



REASONING FROM THE SCRIPTURES

Private Times With God

How Does the Christian Influence This World?

The World Can Be Divided into Two Kinds of People

First, there are the believers who in the Beatitudes are called blessed (*makáριοι*), indwelt by God because of Christ (Mt 5:3-12). They are the people who realize their spiritual helplessness, show sorrow over sin, and who are meek (or balanced between extremes), hungry for God's righteousness, merciful, pure in heart, peacemakers, ridiculed, persecuted, or slandered because of Christ. Jesus compares them to salt and light.

The other group consists of the unbelievers of this world. They are proud, self-sufficient, and do not understand their own unrighteousness before a Holy God.

The Believer Influences the Unbeliever by What He Is, Not by What He Has

Christ did not say, "You have salt and light to dispense," but rather "Ye are the salt. . . . Ye are the light of the world" (Mt 5:13,14). The believer's very presence in the world acts as salt and light, preventing corruption and exposing error.

Being blessed means having God's nature within (2 Pe 1:4). Because of Christ, the believers are no longer "fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners" (1 Co 6:9,10). Rather, they "are washed . . . sanctified . . . justified in the

name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Co 6:11). Indeed, they are "a peculiar people" (Tit 2:14) who are observed by unbelievers. The word translated "peculiar" is *perioúsios* which means "who constitute His possession." It is the difference in their character which distinguishes them.

The adjective *makários* (blessed) means not only indwelt by God because of Christ, but also being fully satisfied. Having obtained peace with God through Christ, the believer is more fulfilled than if he had all the world as his possession (Mt 16:26; Mk 8:36; Lk 9:25). Seeing the believers' contentment despite poverty and physical suffering, the unbelievers are amazed (2 Co 6:10). It may even cause them to see their own lack of spiritual security in spite of worldly goods (Rv 3:17).

The Believer Must Interact with This World of Corruption and Darkness in Order to Act as Salt and Light

Just as salt is derived from the earth, so every believer is to remember that he is earthly, *epígeios* (2 Co 5:1). However, in Christ he becomes "free from the law of sin and death" (Ro 8:2). Thereby, he acts as a preservative in the decaying world around him. Should he lose his Christ-likeness, "his savor" (Mt 5:13), he would no longer be of any use.

Likewise, the believer is light because Christ is the "light of the world" (Jn 8:12). He can only reflect Christ's light. Therefore, Jesus admonishes him, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Mt 5:16). One day the total universe, *kósmos* (Jn 8:12), will be completely transformed by Christ. The believer's life should manifest the beginning of that transformation.