

## **PASS THE SALT 1**

**Helen Harray 2 June 2013**

I wanted to begin our time together today with a tribute to Jesus.

It's possible to avoid Jesus and the intimacy of saying his name in the more abstract concept of 'God'.

You see Jesus isn't vague and non descript.

He's not the movie star we grew up with on our screens

And he's not some crazy martyr that we really wonder about.

He doesn't deserve being sworn about, nor neglected.

The Jesus I know comes right into my living space and every week into my office to meet with people. And I see him work in such a profound way that I am changed, let alone anyone else, by His presence and the words and the truth he brings to people. Jesus restores the past, he binds up the broken hearted, he sets people free from lies and unbearable feelings, he pulls down the destructive scaffolding of inner vows and wounded conclusions we've formed about ourselves; he heals and delivers people from vulnerabilities and weaknesses that get screwed up by the demonic world. He brings new perspectives on our self cursing and unforgiveness and above all He is gentle and loving and trustworthy. He did this this week, not ten years ago, but today.

I would be utterly desolate without Jesus. He is my friend. He is my constant companion. He is committed to me. I cannot imagine where I would have got to had it not been for the influence that Jesus has had and has today.

We need a relationship with Jesus that is dynamic. That doesn't necessarily mean I'll be bowled over everyday by this gushy feeling of his presence, in fact that is not my experience, but it will be a growing sense of companionship and lifestyle of interacting in Christ's world. It should be attended to every day through prayer and worship and reading the Word, and in quietness and repentance. It takes time and discipline to develop, not every day is going to be as exciting as the next, but over time you will grow in contentment. What you put into your friendship with Jesus will be like a bank, you will draw from this treasure for the rest of your life in good times and hard ones.

But why. Why should you bother you may ask?

**Basically because of covenant.**

**Jesus has made a covenant with you.**

Luke 22:20 tells us about the New covenant in his blood. It was prophesied by Jeremiah in chapter 31.

The concept of covenant is as old as you can imagine, it goes way back beyond this time; in fact it is the very basis on which God has always revealed Himself to us. Right back in fact to the Garden of Eden. There have been 8 covenants, 3 universal covenants and 5 theocratic covenants (how God relates to us in the sense of governing). Each of them is initiated by Yahweh and provides for relationship with Him, with promises and responsibilities.

I think what I want more than anything in my life is committed friends, depth and intimacy and realness; a husband who is faithful and a family I can be myself with. And if I am honest, I want this without too much effort, I want to be able to relax in their company and not worry

about offending them. In their company I will express both the good and the bad and still be loved and accepted. There will be some responsibilities within this, to ensure they feel I treat them accordingly and give them everything of myself when they need it.

But with this kind of space and relationship in the background, you know what, I can do just about anything. When I am affirmed and encouraged by them, I will rise to new heights, I will find my core sense of being and belonging.

I think this is a picture of the kind of relationship Jesus and the Father and Spirit want to have with each of us. His too is a home, a whakapapa -a place to stand. The backbone of this God is covenantal relationship. It is a guarantee of his extreme favour – he is always on my side; an offer of the kind of commitment that a true marriage ought to be characterized by, open welcome and hospitality and absolute unconditional love no matter what. I can be myself and I can learn to a better self. I don't have to be a try hard. I don't have to be the great white hostess and entertain Him. I can relax. And there are responsibilities because love calls out of me depth and expression of all the amazingness he has put within me.

If you don't have the kinds of relationships I have been describing here, you need to experience and get committed to Jesus. You will have to cross the line of faith. You will have to get over yourself maybe. But until you do that you won't really know what this covenant is all about. You will need to put your hand in the hand of the man who walked on waters and calmed the sea and you will need to say to him lead me into true covenant relationship.

## COVENANTS

A covenant among Orientals is a sacred pact binding two parties in loving agreement.

A covenant symbolises union and sharing of a common and merged life. The two covenanting are supposed to become of one being, the one is the other and the two are one.

Covenant means 'a coming together'- in our dictionary...an agreement, a treaty, a promise.

Only by context do we see that a covenant bond has **peculiar sacredness** in certain circumstances eg marriage.

It has this added dimension of meaning an indissoluble joining together of two parties covenanting, as distinct from an ordinary agreement or compact. The Hebrew and Greek support this.

**Primitive covenanting was by two persons cutting into each other's flesh and sharing by contact or by drinking the blood.**

**Later it was the blood of a shared and eaten sacrifice that formed the covenant nexus.**

The food of the feast became a part of the life of each and both and fixed their union.

In the giving of the Ten Commandments the Mosaic covenant -Moses took the blood of the sacrifice and sprinkled it on the altar and the people to symbolize the action of covenant.

The Old Covenant was the Mosaic covenant --Exodus 24

**It was the common life into which each party was brought by the covenant that bound them irrevocably.** This established the binding of the two as permanent and established.

Covenanting is life sharing. In God's sight to give over one's very self or one's entire possessions to another. The pledged or merged personality evolves out of this.

In marriage, it is a covenant not an arrangement, not just living together. The two become one; each is given to the other; their separate identity is lost in their common life.

A ring is given as a token of the covenant.

Circumcision likewise is a token of the covenant between the individual and God.

God made covenants with people using memorable signs and symbols.

- With Noah He used a rainbow.  
(Genesis 9:15-17) "And I will remember my covenant, which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh. And the **bow** shall be **in the cloud**; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting **covenant** between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth. And God said unto Noah, This is the token of the covenant, which I have established between me and all flesh that is upon the earth."
- With Abraham He used the stars.  
(Genesis 15:5,18) "And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell **the stars**, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be. In the same day the LORD made a **covenant** with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates:"
- With Moses He used tablets of stone.  
(Exodus 34:28) "And he was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights; he did neither eat bread, nor drink water. And he wrote upon **the tables** the words of the **covenant**, the ten commandments."
- With David it was salt.  
(2 Chronicles 13:5) "Ought ye not to know that the LORD God of Israel gave the kingdom over Israel to David for ever, even to him and to his sons by **a covenant of salt?**"
- When we accept Christ as our Saviour we make a covenant with Him.

Jesus said:

*"You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness ( savour), how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men."*

Matthew 5:13

I can just about guarantee that many of you have heard sermons on being the salt of the earth but have you heard of the salt covenant??

To understand the meaning of Mathew 5 we have to go way back to the OT salt covenant. It's mentioned only three times but they are very significant.

This is a 2 part series called "Pass the Salt" and in this sermon I hope to set the scene with the background of the Old Testament.

**The picture shows pure 'sea salt' being harvested by hand.**

**The seawater is channeled into shallow flats which allow the sun and wind to evaporate the water.**

**The remaining salt crystals are then harvested by hand from the flats.**

**In this natural method there is never any heat used, and what remains is a pure, slightly moist, mineral rich, biologically active salt.**



Jesus' reference to salt was not the purified sodium chloride we use today, but impure salt bleached from the sea or found in veins in the soil.



Real sea-salt is the most complex mineral element on the planet. It supplies all 92 vital trace minerals needed by the body, such as sulfur, magnesium, calcium and potassium, all in their natural organic, easy to assimilate state. By contrast, refined salt contains only two elements...sodium and chloride. Salt refinement means everything good is taken out of it and sold off to other industries, while the supermarket consumer gets the debased junk that is left over.

## **DISCUSSION: What do you know already about salt? Its qualities and uses.**

### **Qualities:**

1. A necessity of life

We are dependent on salt for life, as are animals. An animal can die of salts hunger.

It causes marked symptoms of muscular and nervous weakness.

A mode of torture was to deprive a person of salt and for him to waste away with painful salt hunger.

Common salt is necessary for strong healthy blood and both red and white corpuscles are largely dependent for normal condition on the presence of common salt in the system.

**Salt-famine causes civilization to collapse.** During Europe's Dark Ages, due to glacial melting, the ocean levels rose flooding all the salt flats of Europe causing a salt famine (ref. Economic and Social History of Medieval Europe by Belgian historian Henri Pirenne). The daily average ration fell to less than two grams per person and caused many to die from dehydration and madness. To get salt, some who were stronger would assault the weak, cut their jugular vein and drink the victim's salty blood, giving birth to the myth of the vampire!!

### **2. Salt was more valuable than gold**

Nations would fight over access to salt. Salt access in many countries salt is a matter of government control and its manufacture is guarded.

Salt is used in everything:

seasoning, a preservative, a disinfectant, in pottery, in paper

Salt was necessary to preserve life. In the hot middle eastern climates, salt was needed to be healthy. It was used to preserve or cure all kinds of foods—fish, meats, grains, cheese.

**The salt crystal is an enduring mineral.** Large salt mine deposits, surviving thousands of years, and under great pressure, still hold their flavor and taste.

**Salt can dissolve in water** - but its quality remains.

**Salt can be subjected to extreme heat** and it still retains its particular chemical composition.

3. In various contexts, it is used metaphorically to signify permanence, loyalty, durability, fidelity, usefulness, value, and purification. Salt is considered by the ancients as divine and sacred, like no other material apart from blood which is the synonym of life.

It was a symbol of unchanging, incorruptible purity.

### **Uses:**

Salt was used as money.

Soldiers would be paid part of their wages in salt and from it we get the word 'salary.'

Salarium is word for salary or salt money as wages were paid in salt.

If a man is not worth his salt we mean he is not worth his living wage.

It was used as a weapon against those who rebelled. The enemy would salt a field to prevent it from being used to produce crops, making it useless. (Judges 9:42)

### **Beliefs:**

It was believed that Salt had youthful properties...it preserved life, gave life. This gave rise to rather than 'he was the *life* of the party'; in the Arab world, 'he was the *salt* of the party.'

'Salt is by its heat provocative and apt to raise lust', said Plutarch, so therefore 'we forbid salt to the priests who must be pure and chaste'.

Our word salacious or lustful is a derivative of sal....salt.

Salt was considered important in procreation...the generation of life.

Salt found in a spring of water was considered as peculiarly favoured by the gods.

Among inland people's, a salt spring was a special gift. Some believed a salt stream was a place of peculiar sanctity and a place where prayers were more easily heard.

Babies were washed in salt at birth to supply the special lack of any individual.

**Sharing salt is sharing life.**

### **BLOOD and SALT**

**Blood and salt are in some senses interchangeable in their natures, qualities and uses.**

Where no salt is available, blood is used...fresh blood, dried blood of fowls and pigs supplies the salts necessary for human life.

Saline injections are like a blood transfusion for the preservation of life in an emergency.

Salt representing blood is also used as a substitute for blood sacrifice on the threshold of a home.

The Jews held that in the blood is life and life is in the blood, in the same way salt is in the blood and the blood is salt. So therefore salt was treated like blood as sacred and a symbol of life.

In primitive world's thought, shared salt has preciousness and power because of what it represents and of what it symbolises, as well of what it is.

**In the ancient world, salt stands for and corresponds with, and symbolises, blood and life.**

Salt+blood=LIFE. You can't have one without the other. If you don't have enough salt you die.

And because it represents life, therefore it is sacred and divine. It is of GOD.

So if you shared salt together it was considered to be of such critical importance that it was like entering into a covenant with the person you were sharing salt with.

And a covenant was considered sacred and inviolable to the Arabs. You didn't violate it. So if you ate salt with someone you wouldn't go and kill, rob or harm them. That was treachery.

**Generally you don't eat salt on its own!**

That would be pretty difficult. So bread and salt go together.

The sharing of bread or of flesh brings those who share it into a treaty of hospitality, by which the host is pledged to his guest...while you are on my turf nothing evil will happen to you. For that space of time we are brothers.

If you didn't want to be reconciled with someone, well don't sit down and eat together.

It is the salt which is the vital ingredient to a permanent covenant. The bread is the vehicle of the covenant making salt. If there was no salt in the bread think treachery!!

## STORIES of the ANCIENT SALT COVENANT

John Macgregor while on the upper Jordan in his canoe, was taken prisoner by the Arabs. As he talked with the old shaykh in his tent, Macgregor opened a box of fine salt and offered a pinch of it to his captor.

The shaykh had never before seen salt so fine and white, and thinking it was sugar, he tasted it. Instantly Macgregor put a portion also in his own mouth, and with a loud, laughing shout he clapped the old shaykh on the back. The shaykh was dumbfounded. His followers wondered what had happened. What is it they asked? Is it sucker? He answered demurely, no it is la meleh.

They had eaten salt together and in his own tent and so the shaykh was bound by the strongest tie and he knew it.

The result was that Macgregor and his canoe were carried back in triumph to the river and the people on the banks shouted salaams to their brother in the covenant of salt.

The covenant of salt is widely known throughout the Middle East and Asia

In the late 1970's when Prime Minister Begin of Israel met with President Sadat of Egypt, Begin was greeted as he set foot on Egyptian soil. It was reported that the two men stopped to take bread and salt together.



To the Western mind, this may seem like an old fashioned custom, and one might think that it was a nice gesture, but it was much more than just a gesture. In their Eastern minds, they entered into a salt covenant. Sadat was communicating through his action that Begin would be safe while visiting Egypt and that he was willing to guarantee that safety with his own life.

Since ancient times in the Middle East, if you were traveling and needed shelter for the night, you could ask one of the Bedouin for his protection and help by asking if you could partake of salt

together. He would ask for all your money and valuables and put them in his pockets. Next, he would feed you and give you a place to sleep. Finally, he would stand guard all night to make sure that no harm came your way.

If you received salt from the government or a ruler, it required an obligation of fidelity on the part of his subjects. If we eat the salt of the Palace we are bound to the king by a covenant of salt. The more salt they took the more firmly they were bound. Ezra 7:22

Because of the significance of salt, when made use of as the means of a lasting union, the Covenant of Salt, a form or phrase of the blood covenant, **is a covenant fixed, permanent and unchangeable, enduring forever.**

The Salt Covenant is an ancient Hebrew Levitical covenant found by name in the Bible three times (Lev. 2:13, Num. 18:19, 2 Chr. 13:5) and alluded to throughout both the Old and New Testaments.

1. With Aaron and his seed
2. With David and his seed.
3. With God's people in every offering.

It implies permanence and unchangeableness of a similar nature to the covenant of blood as a covenant of very life.

*"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. Lev 2:13*

Even the Holy ingredients used for the incense offering were to have salt added. "You shall make of these an incense, a compound according to the art of the perfumer, salted, pure and holy" (Ex. 30:34-35).

**Why was salt to be added to every offering?**

## **Aaron**

Numbers 18 begins with God describing to Aaron, the High Priest, the duties and priestly ministries he, his sons and other Levites are to perform in the sanctuary and that these duties are not ordinary or commonplace rituals, but have eternal consequence and as such are to be taken seriously. Moreover, God put Aaron, as priest, in charge of all of Gods offerings. As God continues in this chapter to explain various offerings, the significance of each one in terms of holiness, and the role of the priest, He said that everything devoted to the Lords was theirs.

## **Numbers 18: 19**

*"Whatever is set aside from the offerings of the holy things, which the children of Israel offer to the LORD, I have given to you and your sons and daughters with you as your perpetual share; it is a covenant of salt forever before the LORD with you and your descendants with you."* Numbers 18:19

God is describing to the priests that they are called into a covenant, a binding relationship with God that is an eternal contract.

But after about 500 years something happened. This is described in Hebrew 7.

**"If, therefore, perfection were by the Levitical priesthood...what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchizedek, and not after the order of Aaron?"**

The problem with the Aaronic Levitical Priesthood was, they kept dying.

There was a need for a change in the Priesthood, just as it was foreshadowed 3000 years ago. The Aaronic Priesthood was only a type of the Universal Melchizedek Priesthood. **The Melchizedek Priesthood is an Unchangeable, Never Dying, Always Abiding Priesthood, and of Jesus it is said: you are a priest forever in the Order of Melchizedek.**

God made a perpetual Covenant of Salt with the Aaronic Priesthood, but the scripture clearly tells us the Priesthood was changed. **The covenant of salt yet stands with the Priesthood, but not with the house of Aaron.** It's with the Melchizedek Priesthood. With something as important as this, there must be a clue in the Old Testament hinting at this.

## **DAVIDIC SALT COVENANT**

After God observed David's unrestrained, radical praise and worship when bringing the Ark of the Covenant back to Jerusalem, and seeing his desire to build a house for Him; **God made a covenant with David.** This was the seventh covenant. In 2 Samuel 7 it is outlined, but Salt is not mentioned. You'll have to go to 2 Chronicles 13:5

## **READ: 2 Chron 13:1- 20**

*5. Should you not know that the LORD God of Israel gave the dominion over Israel to David forever, to him and his sons, **by a covenant of salt?***

In essence Abijah says, Give it up Jeroboam, there is no way you can win. Although you have twice the amount of men, you are stronger, all odds are against us in the natural. But there's one little thing I should remind you of, with heaven and earth as my witnesses, as I stand in

the place of double portion: **the Salt Covenant** that God made with the house of David.

This was the mother of all Jewish civil battles in Israel's entire history. One million two hundred thousand Jews on the battle field ready to engage in battle and Abijah preaches about the Salt Covenant. What happened next proves the power of this covenant.

Jeroboam rejected the warning and attacked Abijah's army.

Five hundred thousand of Jeroboam's men died—the largest slaughter of mankind ever to occur in one day in all of history.

**"The old priesthood of Aaron perpetuated itself automatically, father to son, without explicit confirmation by God. But then God intervened and called this new, permanent priesthood into being with an added promise: God gave his word; he won't take it back: You're the permanent priest. This makes Jesus the guarantee of a far better way between us and God — one that really works! A new covenant."** Hebrews. 7:21-22 Message Bible

### **SALT MADE THE COVENANT SURE**

When God made a covenant with David... it was all up to God to fulfill his promise. Jesus came from the line of David through both Mary and Joseph. By his death, he became the salted sacrifice offered before God to cleanse the people from their sin, not for a moment, but for all time. It is eternally available to all who will accept His provision of cleansing and forgiveness. It does not just cover the sin, but it removes it. It is a binding contract that God made on your behalf....a better covenant and a better sacrifice that we read about in the book of Hebrews.

**It is YHWH'S desire** to be sealed with us in an eternal covenant of friendship seasoned with salt. Historically, salt was a means by which friends solidified and preserved their commitment to each other with a covenant of shared salt.

Jesus came amongst us and what characterized his ministry?

Eating with all the wrong people! Parties, wine and a meal shared.

When Jesus says: You are the salt of the earth!

I think we have got something to think about in the way we are in the world and in our life together.

Watch out for Part 2 next week.