

STUDY GUIDE

NEW VISION

MYTHEOLOGY

DEAD PEOPLE GO TO A BETTER PLACE: PART TWO

MATTHEW 13:24-30

11/13/2016



MAIN POINT

The judgment of hell that we all deserve is delayed so that more might become followers of Christ.

INTRODUCE

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

What are some of your favorite foods that you simply cannot eat without salt? How do those foods taste without salt?

Have you ever had to go on a low sodium diet? If so, how significant of a shift was it for you? Did you grow accustomed to it?

Salt is the most basic and universally desired seasoning. There are few foods, even some sweet desserts, that are not enhanced by its flavor. No wonder Jesus chose to use salt as a metaphor for describing what it means to be a Christian in a fallen world, as we will see today in this study.

READ AND REFLECT

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ MATTHEW 5:13

Why do you think Jesus chose salt as a teaching tool? What is a comparable metaphor today?

What did Jesus mean when He said believers are the salt of the earth?

Jesus calls His followers “the salt of the earth.” Salt’s primary function in Jesus’ day was to help preserve food (especially meat), an act that was particularly important in the Middle East due to hot temperatures and arid climate.

What is the church’s role in serving and preserving culture? What part do you play in that picture?

As believers, we act as a preservative in the culture around us by maintaining high moral and spiritual standards that counteract the sin and decay of the world. Salt also serves to add flavor, which is the way we use it today. Salt is distinctly different from the things with which it’s mixed. Jesus’ disciples likewise are to be different from the world.

How does the message of God’s kingdom add flavor to your life? To the world?

Why must God’s people be distinctly different from people who don’t know Him?

By referring to salt, Jesus was making a statement about what it really means to be part of the kingdom of God. People who understand their need for God and have realized His mercy toward them, who seek righteousness even amidst persecution, must not lose their saltiness. Those who follow Him can't keep that hidden, which sets up verse 14 nicely. If we're part of God's kingdom, the world can't help but notice we're different.

What motivates you to witness? What is the most significant "barrier" to witnessing with which you struggle?

Do you ever speak about hell to your unbelieving friends?

Believing the myth that all people go to a better place kills any urgency for evangelism.

1. Don't avoid (opportunities to share Christ)
2. Don't attack (those who are captive to the enemy)
3. Don't sleep (giving the enemy opportunity to work!)
4. Don't assume (people understand the whole Gospel)

We saw a clip today from famous atheist Penn Jillette, where said: "I don't respect people who don't proselytize. I don't respect that at all. If you believe that there's a heaven and a hell, and people could be going to hell or not getting eternal life, and you think that it's not really worth telling them this because it would make it socially awkward—how much do you have to hate somebody to not proselytize? How much do you have to hate somebody to believe everlasting life is possible and not tell them that?" **How does this quote challenge you?**

Do you have trouble being critical of unbelievers? What is your tendency when an unbeliever acts like an unbeliever?

APPLY

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

Read Matthew 5:13-16. What does it mean to be salt in the world? How does this relate to the parable of the wheat and weeds?

Last week Brady said that some people who are separated from God often rely on a "past God nod" or a "good heart" to get to heaven. How would you confront someone with this belief?

Who is one unbeliever that God has brought to your mind that you need to pray for and asking the Holy Spirit for direction and wisdom on how to share Jesus with them?

PRAY

COMMENTARY

MATTHEW 5:13-16

Jesus explained in two word pictures the impact that a truly righteous person will have on his or her world. The entire sermon, including the Beatitudes before and the many teachings after, shows us how to live as "salt and light" in the world as representatives of another kingdom. These word pictures also serve Matthew's purpose—to encourage believers to change their world (Matt. 28:18-20).

There are many lists of the uses of salt (v. 13), most of them inspired by Jesus' statement here. However, among the many possible connotations, Jesus probably had two most centrally in His mind. First, salt preserves from corruption. In the centuries before modern refrigeration, salt was the method of choice for preventing bacteria from poisoning food. Just as salt prevents or kills bacteria in food, the kingdom servant prevents or confronts corruption in the world. Notice that it is the earth that needs the salt, not the kingdom of heaven. If the kingdom servant did not have a function to perform on earth according to God's plan, he might as well go straight to heaven upon conversion.

The second function of salt is to add flavor or interest (Col. 4:5-6). Jesus highlighted this purpose when He spoke of the danger of salt losing its saltiness. Part of the church's task on earth is to live according to its new nature—alive, purposeful, hopeful, joyful. Christians should be living in such a way that others will pause and consider what is different about them (1 Pet. 3:15). Believers are different and should appear so, because the Father is different (holy; 1 Pet. 1:15-16). The kingdom servant who does not live according to his nature as salt is useless to the king's advancement of the kingdom on earth.