
a *Grace Notes* course

Life of Christ 200

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Lesson 204

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Transition to the Sermon on the Mount

Read Matthew 12:15-21

Read Mark 3:7-12

Outline

The geographical movement of Christ and His disciples.

The reason. "But Jesus, knowing [this],"

Jesus knew that the Pharisees and Herodians were trying to kill Him.

In fact, He knew this even before the grain field incident, as we have seen.

The movement. " withdrew from there to the sea with His disciples."

"There" is again undefined. We do not know the location of the grain field, nor do we know the position of the synagogue where the withered hand incident took place.

But we do know that Christ went with His disciples down the sea, and of course the sea is the Sea of Galilee. So, they are somewhere on the coast of the Sea of Galilee.

The attendant movement of His followers.

The following. "And a great multitude from Galilee followed;"

First, we have the fact of the following. They followed Him from Galilee and beyond Galilee.

And second, the reason, which was the usual reason - because He healed people.

Their places of origin. "and also from Judea, and from Jerusalem, and from Idumai, and [from] beyond the Jordan, and [from] the vicinity of Tyre and Sidon,"

Judea is the southern region of Israel. It was 50-75 miles from Judea to the Sea of Galilee. Our modern equivalent: two or three days' drive... 1500 miles.

Jerusalem is about sixty miles from the Sea of Galilee.

Idumai, or Idumaea was about 100 miles to the south, south even of Judea, or a good four days journey.

Beyond the Jordan is 30 to 60 miles to the southeast from the Sea of Galilee.

Tyre and Sidon lie about 30 and 40 miles to the northwest from the Sea of Galilee.

Conclusion: the people of the surrounding regions were coming from all over to see Christ and to receive His healing touch.

The desperation of the multitude.

The healings. "a great multitude hearing what great things that He was doing came to Him..."
"...for He had healed them all,"

Although these two parts of the narrative are out of order, they are in the outline here to explain the motivation of the crowd.

Christ had healed some of them, and the word got out, and so they were coming from all over.

Mark says that "Christ healed them all." In other words, it was His current policy to heal every last one who came to Him. Christ did not heal every sick person in the region - only those who came to Him, and only those who came to Him at this time.

It was never the policy or intent to heal every human being of their physical ailments.

The chaotic reaction of the multitude. "in order that they might not press upon Him; for He had healed them all, so that as many as had afflictions fell upon him to cling to Him.

This is a very chaotic scene.

The people press in against Christ, the sick and afflicted falling upon Him and clinging to Him; hundreds and thousands of people falling and flailing and touching and grabbing and clinging.

In fact, it would not only be chaotic, but dangerous.

The necessity of physical separation. "And He told His disciples that a boat should stand ready for Him"

What a clever, Satanic plot. The people are so anxious to touch Him and cling to Him that they would kill Him in their frenzy.

So Christ very wisely told His disciples to keep a boat ready for Him, so that He can escape their clutches.

Technicality: it does not say that Christ actually got into the boat. Perhaps its presence was enough to settle down the crowd.

The testimony of the unclean spirits. "And the unclean spirits, whenever they beheld Him, fell down before Him and cried out, saying, "You are the Son of God!"

"unclean spirits" is a synonym for demon possessed people. The spirits were not falling down before Him on their own, but instead they were causing the bodies that they occupied to do so.

The spirits were causing their hosts to cry out "You are the Son of God!" Now why would they do this?

The first possibility is that they feared a penalty which Christ could bring against them - namely, imprisonment in the abyss. And so their public declaration and movement could have been an attempt at avoiding this terrible imprisonment.

But, it is much more likely that they were trying to whip the crowd into a frenzy, and thus have Christ die by accident before He could properly introduce His kingdom.

Think: Christ has done many miraculous things, and His life has been full of wonder, but what word has He spoken of His kingdom?

The truth is, He is about to talk about His kingdom for the very first time, and it would be just the right time from Satan's point of view for Him to die.

Christ had no chance of anonymity here. The demons would draw attention to Him wherever He went... and at all times whipping up crowds to throng against Him and even endanger Him.

The exhortation for silence

"And He strongly exhorted them not to make Him known,"

This exhortation went out not only to the demons, but also to all that He healed.

The Greek verb is EPETIMESEN, which means to give strong honor or respect, and in a negative connotation to warn.

Here we may have a dual connotation: a warning against the fallen angels who were attempting to have Him killed by frenzy, and an exhortation against the people who pressed against Him.

The fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah. in order that the word [which came] through Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, saying, 'Behold, My Servant whom I have chosen; My Beloved in whom My soul is well-pleased; I will put My Spirit upon Him, And He shall proclaim justice to the Gentiles. He will not quarrel, nor cry out; nor will anyone in the streets hear His voice. A battered reed He will not break off, and a smoldering wick He will not snuff, until He casts out judgment for victory. And in His name the Gentiles will hope.'

This quote is from Isaiah 42:1-4. You should note that Matthew paraphrases a good deal of it without compromising its essence.

Here is the quote from the New American Standard: "1 Behold, My Servant, whom I uphold; my chosen one in whom My soul delights. I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the nations. 2 He will not cry out or raise His voice, nor make His voice heard in the street. 3 A bruised reed He will not break, and a dimly burning wick He will not extinguish; He will faithfully bring forth justice. 4 He will not be disheartened or crushed, until He has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands will wait expectantly for His law."

The Septuagint translates this way: "1 I will come to the aid of Jacob Israel my servant. My chosen one - my soul delights in him. I have given my Spirit upon Him; He will lead out judgment to the Gentiles. 2 He will not cry out nor yell; nor will His voice be heard outside. 3 He will not crush a reed that has been crushed and he will not snuff a dimly burning wick - but - He will lead justice into truth. 4 He will take up and He will not be broken until He has established justice upon the earth. And the Gentiles will hope in His name."

First observation: this looks really tangled!

First simplification: Matthew did not take his quote from the Septuagint! Throw it out!

Second simplification: Matthew is simply paraphrasing the Hebrew text - there is no great need for an exact translation.

When you paraphrase a passage, you paint with broad strokes of the brush. You capture essence,

and not letter. Paraphrasing is the impressionism of translation.

Now, the impression that Matthew was attempting to give.

The impression has to do with the whole passage in Isaiah, else Matthew would have quoted it only in part.

This passage has been fulfilled in part at the baptism of Jesus Christ.

The voice from heaven said some of these things, and the Spirit descended in bodily form as a dove.

But the impression that Matthew attempts to give here does not have to do with the events at Christ's baptism.

The impression does not have to do with the Gentiles, for Matthew does not include them in his narrative.

The impression has to do with the silence that Christ requires of the crowds (but not necessarily of the demons).

Here it is: Christ will make no ripple or wave on the face of the earth until He casts out judgment for victory.

The picture in the Greek is that of an exchange of judgment for victory. This can only be the cross.

So, Isaiah 42:1-4 predicts that the Messiah will make no violent moves until He has paid for the sins of man.

You will notice that anything within the integrity of God will be allowed after the atonement.

Christ does not want the approbation, and He really cannot truly have it anyway until after the atonement.

Remember what Christ will do at the second advent. With a shout, with the voice of the archangel! 10. This was a common critique of the Jews - that Christ did not make a big splash when He came.

Distinctions on the policy of non-violence.

This policy applies to every aspect of Christ's life.

This policy is restricted to the incarnation only.

This policy is a dispensational constant for evangelization.

This policy does not apply in matters of divine establishment for the church age.

The United States is a Gentile client nation, and the Laws of Divine Establishment should apply.

Luke 21:24: "...and Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled."

The context is the Olivet discourse, where Christ told His disciples of the things to come.

If you remember from the fig tree special, this discourse makes some generalizations about the church age before it gets to the specific predictions of the tribulation.

A part of the discourse not contained in Matthew 24 is that part which deals with the destruction of Jerusalem and the rule of the Gentiles.

Luke covers this in chapter 21, verses 20-24 of his gospel.

Christ indicates that the church age will be characterized by Gentile dominance.

The laws of Divine Establishment are outlined in codices 1 and 3 of the Mosaic Law.

Codex 1 is the freedom code, or the 10 commandments.

Codex 3 is the establishment code, and is set forth in Lev 11-20 and Exodus 21:1-23:9.

The spiritual code, which is codex 2 of the Mosaic Law, is not a requirement for the client nation. It is set forth in Lev 1-8, 21-25, and Exodus 25-40.

Summary: because Christ does not rule the planet during the church age, the Laws of Divine Establishment apply to Gentile nations. The nation which heeds these laws is a 'client' nation.

And, there are many indications from the epistles that the LDE are brought forward into the church age. Romans 1; 1 Tim 1:8-10.

The Beatitudes

Beatitudes Quick Review

The first blessing: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, because theirs is the Kingdom of God."

And, there is something quite significant here: even though you may be a believer, you are still poor in spirit! Many believers have a terrible time

with this concept, because they fail to understand that this sermon assumes residence in the kingdom.

Now, this is truly a remarkable statement! You have no power, and yet the kingdom of heaven belongs to you! But you can see that this is a fantastic introductory statement. This is the wisest thing that you can say to a new believer - just the simple fact that they are poor in spirit - whether they like it or not, whether they acknowledge it or not.

And, this is a blessing from God regardless of whether it is enjoyed.

This is not something you obtain by being humble; it is your estate regardless of your attitude.

Furthermore, this is a remarkable statement because it holds in view the doctrine of eternal security. You have the kingdom of heaven in spite of your lack of merit!

Therefore the first blessing to the one in the kingdom is eternal security.

The second blessing: "Blessed are they who mourn, because they will be comforted."

There are two ways to take the mourning: in the literal sense of mourning for some loved one that is lost; in the figurative sense of mourning over lost fellowship with God.

Now let's turn to mourning. Mourning due to the loss of fellowship is a fairly common Biblical theme.

Psalm 30: 1 I will extol You, O Lord, for You have lifted me up, and have not let my enemies rejoice over me. 2 O Lord my god, I cried to You for help, and You healed me. 3 O Lord, You have brought up my soul from Sheol; You have kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit. 4 Sing praise to the Lord, you His godly ones, and give thanks to His holy name. 5 For His anger is but for a moment, His favor is for a lifetime; weeping may last for the night, but a shout of joy comes in the morning... 10 Hear, O Lord, and be gracious to me; O lord, be my helper. 11 You have turned for me my mourning into dancing; You have loosed my sackcloth and girded me with gladness. 12 That my soul may sing praise to You, and not be

silent. O Lord my God, I will give thanks to You forever.

Psalm 38:1-8: "1 O Lord rebuke me not in Your wrath; and chasten me not in Your burning anger. 2 For Your arrows have sunk deep into me, and Your hand has pressed down on me. 3 There is no soundness in my flesh because of Your indignation; there is no health in my bones because of my sin. 4 For my iniquities are gone over my head; as a heavy burden the weigh too much for me. 5 My wounds grow foul and fester because of my folly. 6 I am bent over and greatly bowed down; I go mourning all day long. 7 For my loins are filled with burning; and there is no soundness in my flesh. 8 I am benumbed and badly crushed; I groan because of the agitation of my heart."

Isaiah 61:1-3 connects mourning and the atonement, "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the afflicted; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to captives, and freedom to prisoners; 2 to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn, 3 to grant those who mourn in Zion, giving them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a spirit of fainting. So they will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the lord, that he may be glorified."

2 Corinthians 7:9-13 makes a very direct connection between sin and grief. This passage seems almost as if Paul intended to clarify our beatitude. "I now rejoice, not that you were made sorrowful, but that you were made sorrowful to the point of repentance; for you were made sorrowful according to the will God, in order that you might not suffer loss in anything through us. For the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation; but the sorrow of the world produces death. For behold what earnestness this very thing, this godly sorrow, has produced in you: what vindication of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what avenging of wrong! In everything you demonstrated yourselves to be innocent in the matter. So although I wrote to

you it was not for the sake of the offender, nor for the sake of the one offended, but that your earnestness on our behalf might be made known to you in the sight of God. For this reason we have been comforted."

Conclusion:

Emotion is NEVER to be a criteria for thought or action.

Emotion should ALWAYS remain subordinate to thought.

Motivation is a system of thought which leads to action.

Sin puts you out of fellowship with God, and God the Holy Spirit.

While you are out of fellowship, God inflicts varying degrees and categories of suffering on your person.

These sufferings cause mental dissonance, and God designs them to get you to wake up.

Once you understand that you are out of fellowship, and that you are receiving divine discipline, your period of mourning begins.

Mourning over sin is a complex of thought about the sin that includes:

The perception of pain over the loss of fellowship.

The perception of pain because of the divine discipline.

The mental mourning over sin then should naturally invoke emotional response in the form of sadness, or mourning.

This complex of thought and subordinate emotion naturally moves the believer toward confession, and this is the intent of God.

Therefore, mourning is a blessing from God, for it brings comfort in the restoration of fellowship.

The comfort comes from the comforter, who is God the Holy Spirit.

There is woe to those who laugh, because if they laugh at divine discipline, and while they are out of fellowship they will have little motive to confess. Hebrews 12:5, "and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, 'My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor faint when you are reprov'd by Him;'"

Mourning and feelings of guilt after the restoration of fellowship are illegitimate, and should be all left behind.

The third blessing: "Blessed are the humble, because they will inherit the earth."

This really denotes the ability to solve problems without violence or angry reaction - but to solve the problems really and truly through the use of Bible Doctrine in the Soul.

Therefore this meekness really brings the idea of doctrinal problem solving, and reliance on the truth vs. reliance on human viewpoint solutions.

And therefore, there really is the connotation of doctrinal orientation vs. human viewpoint orientation.

It brings the inheritance of the earth.

Inheriting the earth while Satan rules it is no prize. It is not about that.

Neither does being meek bring in the millennium - there is nothing that we can do to accomplish what only Christ can.

Therefore, this is about the inheritance of the earth during the millennium, an inheritance based on the death of Christ.

The fourth blessing, "Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, because they will be filled."

The words for hunger and thirst are pretty standard here - exactly what we understand them to be in the English, with little or no extra emphasis.

This blessing works as a companion to the "poor in spirit". It is the realization of that very state.

No person in this world has righteousness in an of him or her self. That is the essence of being spiritually helpless. The one who hungers and thirsts after righteousness has realized this, and thus seeks righteousness in God.

This is about positive volition, and even quite a bit about doctrinal dependence.

There are two righteousnesses related to Jesus Christ.

The first is the righteousness which He produced on the cross, and which is imputed to us at the moment that we believe in Him. Rom 5:18, "So

then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of [eternal] life to all men."

The second righteousness is that which comes through the study of the word of God.

2 Timothy 3:16, "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness."

1 Corinthians 2:16, "For who has known the mind of the Lord, that he should instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ."

This beatitude concentrates on the second righteousness. This is a righteousness which can only come through faith perception.

Hunger and thirst are very excellent metaphors for positive volition, because they convey need, as opposed to simple desire.

Hungering and thirsting for righteousness is a simple honesty with self about a spiritual need. It is the need for Divine viewpoint thinking.

Hungering and thirsting for righteousness leads to fulfillment. God is 100% faithful to positive volition.

10. The fulfilling that comes from knowing the word of God is a great blessing in itself. To be filled to the point of overflowing is truly great.

11. Being filled with the Word of God means:

Knowing God - the greatest person you will ever know.

Being able to resist temptation more effectively.

Being able to reduce the impact of sin in your life.

Understanding your destiny in Christ for this life and the next.

Tapping into a great portfolio of blessing for this life and the next.

Adding meaning to every blessing and understanding to every category of suffering.

The development of an invincible Spiritual self esteem.

Becoming the recipient of Divine personal love.

Being able to solve life's problems through doctrine, and not reaction.

15. Therefore, this is a fantastic blessing indeed.

The fifth blessing: "Blessed are the merciful, because they will be shown mercy."

All of the actions of God are done without conditions.

Unlimited atonement is an expression of Divine mercy, 1 John 2:2, "He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world."

Eternal security is an expression of Divine mercy, 1 John 3:1a, "How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!"

The life and death of Jesus Christ are the ultimate testimony of the love of God.

An extension of your life is often an expression of mercy, so that you may have another chance to use your volition responsibly.

The merciful of the tribulation will be shown mercy in the preservation of their human lives in the tribulation. In fact, human mercy as expressed in charity is very much a measure of Christian maturity during the millennium.

The sixth blessing: "Blessed are the pure in heart, because they will see God."

Almost anyone can appear to be pure. This is not a great accomplishment. But those who are privately and mentally pure are another category entirely.

Why is anyone pure in heart? It only because they are in fellowship with God. No one is righteous - no one at all. We can only be pure in heart because of the ability of God to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Pure in heart does not refer to spiritual maturity, but rather the state of being in fellowship and cleansed from all sins.

Putting the word in your heart causes personal purity related to spiritual maturity.

Purity of heart is a requirement for prayer, 2 Tim 2:22, "Now flee from youthful lusts, and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart."

Summary of Biblical references to maturity.

Purity may refer to the status of spiritual maturity.

Purity may also refer to the temporal state of being in fellowship with God.

The only extra context we have is the blessing which attends the state. And the blessing is that the pure in heart will see God. "will see God" is the future indicative of OPSONTAI with the simple accusative case of THEON .

So, those who are pure in heart now will see God in the future.

Observation: this future may be in one minute or it may extend to the tribulation, the millennium, or even into eternity.

OPSONTAI however, is from the verb HORAO, and this verb designates a category of sight that goes beyond on the literal to the figurative. It is seeing God in the figurative sense, and thus what can only be seen through the Word of God.

Question: do you have to be pure in heart before you can become pure in heart? In other words, it is very important to separate the idea of fellowship from the idea of maturity. Both derive from purity, but they are quite distinct from one another.

Conclusion: this purity of heart is the fellowship which comes from the confession of sin. Thus a connection exists between this and the second beatitude, that to "they who mourn".

Blessed are they who mourn, because they will be comforted [and thus become pure in heart]; blessed are the pure in heart, because they will see God. There is a definite string of blessings here, one balanced on the other.

Purity of heart is the status of being in fellowship with God. It is only while you are in fellowship that you can learn and apply most doctrines.

The seventh blessing: "Blessed are the peacemakers, because they will be called sons of God."

The interpretation of the term is somewhat more difficult. We will begin with the meaning of the word itself.

This is the only place in the Bible where this noun occurs. Its corresponding verb appears in Colossians 1:20.

"For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, and through Him to

reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven."

Christ is the peacemaker through the blood of His cross. Therefore, Paul connects the word to the doctrine of reconciliation.

Christ was the peacemaker through His fantastic victory on the cross. He founded that victory on His non-violent policy for the incarnation.

However, at the second advent, Christ will make peace through His great military victory at the battle of Armageddon. That will be peace through violent means.

If Christ is the peacemaker through the reconciliation, then certainly we are whenever we introduce others to that same reconciliation.

So, peacemakers are purveyors of the gospel.

The peacemakers will be called the sons of God.

And so it comes to this: that this is a special reward for those who lived or will live in any of the dispensations related to Israel.

12. A person's name held great significance in Biblical times - probably more so than it does today.

13. And to gain a new title, given by God Himself, would be significant indeed.

14. To hold the same title as God the Son is truly a fantastic complement. Peacemakers having the same title as THE peacemaker has a certain poetic symmetry to it.

The eighth blessing and its explanation: " Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, because theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. You are blessed whenever they insult you and persecute you, and whenever they ostracize you and they insult you and cast down your name as evil falsely for my sake. Rejoice and exult and leap wildly, because your reward is great in heaven; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

Conclusion: you may be persecuted for two reasons: because you are a Christian, and because you are a mature Christian.

The blessing for this is the kingdom of heaven. This seems curious at first, because the same is

awarded the poor in spirit no matter what they might do.

However, there is a contrast. In the first beatitude the emphasis lay on eternal security. In this last one it is on eternity, period.

Next comes the explanation. It begins with the phrase "you are blessed".

Then comes a command that is predicated on the persecution. "Rejoice and exult and leap wildly, because your reward is great in heaven; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

The second pairing of verbs has to do with wild rejoicing. Matthew's verb concentrates more on verbal expression, while Luke's on physical expression. They both describe an ecstatic kind of rejoicing - the kind that you see when you win the world series.

The reason for the rejoicing is the reward in heaven that waits for those who endure undeserved suffering.

Undeserved suffering leads to great reward in heaven.

And, therefore Christ commands His hearers to rejoice when they encounter it.

Waiting for the Kingdom

The Present Responsibility of Those Who Wait for the Kingdom

Matthew 5:13-16

Translation: "13 You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt becomes foolish, how will it be salty? It is useful for nothing further except when cast outside to be trampled by men. 14 You are the light of the world. A city is not able to hide while laying on a hill; 15 nor do they light a lamp and put it under the peck-measure, but they put it on the lampstand, and it illuminates all that is in the house. 16 So let your light shine before men, so that they might behold your good works and glorify your Father Who is in heaven."

Outline.

The principle of salt, v.13.

The identification of the hearers with salt.

The application of salt to witnessing.

The loss of saltiness due to foolishness.

The uselessness of saltless salt.

The principle of light, vv.14-16.

The identification of the hearers with light, v.14a.

The unhideability principle, v.14b.

The foolishness of lighting and hiding, v.15a.

The usefulness of the fully exposed light, v.15b.

The application to the hearers, v.16.

Exegesis.

This passage is not all what you might think, for it poses a dispensational variable exclusive to the dispensation of the hypostatic union.

Although there is a lot of application into the church age believer's life, you should know from the top that the church age believer has more.

Distinctions.

The Dispensation of Israel concentrated on corporate witnessing. The nation itself was the prime element of light to the world. There are only a couple of notable exceptions like Jonah.

The Dispensation of the Hypostatic Union required individual participation in the internal mission of witnessing to unbelieving Israel. But the followers of Christ also had an ambassadorial function to the whole world of unbelievers.

The Dispensation of the Church requires individual participation in the external mission of witnessing to the unbelieving world. Since this is an external mission, the Bible calls the church age believer an ambassador, 2 Corinthians 5:20.

During the church age, any organization or nation built on strong establishment principles and with a strong missionary movement will have an excellent corporate witness without even trying.

However, the responsibility of personal evangelism lies heavily on the individual, and functions entirely apart from the corporate witness.

Therefore the techniques of personal evangelism set forth in this passage apply equally to church age believers.

This was a difficult time for personal evangelism.

Evangelism of the Jews was very difficult because of the stranglehold of the legalistic Pharisees.

Evangelism of the Gentiles was very difficult because of the national pride of Rome and the insidious idolatry of the time.

It is important to observe that Christ does not introduce the subject of personal evangelism until after He has fully covered the plan of God.

Witnessing is not the plan of God for any believer.

Witnessing has its proper place as the natural outgrowth of the fulfillment of the plan of God, and the believer's love for God.

Witnessing becomes more effective because of spiritual growth.

Witnessing can be a roundabout motivation for spiritual growth.

The principle of salt, v.13.

Christ first identifies His hearers with salt. "You are the salt of the earth." Remember that His hearers are the inner circle of His disciples, and therefore this comparison is restricted to members of the kingdom of God alone.

They are identified with salt, and also their comparison with it is extended to the earth.

The word GEN translates 'earth'. Although it may denote 'Israel' at times, it does not in this context. The other times that Christ employs GEN in this sermon, it is always in the sense of the entire planet.

They are the salt which belongs to the whole earth, and more specifically the people on it.

Now salt has some natural connotations, and some Biblical connotations. We will combine the two before we go on with the passage.

Salt had three useful purposes in the ancient near east.

It preserved food. Since they lived before the age of refrigeration, and far from any usable ice, they had to preserve their foods by other means. Salt was the answer to this need.

It seasoned food. Salt adds a great deal of seasoning to almost any food. Even many dessert recipes contain significant amount of salt.

It served as a fertilizer. Many fertilizers contain salt as a major ingredient.

We find a fourth purpose in the modern world: traction for roads. It was not needed in ice-free Israel.

Salt was a part of the ritual plan for Israel, Leviticus 2:13, "Every grain offering of yours, moreover, you shall season with salt, so that the salt of the covenant of your God shall not be lacking from your grain offering; with all your offerings you shall offer salt."

Numbers 18:19 provides the interpretation for the inclusion of salt in the Levitical offerings, "All the offerings of the holy gifts, which the sons of Israel offer to the Lord, I have given to you and your sons and your daughters with you, as a perpetual allotment. It is an everlasting covenant of salt before the Lord to you and your descendants with you."

Obviously, the preservative power of salt is emphasized in this covenant.

Salt therefore represents the faithfulness and integrity of God in standing behind His covenants with Israel.

2. 2 Chronicles 13:5 confirms this very thing, "Do you not know that the Lord God of Israel gave the rule over Israel forever to David and his sons by a covenant of salt?"

Christ uses the term twice in Mark 9:49-50, "For everyone will be salted with fire. Salt is good; but if the salt becomes unsalty, with what will you make it salty again? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another."

Salted with fire is a reference to salt as a seasoning. Salted with fire refers to undeserved suffering for blessing. Undeserved suffering seasons the believer - i.e., makes him better.

The second use is a reference to doctrine as a seasoning in the heart of the believer. Only doctrine can cause unity among Christians.

Paul also uses it in Colossians 4:6 as a symbol for seasoning, "Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned, as it were, with salt, so that you may know how you should respond to each person."

Salt represents the tailoring of the words of the personal evangelist, so that each time the gospel is given it is unique.

This method is far superior to the dissemination of gospel tracts, because the message is personalized, and accounts for whatever the individual may need to hear as a part of the presentation.

Now when Christ told His hearers that they were the salt of the earth, He meant that they were the seasoning for it. Their spreading of the Gospel would bring good to their country, and to the whole world.

Now Christ continues: "but if the salt becomes foolish, how will it be salty? It is useful for nothing further except when cast outside to be trampled by men."

That's right. Christ said foolish. This is the only reference in all of ancient Greek literature up to that time where the verb MORAINO describes a loss of flavor.

There is a reason. Christ wanted to make a connection between cosmic involvement for the believer and his loss of seasoning power.

Therefore Christ depicts the loss of seasoning power with the verb which means 'foolish'.

Your involvement in the cosmic system (Satan's domain) destroys your effectiveness in personal evangelism.

The translation is very precise on that point: "if the believer becomes foolish, how will he be effective in personal evangelism?"

It is noteworthy to point out that the word 'again' does not appear in the original Greek. Although it is often included in English translations, it skews the meaning of the passage.

Christ is saying precisely this: that your residence in the cosmic system temporarily destroys your Christian witness. You do not have the ability to recall doctrine for the purpose of evangelization.

Christ is not saying anything at all about recovery from the cosmic system, or the lasting effects of cosmic involvement on personal evangelism.

Note this: when you recover from sin through confession, your ability to give the gospel is completely restored.

If you have gone a long time in the cosmic system, your arsenal of doctrines may be well depleted or quite stale, and that also lends itself to weakness; but! God the Holy Spirit is the power factor in evangelism through His common grace ministry, and therefore there is no lack of power in your evangelization.

You are therefore useless to God in the realm of personal evangelism when you are out of fellowship.

The principle of light, vv.14-16.

Christ begins this passage in the same way as He did the preceding: He identifies His hearers with the inanimate object of His illustration.

So, His listeners are light. The direct association of the two technically makes this a metaphor.

Furthermore, they are the light of the world. He employs the noun KOSMOU as a synonym for GES. This noun still depicts the entire world, and is definitely not restricted to just Israel.

There is one significant reference to light in the Mosaic Law: it is the golden lampstand.

Materials: It was made of pure gold.

Description.

It was on the South side of the Holy place.

It was identical to the modern menorah. It had a main shaft which had on each side three projecting branches.

It had a system of oil-holding cups, which were under each of the lamps. These cups were shaped like almond blossoms and buds.

Even the wick trimmers and trays were made of pure gold.

Use.

The lampstand was used to light the Holy place.

The incense altar, and the table of showbread were lit by this lampstand.

Symbology.

Note that this is made of pure gold only. It represented God the Holy Spirit. There was no wood, and therefore, no humanity.

God the Holy Spirit provides the light for our daily lives. With light, we have true understanding.

Human beings depend very much on sight for understanding. Light is very necessary for sight. The light is shed on the table of showbread, and thus the Spirit provides light for understanding the Word.

The light is shed on the incense altar, and thus the Spirit provides light for the production of righteousness through the Word.

Note that the Spirit provides light for the life and ministry of Jesus Christ.

Next, Christ relates the unhideability principle. A city is unable to hide while laying on a hill. The picture comes to mind of the modern city with all of its lights lit up at night. As long as that city is on the hill it cannot be hidden in any way.

This relates to the personal witness of the believer in Jesus Christ. You are on the hill when you are in fellowship and under the ministry of God the Holy Spirit.

The city on the hill is fellowship, because this metaphor contrasts the preceding one with regard to content. Since the preceding one is about being out of fellowship, and talks about the weakness of the witness of the one out of fellowship, so this one must be referring to fellowship, and the strength of the witness of the one in fellowship.

There is also a second illustration with light at its core. The lamp is a metaphor for the ministry of the Spirit related to personal evangelism.

Lighting a light is analogous to the moment of salvation for the believer. It is at that moment that the believer receives the ministry of the Spirit. The lamp is re-lit each time the believer confesses his sins.

It is quite foolish to light a lamp and then put it under a cover. To do so would not only eliminate its true effectiveness, but would shortly extinguish the lamp through suffocation.

However, if you put a lamp on a lampstand, you make it effective enough to light everything that is in the house.

This is analogous to the believer who is under the ministry of the Spirit through fellowship.

Again, your personal witness is nothing without the ministry of the Spirit, and you must be in fellowship to tap that.

Without the ministry of the Spirit you are completely helpless to use the doctrines in your soul in the course of a personal evangelism encounter.

"all that is in the house" Is not a reference to people; this is a dative plural adjective and definite article combination - PASIN TOIS. It is instead a reference to things, and so it connects with the doctrine in the soul of the believer.

The lamp is the Holy Spirit; you light it by maintaining and re-establishing fellowship.

The Holy Spirit gives light to all that is in the house of your soul. He uses everything that is there in a witnessing encounter.

The final statement that Christ makes on the subject is in verse 16: "So let your light shine before men, so that they might behold your good works and glorify your Father Who is in heaven."

A very important part of this translation is the meaning of HOUTO.

It denotes that Christ is about to apply his illustration to His listeners.

It takes the metaphor of the preceding verses and makes it real.

"your light" is of course the ministry of God the Holy Spirit specifically related to your 'good works'.

Christ employs the imperative of entreaty to politely communicate a command. In other words, this is not really an option in the Christian life.

The ministry of the Spirit in your soul is to shine before men. This means that you do not stifle that ministry by getting out and staying out of fellowship.

If you remain in fellowship, the ministry of the Spirit is going to shine; and good works are going to result.

KALA ERGA is translated 'good works'. KALA is really a weaker word for good. AGATHOS is the usual word for good manufactured from spirituality.

However, it is the right word for describing outward beauty, so it is appropriate here.

Works of outward beauty or good can be many: anything that you do under the power of the Spirit can be a part of this classification.

Works of Christian service, including the function of your spiritual gift; charity; service related to citizenship.

Anything you do that imitates the character of God.

The point is that these works of outward good are visible before men.

This is not something that you must try to do! This is simply what happens when you are under the doctrinal guidance of God the Holy Spirit.

You must not be shy when given the opportunity to let your light shine. To do so is to reject the authority of God the Holy Spirit, and that means sin.

Lighting your light and displaying it for all to see has a purpose: it is so that men might glorify your Father Who is in heaven.

Men glorify God by believing in Jesus Christ.

Men glorify God by fulfilling His plan.

Christ and the Law of Moses

The General Policy of Law in the Kingdom; Christ and the Law of Moses

Matthew 5:17-20

Translation.

"17 Do not assume that I came to destroy the law or the prophets; I came not to destroy but to fulfill. 18 For truly I say to you until heaven and earth pass away certainly not one jot nor one tittle will pass away from the Law, not until everything happens. 19 Therefore whoever might destroy the least one of these commandments and so teach men, he will be called the least in the kingdom of heaven. But whoever might do and teach, this one will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. 20 For I say to you that if your righteousness does not greatly exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees, you will definitely not enter into the kingdom of heaven."

Outline.

Christ's relationship with the Law of Moses: the general principle, v.17.

The lasting endurance of the Law, v.18.

Man's responsibility to the Law, v.19.

The status of the destroyers of the Law.

The status of the keepers of the Law.

The value of the Law related to salvation, v.20.

Exposition.

"17 Do not assume that I came to destroy the law or the prophets; I came not to destroy but to fulfill."

Christ had already been the target of opposition from the Pharisees; some of the things He had said were revolutionary. Many began to assume that He was going to destroy the Law.

Because of this, He had to make clear the relationship of His ministry to the Law.

Christ did not come to destroy the law or the prophets.

The freedom code, or the ten commandments was retained entirely.

The spiritual, or the rituals, was retained in content, although the outward form of the ritual was dropped.

The establishment code remained intact, although it would be expanded to include mental attitude sins.

Christ fulfilled the Law and the prophets.

There are hundreds of Messianic prophecies which have been fulfilled by Christ.

Christ fulfilled the prophetic elements of the Law, i.e., the Passover ritual.

Christ also fulfilled the ten commandments by keeping them perfectly throughout His life. He was the one human being with the greatest personal liberty of all time.

And He did it under great personal persecution.

The ten commandments work regardless of personal circumstance. The truth will make you free.

Christ was the greatest citizen of all time, and fulfilled His citizenship to His home nation, which was Rome.

"18 For truly I say to you until heaven and earth pass away certainly not one jot nor one tittle will pass away from the Law, not until everything happens."

There are two clues in this verse as to the durability of the Law:

First, it will outlast heaven and earth - the physical universe plus heaven itself. Heaven and earth pass away at the end of the millennium and the final judgment of unbelievers at the great white throne. Revelation 21:1, "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea."

Second it will not pass away until everything happens, that is, every event of human history must come to pass before the Law passes away.

The jot is from the Greek IOTA, the smallest letter of the Greek alphabet. The Hebrew equivalent would have been the YODH.

A tittle is from KERAIA, which is literally horn. It represents any little mark of the Hebrew writing system, including punctuation marks and vowel points.

This is a hyperbole used to communicate that not the smallest part of the Law will be eliminated.

The truth of the Law will never pass away:

God will always be as He is revealed through the Law, for He never changes.

In the same way, sin will always be sin. If God never changes, then neither does the nature of sin.

Likewise, the gospel never changes - Christ is the savior for all dispensations.

The Law communicates many dispensational constants; however, the form of the teaching may change without changing the actual truth that is taught.

Although the truth that is communicated in the Law will never pass away, the ritual system which teaches that truth already has.

"19 Therefore whoever might destroy the least one of these commandments and so teach men, he will be called the least in the kingdom of heaven. But whoever might do and teach, this one will be called great in the kingdom of heaven."

This verse contains two simple principles related to the application of the durability of the Mosaic Law.

If you destroy the least one of these commandments, and so teach men, you will be called the least in the kingdom of heaven.

The Greek word LUO is translated here 'destroy'. The original word means to loose or untie something.

You personally destroy one of the commandments of the Law when you consider it as not binding to you; or when you no longer accept it as an authority over your life.

Personal destruction means that you do not mold your life to Scripture but rather mold Scripture to your life. That is, you begin to change Scripture as a rationalization for your failures.

This is for believers; unbelievers never enter the kingdom of heaven. To be the least in the kingdom of heaven is to be completely without reward at the judgment seat of Christ.

It is one thing to destroy a commandment in your soul; it is a much more severe thing to become the devil's ambassador. If you teach the destruction of the truth of the Law, then you are the devil's ambassador.

However, if you are one to do and teach the Law, then you will be called great.

If you do it, it means that you believe it.

If you believe it enough to do it, then you may go on to teach it. If you go on to teach, it means you are an ambassador for it.

If you are an ambassador for the Law, then you will be called great in the kingdom, that is you will receive your full reward.

"20 For I say to you that if your righteousness does not greatly exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees, you will definitely not enter into the kingdom of heaven."

The explanatory conjunction GAR points to what has gone previously in the passage. In other words, Christ now explains what He has just said.

Christ injects this here so that He can cover a point that He has yet to cover: it is the case of entrance into the kingdom of heaven. Up to this point

Christ has only considered the case of the believer, that is, the one who is already in the kingdom of heaven. Now He has to go back and tell His audience how to get in the kingdom in the first place.

Christ illustrates the need for grace by means of the negative illustration.

You can only enter the kingdom of heaven if your righteousness exceeds that of the Scribes and Pharisees.

From the human viewpoint, the Scribes and Pharisees had the all time record for righteousness produced by human power and intellect.

Only if your righteousness exceeds that of the all time record will you enter into the kingdom of heaven.

What better way to communicate the necessity for grace in salvation than a backhand compliment toward the enemies of Christ?

Christ employs the double negative OU ME. This leaves absolutely no room for doubt concerning the matter. This is a dogmatic and absolute negation.
