



## **Salt, Light, and the City**

**Sunday, June 9, 2024 - Pastor Rafael Aristy**

### **Matthew 5:13-16**

"You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet. You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven."

In this portion of Jesus' sermon, He uses three metaphors to convey a message to His hearers; salt, light, and a city on a hill. **What did Jesus REALLY mean when He used them?**

Salt is one of the most universal things. It doesn't matter where you're at, salt is salt.

Uses for salt in biblical times:

1. As a preservative
2. Connected to purity - purification/cleaning
3. For covenants (relational agreement)
4. Used in sacrifices
5. Use for medicinal purposes
6. As a condiment for food
7. Symbol of relationship or being friends with others, partaking of salt together:

**Mark 9:50** "Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can you make it salty again? Have salt among yourselves, and be at peace with each other."

Jesus' language in our passage today may seem a little different or even foreign to us, but it was not so to Jesus' hearers. They were very familiar with salt.

- Look to the book of the Prophet Isaiah. Jesus uses a lot of the language used in some of the writings of the prophet Isaiah to convey the message He wants His followers to hear.

### **Isaiah 2:2-5**

"

In the last days the mountain of the Lord's temple will be established as the highest of the

mountains; it will be exalted above the hills, and all nations will stream to it. Many peoples will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the temple of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths." The law will go out from Zion, the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore. Come, descendants of Jacob, let us walk in the light of the Lord."

Prophet Isaiah talks about a mountain here in this passage.

- This mountain is not just any mountain, but the mountain of the Lord's temple would be established as the HIGHEST. It will be exalted above all, and all nations will stream to it. They will **all** come to it!
- This is the City of God, the exalted Jerusalem.

**14** "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden."

This is that "hill" that Jesus is referring to, one higher than any other.

What is so important about this hill, this mountain?

- In human history, mountains were associated with heaven touching earth.
- In the Hebrew bible, mountains are the places where heaven and earth become one (Mount Sinai, Mount Carmel, etc).

In this chapter, the prophet Isaiah uses a connection between God's law, being taught, and the light.

Light - in Hebrew - *Owr*

Law - in Hebrew - *Torah* (Direction, instruction)

Teach - *Yarah*

**3** "Many peoples will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the temple of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths." The law will go out from Zion, the word of the Lord from Jerusalem."

- Many people would come to the mountain of God, the highest of all!
- They come to be taught by YAHWEH...Yarah...by His law/instructions - Torah...and then they would walk in the Owr of God...the LIGHT of God

When Jesus says "you are the LIGHT of the world," He is not necessarily saying SHINE BABY SHINE! though he could. He is asking them to reflect OWR of the TORAH...To reflect the light of His instructions to the world!

- He is saying, ***may the way you live your life, by following my instructions, bring the Father's light to all who come.***

***It is Yahweh's TORAH, His law/instruction, that brings the OWR of Yahweh- His LIGHT- to His people!***

**1 John 1:5-7**

"This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie

and do not live out the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.”

We are called to walk in the light. In other words, we are called to go through life following the Lord’s instructions on **how** to live in this world.

- In his light, in his instructions, we have fellowship with one another.

Back to the prophet Isaiah. Yahweh speaks to His people.

**Isaiah 42:1** “Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him, and he will bring justice to the nations.”

The servant mentioned here is Jesus.

Listen to what Yahweh says just a few verses later about the servant:

**Isaiah 42:6-7** “I, the Lord, have called you in righteousness; I will take hold of your hand. I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles, to open eyes that are blind, to free captives from prison and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness.”

The Servant, Jesus, is made to be a covenant for the Jewish people, and a light for the Gentiles

- In Chapter 2 of Isaiah the people were following the light of Yahweh
- Now, Jesus has become that light
- Jesus Himself becomes Yahweh’s instruction. He is the coach, the example, and the role model.

**John 1:1-5** “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.”

Here it is again, just as the prophet Isaiah foretold, the servant becomes the LIGHT to the Gentiles.

- His light brings life to all mankind!

Isaiah 42 tells us that not only is the servant (Jesus) is made a light to the Gentiles, He is ALSO made to be a covenant for the people!

HERE IS THE SALT!

- Yahweh has made Jesus the **covenant**.
- Salt is symbolic of covenant. **Salt symbolizes long-lasting and enduring.**
- We sometimes say we are in a “covenant relationship with Jesus.”
- That means it’s a relational agreement that it’s to be enduring and long-lasting.

**Numbers 18:19** “Whatever is set aside from the holy offerings the Israelites present to the Lord I give to you and your sons and daughters as your perpetual share. It is an everlasting covenant of salt before the Lord for both you and your offspring.”

The Hebrew Bible calls it an everlasting covenant of salt...Jesus has become that  
EVERLASTING COVENANT OF SALT!

- God the Father kept his covenant with Israel and with all mankind by sending His son Jesus to fulfill the agreement, to fulfill the promise.
- Jesus' blood is the ink used to sign this agreement, this covenant.
- Salt represents this EVERLASTING covenant, which is unchanging and enduring.

Towards the end of the book of Isaiah God speaks to those who dwell in the exalted Jerusalem. Those in Zion...

**Isaiah 60:1-3** "Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord rises upon you. See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples, but the Lord rises upon you and his glory appears over you. Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn."

ARISE, SHINE, FOR YOUR LIGHT HAS COME! What an incredible imagery!

- Imagine the glory of the Lord rising upon the people of God!
- All is dark, darkness covers all the earth like in Genesis 1, but the Lord rises upon them and His glory appears.
- Nations will come to their light and kings to their brightness.

**IMAGINE WHAT THAT MUST BE LIKE!**

**Isaiah 60:14** "The children of your oppressors will come bowing before you; all who despise you will bow down at your feet and will call you the City of the Lord, Zion of the Holy One of Israel."

Let's try to bring all this together.

- In Isaiah chapter 2, Yahweh sets His **hill/mountain**, high above everything else. **His city** is seen by all nations, and they come to receive His instruction so that they would walk in it.
- In Isaiah 42, Yahweh then says that is making the servant (Jesus) the **light**, and the **covenant**.
- So far, we can see the **SALT**, the **LIGHT**, and the **CITY on a HILL**.

The last part we discussed in Isaiah is the final piece of the puzzle connected to Jesus' sermon

- In Isaiah 60 **the people of God, who dwell in the city of God, on the mountain of God, who are in a covenant of salt with God, will shine for others to see and be attracted to their light.**

Considering that, let's look at the words of Jesus in the sermon of the mount...

**13** "You are the salt of the earth

**14** "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden.

There seems to be a progression...

**Salt:** Yahweh makes a covenant of salt with His people. Then the servant (Jesus) becomes the salt, the covenant. Then, we become the salt by living in a committed relationship with Him and each other.

### **Light & City on a Hill**

From the highest place where everyone can see it, God brings his instruction, which is the light. Then, the servant (Jesus) becomes the light that lived a sinless life and was lifted high on the cross for all to see. Then, we became that light and the way we live out the gospel point to our Father.

First, some simple observations:

Jesus says, **YOU ARE** the salt - Not you 'will become salt' or 'you have salt'

Jesus says, **YOU ARE** the light - Not you 'will become light' or you 'have light'

*Some of us stand around waiting for God to make us into something we already are...*

***This is who YOU ARE!***

**Matthew 5:13** "You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet"

Our effectiveness as the salt rests solely on our ability to stay committed to the one who became the covenant...Jesus! If we separate ourselves from Him, we are like salt that is not salty anyone. It doesn't do what it was created to do.

Remember: ***You must come out of the saltshaker! Salt can't flavor, influence, preserve, or purify if it remains bottled up!***

**Matthew 5:14** "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house."

Our lives should not be hidden from view. They shouldn't be hidden from the eyes of those who are in darkness.

- It is not those who are in the light that need the light. It is those who in darkness...***DON'T COVER IT UP!***

And this is what happens when we do not cover the light that living for Jesus and following his teachings produce...

**Matthew 5:16** "In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven."

- *How do we apply Jesus' words to our lives as His disciples?*

- *What ways are you living as salt and light to the world around you?*

- *Where could you be a difference maker in the lives of unbelievers within your circle of influence?*

- *What is God revealing to you through the Sermon on the Mount series?*