

Rightly Dividing the Gospels

—Installment 28—

The Sermon on the Mount

—Part 2—

The Influence and Duty of Jesus' Subjects
(Salt and Light)

~ 28 A.D., after Passover

Near Capernaum by the Sea of Galilee

Albuquerque 09 January 2011

Springtown 05 October 2013

Durango 20 July 2014

I. Brief Review of Overview of the Sermon on the Mount

A. Comparison with the Sermon on the Plain

1. Matthew and Luke each describe a sermon in Galilee connected with the calling of his apostles and with large multitudes coming to him for healing
 - a. Sermon on the Mount(Matt. 5–7)
 - b. Sermon on the Plain(Luke 6: 17–49)
2. Whether they are the same event, or similar sermons in different locations, matters little
 - a. We will treat them together for efficiency

B. Audience

1. His disciples, whom he particularly addressed in a public setting among multitudes
 - a. That is, those whom he was preparing to receive and enter his kingdom

C. Theme

1. The kingdom and its distinctive qualities
 - a. The kingdom is shown to be composed of his (Messiah's) subjects
 - i. Its distinctive traits derive from his character
 - b. The kingdom is distinguished by contrast to three things
 - i. The Mosaic system
 - ii. Popular expectation
 - iii. Pharisaic hypocrisy
 - c. This forward-looking teaching is grounded in its context: the closing years of the Mosaic covenant

- i. It teaches what will shortly be, and how men should prepare themselves for it
- ii. While recognizing certain OT features of the day

II. The Influence and Duty of Jesus’ Subjects (Salt and Light) Matt. 5: 13–16

A. Salt of the earth..... Matt. 5: 13

1. Value of salt—literal

a. Nutrition (life-supporting)

- i. Essential for human life
 - (i) Regulation and transportation of fluids, other cellular functions

b. Preservation (curing)

- i. The most important preservative in history of man
- ii. Prevents spoilage and loss
- iii. Enables storage and transportation
 - (i) Prevents waste and hunger
- iv. Used as a purifying agent..... II Kings 2: 20–22
- v. Used as an element of enduring covenant..... Lev. 2: 13; Num. 18: 19; II Chr. 13: 5
 - (i) Contrast salt (in sacrifice and covenant) with yeast, which was forbidden in most sacrifices
 - 1. Salt symbolizes endurance
 - 2. Yeast symbolizes change

c. Seasoning (savor)

- i. So important as to be one of five basic tastes, with dedicated taste receptors in the tongue
- ii. Salt enhances other flavors, greatly improving palatability in most foods Job 6: 6

d. Currency (value)

- i. Pliny the Elder (1st century Roman nobleman) asserts that Roman soldiers were paid in salt and that the word *salary* is thereby derived
 - (i) His assertion is disputed by modern scholars, at least insofar as it implies that salt was ever the actual and sole currency of pay
 - (ii) Other etymologies for *salary* also exist, not derived from salt
 - (iii) Roman soldiers were provided necessities, including salt, which may have been deducted from their pay
- ii. The colloquialism “worth his salt” alludes to salt as salary

2. Value of salt—figurative

a. Nutrition

- i. Supply of that which enables life
 - (i) Preaching needed for salvation.....(I Cor. 1, 2)

- b. Preservation (curing)
 - i. Prevention of moral decay
 - ii. Maintenance of human value
 - (i) Insufficient salt—godly people—to prevent destruction of
 - 1. Antediluvian worldGen. 6: 5–8; 7: 1
 - a. Eight saved
 - 2. Sodom and Gomorrah Gen. 18: 20–24, 32–33
 - a. Four (three) saved
 - 3. Canaanites
 - a. E.g., Rahab (and her family) alone from JerichoJosh. 6: 17
 - c. Seasoning
 - i. Though few, Christians (should) exert an outsize influence in the world in the gracious qualities of godliness
 - (i) E.g., with gracious speechCol. 4: 6
 - d. Currency
 - i. I wouldn’t assign much figurative value to this doubtful metaphor; but Christians ought to be valuable to their employers Eph. 6: 5 (Col. 3: 22; I Tim. 6: 1; Tit. 2: 9; I Pet. 2: 18)
3. If the salt have lost its savor
- a. Salt cannot lose its savor (its taste or any other property) so long as it is still salt
 - i. If salt is not savory, it has been
 - (i) Corrupted with another substance
 - (ii) Lost and replaced
 - (iii) Changed into another substance
 - (iv) Something else all along
 - 1. Perhaps obtained from a fraudulent source
 - b. The value of salt derives from its behavior
 - i. True salt is immensely valuable
 - ii. False salt is worthless
 - c. Its behavior betrays its identity, whether true or false
 - d. Jesus here uses hyperbole (un-salty salt) to make an important point
 - i. He uses hyperbole occasionally, in this sermon and other teachings
 - (i) Beam in the eye
 - (ii) Camel through the eye of a needle
 - ii. This is not a chemistry lesson, but a lesson about the value of his disciples
 - e. If we stop providing the gracious “savor” of godliness to the world, we

- i. Have become corrupt
 - ii. Have become something else
 - iii. Were never his disciples to begin with
 - f. And it doesn't matter how we got in that condition, we are worthless and fit to be discarded
 - g. We are known by our behavior, and that behavior is determined by our identity
 - i. Faith and works.....Jas. 2: 14–26
 - ii. Sheep in wolf's clothing Matt. 7: 15
 - iii. Trees and their fruits Matt. 7: 16–19
- B. Light of the world..... Matt. 5: 14–16
 - 1. We have seen previously that Jesus came to bring light..... John 1: 1–9
 - a. And that men draw near or flee according to their deeds..... John 3: 19–21
 - b. Good and evil are revealed and sorted by light
 - i. Safety and hazard
 - ii. This is as valuable and vital a function as that of salt..... Acts 13: 47
 - 2. Jesus' disciples must provide that light following his departure from the world
 - 3. City on a hill
 - a. Cities were commonly built on hills to make them easier to defend
 - i. Jerusalem and Samaria are both hilltop cities
 - b. Such a city cannot be hidden
 - i. The church should be a transparent and honest body
 - (i) Both its virtues and its flaws apparent
 - (ii) Contrast with secretive and deceptive political parties
 - 1. And some false churches
 - 4. Lamp on a stand
 - a. *Candle* is a (harmless) mistranslation, an anachronism, appearing dozens of times in the KJV
 - i. *Candle* is a legitimate translation of the Greek *λυχνος* *luchnos*, but
 - ii. Wax candles were unknown at this time in this part of the world
 - (i) They were in use in Asia, but not the Middle East
 - iii. Lamp is the correct term, referring to a bowl of olive oil with a spout or nozzle in which was lain a flaxen wick
 - b. Bushel refers to a large wide mouth vessel or basket made for dry storage, with a volume corresponding to about 8 gallons
 - i. A bushel inverted over a lamp would defeat its purpose, and might
 - (i) Extinguish it
 - (ii) Burn down the house (if it were a woven basket)

