

ARE YOU THE SALT OF THE EARTH?

Jesus Christ often used analogies—like the tiny mustard seed, hidden treasure, a fisherman's net and even leaven—to describe the Kingdom of God and what it would be like.

And in Matthew 5:13, Christ used one such analogy to teach His disciples and all of us today what a true Christian is.

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

Why did Christ use salt?

He could have used a precious metal like gold or a beautiful stone like a diamond or some other seasoning, like pepper.

But He chose salt!

Why?

To find out, let's begin with a brief background on salt.

For most, if not all of us, salt is that white crystal inside the salt shaker on our dining room tables.

Salt has a variety of uses.

The most familiar one is enhancing the taste of food.

But it is also a potent stain remover. Applied directly on stains of wine, grease and even blood, salt removes them after laundering.

To test an egg for freshness, put it in salt water. A fresh egg sinks; an old one floats.

By adding a dash of salt to a vase of cut flowers, they stay fresh longer.

Before frying fish, sprinkle some salt on the skillet, and it won't stick. Do the same thing on pancake griddles or on a waffle iron.

Salt is all around us, but only 3% of the world's salt is used in the home.

Many of the products we see and use daily are manufactured using salt.

Salt is incredibly versatile. According to the Salt Institute, salt has 14,000 other known uses.

The chemical industry uses 40% of salt derivatives for producing soaps and detergents, various medications, PVC pipes for our homes, cell phones, cosmetics, protective suits for astronauts, digital cameras, flat panel TVs, electron microscopes, solar panels for energy production. The list is essentially endless.

Even drilling oil wells depends on salt.

Animal nutrition experts use salt to ensure the health and productivity of livestock and poultry.

Salt is used to regenerate our water softeners to protect the pipes and appliances in our homes.

And seasonally, those in the snow belt give thanks for the salt that road maintenance crews apply to keep our cars, trucks and school buses traveling safely on snowy winter roads. About 40% of dry-salt production is used for highway de-icing.

China, the US and India dominate world salt production, combining for approximately 50% of the world's 300 billion tons of salt produced each year.

Despite the apparent abundance of salt today, it was very rare and very valuable in the time of Christ.

Roman soldiers were paid with bags of salt called *salaria argentum* or silver salt.

That's where we get the English word "salary."

Christ chose salt for its unique and very interesting properties to describe important qualities true Christians must have.

First, salt is pure.

Salt is a powerful disinfectant. Germs can't live in it.

It is an excellent teeth cleaner and an effective mouthwash. When afflicted with a sore throat, gargle a mixture of salt and warm water to get rid of the bacteria.

Turn to Leviticus 2:13.

13 And every offering of your grain offering you shall season with salt; you shall not allow the salt of the covenant of your God to be lacking from your grain offering. With all your offerings you shall offer salt.

Animal sacrifices had to be seasoned with salt to keep the animal free of bacteria so there would not be the awful stench of rot and decay.

To be spiritually pure then means we must be presented as "living sacrifices acceptable unto God" (Romans 12:1-2).

We must be as spiritually pure as salt is physically pure.

We must not be defiled by the ways of the world: its pleasures and lusts; its ways of greed and vanity.

Without God in the picture, the world today has become morally and spiritually bankrupt. As true followers of Christ, we must come out of and stay separate from this world that lies in wickedness. (2 Corinthians 6:17; 1 John 5:19).

Second, salt adds flavor.

As salt improves food by making it more flavorful, our lives as true Christians must radiate with joy, hope and excitement.

We must be constant in prayer, asking God to let more of His joy flow from us to others.

As the "salt of the earth," we should be positive, high-quality people. Pleasant and a joy to be around. Having an attitude of serving that enhances the lives of others.

And finally, salt endures.

Pure salt does not spoil, rot or go "bad."

Salt comes from underground salt deposits that are thousands of years old. Refined salt can be stored for long periods of time and still retain its saltiness. Salt is an enduring substance that will not spoil!

Natural salt can be subjected to the most severe tests and still remain unchanged. It is hardy and durable; however, salt can lose its flavor.

The salt used in Christ's day was often natural rock salt. When exposed to the rain, sun and air, this salt could lose its saltiness.

But the salt that was close to the rock remained protected, and it retained its savor.

The admonition for us is very clear.

Turn to Mark 4:19.

19 and the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things entering in choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.

Worldly pursuits have a tendency to crowd out the things that really count: living by every word of God; obeying Him and doing what He says.

Christ used the analogy of salt to teach us very important lessons.

We are to remain pure, just as salt is pure. A living sacrifice delightful unto God; pure, clean and unblemished.

Just as salt adds flavor, we are to be excited, enthusiastic, positive and filled with joy.

We need to remain steadfast and endure to the end just as salt retains its unique saltiness despite being subjected to extreme conditions.

We need to stay close and totally surrendered to God and Jesus Christ, the Rock. Otherwise, we will lose our savor; and, we will be totally useless and utterly worthless. Not even fit for the garbage dump (Luke 14:35).

Here is what Christ Himself urged us to become.

Mark 9:50.

50 Salt is good, but if the salt loses its flavor, how will you season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace with one another."

To be true Christians, obedient followers of Jesus Christ, we must continue to grow in the grace and knowledge of God's truth. Living by every word of God, and truly become "the salt of the earth."