **when** will be dependent upon the who.



POJ map of Zebulun & Naphtali

It's especially interesting that Matthew opens chapter 5 with a quote from Isaiah 9. **Capernaum**, along the North edge of the Sea of Galilee, was the covenanted home of two of the sons of Jacob's family - the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali. Isaiah 9:2 goes on to say,

"The People who walk in darkness will see a great light; Those who live in a dark land, the light will shine on them."



"The King and the His Promised Kingdom"

Those who heard this quote would immediately recognize it as speaking to Israel concerning the coming of the Promised King of the Promised Land - **The Promised Kingdom**. As Isaiah's text continues into chapter 9, we find those wonderful words that start in verse 6,

"For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders; and His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from then on and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will accomplish this."

And Jesus is here, in Capernaum, teaching His disciples **what the Kingdom will be like.**

As Jesus walks along His path, he stops and calls Peter and Andrew, fishermen. And then He calls James and John, the "Sons of Thunder," and He continues to preach "The Gospel of The Kingdom." Together they travel together healing and teaching. When we enter Chapter 5, Jesus begins his now famous "Sermon on the mount." And He begins with "The Beatitudes."

Matthew 5:3-12

*"**Blessed** are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

*"**Blessed** are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.*

*"**Blessed** are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth.*

*"**Blessed** are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.*

*"**Blessed** are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.*

*"**Blessed** are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.*

*"**Blessed** are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.*

*"**Blessed** are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

*"**Blessed** are **you** when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against **you** because of Me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before **you**.*

It ain't what you don't know
that gets you into trouble. It's
what you know for sure that
just ain't so.

Mark Twain



The Focus of our study "It's not what we might think!"

Of enormous importance to every one of us is that as we study His words... they perhaps don't mean what "we" want them to mean. He is the author of creation, His message to us concerns what He intends for us to learn and know.

As we listen and learn the words of Jesus... He reminds us that what we already know... like what the Jews and Pharisees of His day taught... Like what His Disciples and followers thought they knew... may not be exactly what He wants us to know, for He said to His disciples and followers...

"But I say to you," and "You who have ears for hearing, be hearing these words."

Even now for you... have you ever thought about just when these blessings might be true? Non of this could be fully true then, non of this could be fully true a hundred years later, or even a thousand years later. It's not fully true now. Yes, believers do benefit from the Beatitudes, but they will only be fully true when the Kingdom of God is established at the second coming of our lord and savior! Only then, under the rule of our Beneficent King -

the Lord Jesus, the Christ, will these wonderful blessings come to pass in their fullness. But... even then much of mankind will fail at holiness and faith. The absolute fulfillment will then come with Judgment and the believer's move to the Heavenly Kingdom - with a new heaven and a new earth.

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"YOU ARE THE SALT OF THE EARTH"
Matthew 5:13; Luke 14:34-35; Mark 9:50

The Words of Jesus - The Combined Text

So, let's concentrate on the words of Jesus that can change you and me right now. Let's see how God can change you - even today.

Jesus is teaching His new disciples and those who have followed Him to this mountainside. He has just started His "Sermon on the Mount," when at the end of the twelfth verse He opens His mouth and says...

[Mt 5:13a] "You are the salt of the earth;

[Mk 9:50b] salt is good, but if the salt becomes unsalty, [Mt 5:13c] how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, [Lk 14:35a] It is useless either for the soil or for the manure pile, [Mt 5:13d] except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men.

[Mk 9:50c] Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another.

[Lk 14:35c] He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

If you are at all familiar with this parable, you can see that combining the three instances (Matthew, Mark and Luke)... we have considerably more detail – and all in one place.

As we look at the words, we see Jesus speaking to these Jews somewhere near Capernaum, just north-east of the sea of Galilee.

What does Jesus mean? We mentioned earlier that Jesus' message is probably not what you think (or sometimes may have been taught).

The Focus Point

Think back to Mark Twain...

Jesus is telling these Jews what they knew, or should have known, about their place in the world. God had given this nation a covenantal place in the job of winning the nations around them to the belief in the One God Yahweh, and His grace driven

forgiveness of sins by way of the sacrifice of “the lamb.” They were to be the “Salt” of the earth, but what did Jesus mean by this?

The reason it’s confusing is that salt had a number of purposes in the ancient world. At least five of them are relevant to Jesus’s words about his disciples: salt was used for flavoring, preserving, sacrificing, destroying, and fertilizing. Rather than assuming that Jesus’s statement is confusing and then debating which particular use of salt he had in mind, it’s best to assume he knew what he was saying and that metaphors can function in multiple ways. Followers of Jesus are like salt: although we’re ordinary and everywhere and get involved in pretty much everything whether we’re noticed or not, we also have a variety of roles to play as God’s kingdom comes on earth.

Let's look briefly at each of the five basic uses of salt.

1. Flavoring

This is probably the use of salt that most of us think of because it's the only one of the five that still has large application today - and it's a powerful illustration of the way Christians are to serve the world. We’re intended to spread throughout the world and enhance it, adding flavor to things that would be bland, drawing out the blessings of whatever is good, and providing a contrast by being distinct and different. When Paul tells us to ensure that our speech is “seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person” (Col. 4:6), this is the kind of thing he has in mind.

2. Preserving

Salt was the ancient equivalent of refrigeration. If you wanted to stop meat or fish from decaying, you could rub in salt and make it edible for longer. This was the main reason salt was so valuable.

Jesus' disciples (us too) are to be those who preserve the spiritual lives of all those around us. We're not to let our friends and neighbors' decay in their spiritual lives as much as is possible. Constant prayer for the unsaved, constant witnessing to our friends and neighbors. Spreading the saving salt upon them.

So, salt savors - and it saves.

3. It fulfills the Law of Sacrificing

Moses explained how Israel was to offer sacrifices to the Lord: "You shall season all your grain offerings with salt. You shall not let the salt of the **covenant** with your God be missing from your grain offering; with all your offerings you shall offer salt." [Lev 2:13].

Application:

As we offer ourselves in obedient, suffering self-sacrifice, we become the seasoning on our sacrificial giving of our lives that makes it well pleasing to God.

So, salt savors - and saves - and its use is mandated in the Law through sacrifice.

4. Destroying

This is one we find much less appealing, but we can't get away

from it: there are more scriptural references to salt being used in judgment or destruction than to any of the other purposes.

There is the story of Lot's wife - turned into a pillar of salt. Moses warned the Israelites that if they break God's covenant, their land will be **"burned out with brimstone and salt, nothing sown and nothing growing where no plant can sprout"** [Dt 29:23].

Abimelech tried to set himself up as King and "burns" a city by sowing it with salt. Salt, in the ancient Near East, was used to express judgment upon evil. Jesus Himself, in one of the fiercest judgment paragraphs in the Gospels, says simply that *"everyone will be salted with fire"* [Mark 9:49] (one verse before our use of Mk 9:50).

As disciples of Christ, we need to remember that we have been scattered into the world to be salty as a way of judging evil (judging the sin, not the person), destroying wickedness, and preventing lust or greed or murder or injustice from taking root. The very existence of the church, preaching, and living out the gospel, proclaims judgment against the enemies of God. **"A clear sign to them of their destruction" [Phil 1:28].**

So, salt savors - and saves - and its use is mandated in the Law through sacrifice, and guards against the advancement of evil.

5. Fertilizing

Several ancient civilizations used salt as a fertilizer for the soil, and depending on the conditions, it could help the earth retain water, make fields easier to plow, release minerals for plants, kill weeds, protect crops from disease, stimulate growth, and

increase yields. The reason this matters is that Jesus specifically describes His people as the salt of the earth, which in a rural, farming culture would have been significant.

So, salt savors - and saves - and its use is mandated in the Law through sacrifice, and guards against the advancement of evil, and it acts as a benefit to the soil in conditioning and fertilizing it.

Andrew Wilson, a pastor in London tells us, "So when Jesus said we are the salt of the earth, what did he mean? Did he mean that God will use us for flavoring, preserving, sacrificing, destroying, or fertilizing? In a word, **yes.**"

They were to be the life preserving spice for all to partake and live. They were to be the excitement that would drive men and women to believe in the plan and program of God and His promised King and Kingdom.

So, then Jesus directly asks them the question,

"If the salt (you Jews) has lost all of that spice (the grace of God), and you can't re-salty un-salty salt, then what good are you (for that purpose - salting the people of the land)?"

Then He gives them the answer...

"only good for being cast out and trampled by men."

The Jews were to be a chosen nation with a holy special calling - to win the world through belief. But their failure in every respect

over more than 1,440 years made them non-believers and useless as examples to follow for a life of holiness and righteousness. What good was the then nation of Israel to the purposes of God? ***"only good for being cast out and trampled by men."***

We can also see in this parable a hint that if those who followed Jesus would believe and stand up in Judea against the then religious/political leadership and reform the culture to a Biblical standard – that the Messiah/King would lead them back into their calling as the salt of the earth, and the establishment of their promised kingdom. But this did not happen. We don't see the masses of Galileans storming Jerusalem demanding a change in leadership and culture. Instead, we see mobs of Judean people shouting, **"Crucify Him, Crucify Him, Crucify Him."**

Mt 5:13 - You are the salt of the earth.

Let's ask and answer some questions:

FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS WITHOUT ANSWERS

- 1. What is salt?**
- 2. Where do you find salt?**
- 3. What is salt used for?**
- 4. Is salt important?**
- 5. What is Jesus telling us?**
- 6. If it loses its saltiness, what's it good for?**
- 7. So, what's the Point?**

FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS WITH ANSWERS

1. What is salt

Natural mineral – sodium chloride – two deadly chemicals made beneficial by molecular combination.

2. Where do you find salt?

Everywhere!

3. What is salt used for?

taste, preservation, medication, nothing in the oceans (3/4 of the planet) can live without it, etc.

4. Is salt important?

Absolutely – it is essential to our world. **Mark 9:50b - Salt is good**

5. What is Jesus telling us?

We are essential to our world! We are good for it, we belong here, etc.. I we are salt... we should be "salty!" Salt-like.

"But if the salt becomes unsalty, [Mt 5:13c] how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, [Lk 14:35a] It is useless either for the soil or for the manure pile."

We're not talking about salt losing its taste – we're talking about a quality - that if it is lost – it has lost its quality **purpose**.

Can you make a mineral salty if it has lost its salt – can you **restore** a quality purpose if that quality has been **lost? – NO** (not talking about missing it with more salty salt). It is just a simple question with an expected simple answer - **NO**

6. If it loses its saltiness - What is it good for?

A mineral with no quality of its own...

No help to the dirt

No help to manure

Just throw it on the ground where it will be trampled like the rest of the dirt – **BY MAN**

[Mt 5:13d] "except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men."

Jesus introduces "Man" into the story line.

What do men do in this story?

They trample the earth – What does that mean to you? It's all the rage today – environmentalism – we trample the earth and all that is in/on it – Remember last week? ***"The heart of man is desperately wicked, who can know it?"***

So, **If** you are the **"Salt of the earth"**... you are of value, according to your **Quality** and **Purpose**.

7. So, what's the point?

Jesus is telling them that the nation of Israel lost its saltiness. They lost their quality, their purpose. They abandoned their God given mission. They lost their Abrahamic quality and purpose. God spoke, Abraham listened and heard God's commands. Abraham believed God and loved Him, followed Him, worshipped Him. Israel no longer did.

Before we finish the text, we need to also consider all those who are in its context.

There were the **Disciples** - Jesus is telling them that there is a better way - one that leads to the Promised Kingdom of God. Hear what He has to say, understand that there is a believer's quality and purpose to their existence - don't lose it - for then you will be worthless.

His message to **all the followers** around them is to see that the benefits of the Kingdom are worth pursuing. Listen to His words, you followers, and choose whom you will serve and worship.

The message to **the Pharisees and scribes** would be perceived as a kind of blasphemy. He's telling them that they have failed in quality and purpose. They are only good for the manure pile. They were not happy with His words.

How about you? Are you hearing what Jesus has to say? Are you aware that many in our Christian churches and many that

"call" themselves believers, don't make it to the end. They allow the world to wear away their faith, and they lose their salty flavor, and it can't be regained. Don't be one of them. Focus on God's purpose and quality that He has given to you. Don't let it go, follow... and be faithful - all of your life.

Here's His message to all of us in any age.

[Mk 9:50] Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another.

Many think "Church" is no place to be. It's often full of disagreement, gossip, bad attitudes, and the list goes on. It's also full of blessing, fellowship, love, and deep prayer. Jesus said it best,

[Mark 2:17] says...

And hearing this, Jesus said to them, "It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick; I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

The Church is full of "sinners." And we are of all kinds. Those of us who are "well" need to focus our efforts and prayers on those who desperately need them. I've always said, "Perfect is a little hard to come by!" So, take your salt and apply it to those who desperately need it. It is much more important to minister to the sinner than to reject them from your immediate presence - we're not talking about church discipline... we're talking about not shunning church people because they're different than you, or your neighbors because they are a different color, or they speak a different language, or live a different lifestyle from you.

[Lk 14:35c] "He who has ears to hear, let him hear." Jesus' final words on the subject of the importance of being "salty" in the Gospel, "salty" in our Christian relationships, "Salty" in our love for the un-believer. You should be hearing what He has to say, and changing your life, and growing in your Christian experience in His "Salty way."

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Jeremiah 18:15
"Don't stumble from the Ancient Path"
2024-03-06 UPDATED

ⁱ From: Focus on the Family (Edited)
thattheworldmayknow.com/the-amazing-galileans