

The Sermon on the Mount (Part 1)

The Good Life – A Fresh look at the Beatitudes

Study 9 – Witness to the World

Introduction

Although Matthew 5:13-16 is not strictly speaking a part of the Beatitudes (it lacks the characteristic phrase *'blessed are'*) we include it in our studies of the Beatitudes because, as we shall see, Jesus' words 'you are' in 5:13&14 show that the passage is closely tied to the Beatitudes and is dependent on them for its meaning. Strictly speaking, the passage is part of the introduction to the Sermon on the Mount and acts as a bridge between the Beatitudes and the main body of the sermon which begins in Matthew 5:17 and ends in 7:12 (note the phrase *the Law and the Prophets* in 5:17 and 7:12 which ties 5:17-7:12 together as a unit).

As the title for this study suggests, the main theme of 5:13-16 is the believer's witness to the world. As we saw in our earlier studies, the Beatitudes were the announcement that the coming of Jesus the Christ had brought an end to the exile, not just for ancient Israel but for the world. In Christ, the age of blessing under the rule of God's long awaited king had arrived. In Christ the poor in spirit, the mourners, the meek, those who longed for righteousness, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers and those persecuted for righteousness – in short, those longing for the kingdom of heaven – would find God's fulfilment to His ancient promises. With the coming of Christ the light of life had dawned in a world of darkness and death (Matthew 4: 12-17). And in Christ, a new people of God was called into being and given the privilege and responsibility of living for their king in a dark and dying world, a hostile world, but a world loved by God and in desperate need of His saving grace. It is this privilege and responsibility that Matthew 5:13-16 explores.



Investigate and Think



Read Matthew 5:13-16

- What do you understand by the phrases 'salt of the earth' and 'light of the world'?

- Note Jesus' statement 'you *are* the salt of the earth' and 'you *are* the light of the world'. Jesus is referring to what the disciples already are – not what they must become! How do the Beatitudes fit in with this description?
- In the light of this link between Matthew 5:3-10 and Matthew 5:13-14, what do you think that Jesus meant when he described his disciples as the salt of the earth and the light of the world? How has this changed your answer in the first question?
- What do you think Jesus meant when he likened his disciples to 'a city set on a hill'?
- Salt cannot be made un-salty but it can be mixed with impurity and lose its usefulness. What do you think Jesus meant when he spoke about such impure salt being trampled underfoot?
- What did Jesus mean when he spoke about light being hidden?

- Re-read Matthew 5:11-12. What help do we get from this passage with regard to why disciples would cease to be salt or light in the world?
- What does this tell us about Jesus' purpose in Matthew 5:13-16
- According to Matthew 5:13-16, why should disciples of Jesus be salt and light i.e. live in a way which is different from and distinct to the world?
- What will the result of this different way of life be?

Read Isaiah 2:1-5 and Isaiah 60:1-3

In these passages the LORD is making a promise to Judah and Jerusalem and also giving responsibility to them.

- What do these passages teach us about Ancient Israel's role as a city set on a hill and as the light of the world?
- What was required if Israel were going to fulfil this role? (see 2:5; 60:1)

