

"WE must be salt and light in this world!" This is a common topic for a devotional challenge, taken either from Matthew 5 or Luke 14. The "we" in this challenge is usually a church group being motivated to have an influence in the world around them, as a preservative or a seasoning of some sort. This is a good application but not the interpretation, the one basic meaning of the author.

Taking a closer look at the context and the actual words that Yeshua used, we find much more significant information. First of all, the "we" is not a gentile church group. Yeshua is teaching His disciples on a mountainside while a multitude is listening in. It is a Jewish audience. Literally Yeshua says, "You yourselves are the salt of the earth," an emphatic "you." You Jews are the salt of the earth (Land, planet), no one else!

The next clause, "but if the salt has become tasteless," or "if the salt loses its flavor" has to be understood as a figure of speech for two reasons. For one, salt does NOT lose its flavor or become tasteless! As a chemist I knew that, but it was indelibly put on my mind while taking geology at the U. of Hawaii many years ago. Part of an exam was to identify a box of rocks. One rock was about an inch cube of halite, common name for rock salt. The identifying characteristic was taste. Each student would lick the cube and pass it on to the next one. No germs were passed on since salt kills germs on contact. As long as sodium chloride does not chemically react with something else, but remains NaCl, it never loses its characteristic taste!

Secondly, Yeshua used a word that has nothing to do with taste or flavor. He used the word *moraino*, which comes from the word *moros*, meaning "fool." *Moraino* is used only four times in the NT. Matthew 5:13 and Luke 14:34 are incorrectly translated as "to lose taste or flavor." More correctly, Romans 1:22 says "they became fools," and 1 Corinthians 1:20 says "God made foolish." To make foolish is the literal meaning of *moraino*. So Matt 5:13 should be, "but if the salt might become foolish," a probable future condition! This verse is a prophecy of the future of Israel in line with Deuteronomy 28!

The next clause, "by what shall it be salted?" can also be "by whom shall it be salted?" Think about that one as we proceed!

The second sentence, "It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trodden under foot by men," occurred in AD 70, as Yeshua also predicted in Luke 21:24, "and Jerusalem shall be trodden down by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled." At

that time, and especially after AD 135, Jews were thrown out of Jerusalem and eleven successive gentile conquerors have trodden down the Land and Jerusalem. Of course we know from history that remnants of Jews came back to Jerusalem, Hebron, Tiberias, and Safed, but they lived under the yoke of the gentile conquerors.

What does it mean "to become foolish"? Psalm 14:1 says, "The fool has said in his heart, 'There is no God.'" Outwardly the fool may be religious, but in his heart he plans his life according to his own ideas, with no reference to God, just as Nabal (fool) did in relation to David. Israel became foolish when its leadership rejected Yeshua, denying that He is God, and the probable future condition predicted by Yeshua came true. Forty years later the rest of His prophecy came true.

Now consider, how can the Land be made salty again, or by what (whom) shall it be salted? That clause plus "until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled" bring us up to the last 120 years. Jews are the salt (preservative) of the Land of Israel. Since the late 1800's, Jews have returned in large numbers to reclaim the Land from its wasteland condition. June 7, 1967, Israel retook Jerusalem, probably indicating that the time for gentiles to trod down Jerusalem is finished. Moshe Dayan mistakenly gave back the keys for the mosques on the Temple Mount, but Ariel Sharon recently made a great statement for Israel by walking around the top of the Temple Mount to emphasize Israel's sovereignty over the whole area. If we understand Luke 21 properly, this sovereignty must continue over the whole of Jerusalem. Sooner or later God is going to make Jerusalem a cup of poison to the nations around, according to Zechariah 12:2, but that is beyond this study.

Is the salt still foolish, denying God in their hearts? For the most part, yes, but with the growing number of Messianic Jews, some salt is no longer foolish. Some other salt is not foolish either, worshiping God in their hearts and living by His Word, but not being able yet to recognize Yeshua as Messiah, being hard-

"SALT & LIGHT"

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ened/blinded "until the fullness of the gentiles comes in."²¹ What a day it will be when that "blindfold" is removed!

"You yourselves are the light of the world (cosmos, the worldly system)." Jews again are the focus of the statement. Jews throughout the Tanakh (OT) are to be God's witnesses to all the peoples of the world that He alone is the only True God. As Jews live according to light given in the Tanakh, the world will observe and glorify God. This is continued in the NT. "You shall be My witnesses, both in Jeru-

salem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth."²²

This was said to a Jewish audience. Gentile Believers share in this as they are grafted in to the good Jewish olive tree, but the primary responsibility for witnessing to all the peoples of the earth is upon the Jews. Many Jews do not like that responsibility (choose someone else next time!), but all are witnesses, for good or bad, just because they are Jews. This is a big topic also, so let it rest there for now.