

# THE KING OF KINGS: A STUDY OF MATTHEW

## The King's Arrival: A Study of Matthew 1–7

### STUDY TWELVE

## Shake and Shine!

*Matthew 5:13–16*

*The Beatitudes describe who we are—poor in spirit, peacemakers, merciful, humble, pure in heart. Matthew 5:13–16 talks about what we must be in the world—salt and light.*

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

**T**HE Beatitudes are more than platitudes. They are Jesus' marching orders for a countercultural mission to change our world for good. What a daunting task! Is world-change even possible?

In biblical terms, the “world” is an organized system run by the devil that is hostile toward God and bent on undermining His redemptive work. Long ago, Satan corrupted God's good world into a breeding ground for every form of evil. Just glance through the morning headlines to confirm the deep-seated depravity: murder rates rise, sex traffickers enslave innocents, domestic abuse shatters families, scammers defraud the elderly, violence enflames city streets, and the grim list goes on.

Jesus told us bluntly to expect hatred, persecution, and tribulation in this world (John 15:20; 16:33). How can we hope to survive in such a hostile place? How can soldiers of the cross—armed only with humility, contrition, gentleness, a longing for righteousness, mercy, purity, and peace—ever make a lasting impact on a world set on our destruction? The same way Jesus did.

Armed with these same characteristics, Jesus engaged an even more hostile world. His response to its hatred was love; to its lies, truth; to its harshness, gentleness; to its cross, forgiveness. With these qualities, He triumphed over His opposition, defeating the devil himself.



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Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

## Shake and Shine!

*Matthew 5:13–16*

We learn from our Master that the secret to making a difference is to be different. We counter the might of the world with meekness, the vices of the world with virtue, and the violence of the world with peace. As the Beatitudes change us, the world around us changes. And as the Beatitudes shape the essence of *who* we are, *what* we are takes shape too. According to Jesus, we become salt and light—two influences our decaying and dark world desperately needs.



### PREPARE YOUR HEART

As we open God's Word, let's prepare our hearts to receive the teaching of Jesus, the One who preserves our souls and lights our paths:

*Father, the sinful state of Your world grieves You. Your love for the world sent Your Son to find the lost and save sinners—of whom I am one. Help me to relate to others with Your love, even toward those who hate Your Son and persecute His followers. Illumine and encourage my heart through Your Word. In Jesus' name, amen.*



### TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

As you read [Matthew 5:13–16](#), you'll notice the two metaphors of *salt* and *light* that describe our influence in the world. Jesus often packaged truths in word pictures to help people understand His teaching and recall it later. Each time those in His audience used salt in preparing food or lit a lamp in their home, they would remember Jesus' words. You can do the same as you bring Jesus' teaching points into your everyday life.



### Observation: You Are Salt and Light

Before digging too deeply into the metaphors, write down everything you observe in these four verses. Patient observation is essential in gleaning the most from your Bible study.<sup>1</sup>



## Shake and Shine!

*Matthew 5:13–16*

Do you see the parallelism in *Matthew 5:13–14*? How are the sentences similar? Whom did Jesus address? Whom was He *not* addressing? Where is the salt located? Where does the light shine?

Notice the present tense of the verb, “you are.” Salt and light are not something we become but something we are. *If we are* followers of Christ, *then we are* salt and light. Our condition, however, can impact our effectiveness. *What* must the salt be to be effective (*Matthew 5:13*)? And *how* must the lamp be displayed to fulfill its purpose (*5:14–15*)?

If Christians are like salt and lamps, what is it about us that makes us salty and full of light? In *5:16*, Jesus answered this question regarding the lamp only. What did He say is the light that shines out of the lamp? And what are the results when we let our lights shine?

*You don't carry salt. You're not handing out bags of it. You don't give out saltshakers. You are the salt. You don't shine big lights in people's faces. You ARE the light.*  
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



## Shake and Shine!

*Matthew 5:13–16*



### Interpretation: The Meaning of the Metaphors

Ordinary salt mined around the Dead Sea along with common oil-burning lamps made from clay had many practical uses in first-century Israel. As we uncover their uses, we'll discover the gems of truth Jesus taught and the reasons He chose these objects as word pictures.

#### Salt for a World in Moral Decay—Matthew 5:13

In his commentary, Pastor Chuck Swindoll lists four uses for salt.

Salt adds flavor to food, and it also serves as a preservative, keeping meat from spoiling. Furthermore, when people consume salt, it makes them thirsty. Finally, salt can serve as a kind of detergent, making things clean.<sup>2</sup>

How are these benefits of salt similar to the ways Christians can benefit the world?

What exactly is the “saltiness” that we bring? Although Jesus didn't say directly, we can pick up clues from the context. Recall the ethical values and blessings of the kingdom of God that Jesus taught in the Beatitudes (*Matthew 5:3–12*). Take a moment to imagine what the world would be like if none of these values existed—no desire for God, no sorrow for sin, no gentleness, no yearning for justice, no mercy, no peace, and no refuge for the persecuted. *How much more trouble would the world be in!*

How do we help preserve a morally decaying world by living out Christ's “kingdom values”?



## **Shake and Shine!**

*Matthew 5:13–16*

What did Jesus mean when He said, “But what good is salt if it has lost its flavor?” (Matthew 5:13)? What was He implying about Christians who’ve lost their virtue and lived identical to those in the world?

By showing mercy, we point people to our merciful God. By calming conflict with words of peace, we give people a taste of God’s peaceful kingdom. But if we live like the world, full of anger and retaliation, our salt has lost its flavor. Our world needs us to shake some kingdom-of-God “salt.” *Where else can true goodness be found?*

### **Light for a World in Spiritual Darkness**

Reflecting on Christ’s metaphor of a brightly shining lamp, can you name some benefits of light?

In places of the world where no light from the works and words of Christ exists, what are some of the consequences of the spiritual darkness?



## Shake and Shine!

*Matthew 5:13–16*

Jesus pointed to “a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden” and a lamp “placed on a stand” (Matthew 5:14–15, emphasis added). What principle about our Christian witness was Jesus teaching by highlighting the importance of light being visible out in the open?

*Light helps us find our way. It keeps us from being afraid, shows us the dangerous places so we don't walk into them, and points out the path that leads us where to go. Just one light in the darkness does all that. Just live your godly convictions, and the blacker the darkness, the brighter your light will shine. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*



### Correlation: Reasons the World Hates Us

We might think that people in the world will appreciate our salt and be drawn to our light, and some may. However, persecution is often the world's response. In His private instructions to His disciples on the night of His betrayal, Jesus explained the reasons the world will hate His followers. Read the following verses and write down at least three reasons the world will hate you.

*“If the world hates you, remember that it hated me first. The world would love you as one of its own if you belonged to it, but you are no longer part of the world. I chose you to come out of the world, so it hates you. Do you remember what I told you? ‘A slave is not greater than the master.’ Since they persecuted me, naturally they will persecute you. And if they had listened to me, they would listen to you. They will do all this to you because of me, for they have rejected the one who sent me. They would not be guilty if I had not come and spoken to them. But now they have no excuse for their sin.”*  
(John 15:18–22)



## Shake and Shine!

*Matthew 5:13–16*

How does Christ's warning prepare you for being salt and light in your world?

*We can expect hateful treatment because the world rests in the lap of the evil one. But don't fight fire with fire. Jesus didn't do that, and neither should we. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*



### Application: Thoughts on Being Salt and Light

In closing, here are three don'ts that will help us become a more positive and effective witness in the world.

- *Don't overdo it.* Don't rub salt into someone's fresh wound and don't shine a flashlight into somebody's eyes. There's no need to be hurtful or offensive. Just shake the salt and raise the light high for people to see.
- *Don't hold back.* Risk getting involved with spiritually lost people who are morally dying. Risk standing up even when others don't stand with you.
- *Don't worry about those who resist it.* People may shout insults, fight against us, even try to destroy us. Anticipating the backlash guards us against discouragement and, actually, affirms that we're going the right way—the way of Christ.

Which of these “don'ts” apply most to your situation? How so? In response, what can you do?



## Shake and Shine!

*Matthew 5:13–16*

Jesus' goal was to inspire His followers to simply be who they were. They didn't need to become super-disciples; instead, they were just to follow His lead and influence people naturally as they displayed His love and virtue. In what ways can you be an influencer for Christ in your family and among your friends?

We often complain about cultural morals going bad. But why should we be shocked? Decay naturally occurs without a preservative. Who can blame meat for spoiling on the counter? Shake some salt in your world by putting into practice the ethics of Christ's kingdom. And let the light of your good deeds lead someone out of the darkness.



### A FINAL PRAYER

*Father, the times are confusing. The world is frightening and unpredictable, and it's easy to become paranoid and want to hide. Give me the courage to run into the world, not from it. To let the salt of Christ's character rub off on others and the light of His truth show them His way. In the end, You will receive all the glory and praise. In Jesus' name, amen.*

### ENDNOTES

1. To learn about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study, go to the Web page, "[How to Study the Bible for Yourself](#)."
2. Charles R. Swindoll, *Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary: Insights on Matthew 1–15*, vol. 1A (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2020), 92.

