

## Salt Of The Covenant

'Every grain offering you will season with salt. You will not allow the Salt of the Covenant of your God to be lacking from your grain offering. You will offer salt with all your offerings' (Leviticus 2:13). 'All the offerings of the holy things the children of Israel give to the Lord, I give to you and your children with you forever, a Covenant of Salt before the Lord for you and your children with you' (Numbers 18:19). 'Take sweet aromatic spices, balsam gum resin, onycha and galbanum gum, with pure frankincense, each of equal weight and make incense of it. A perfume after the art of the perfumer, seasoned with salt, pure and holy. Grind some of it until very fine and put some of it before the testimony in the Tent of Meeting where I will meet with you. You will regard it as being especially holy. You are not to make any incense with the same composition of ingredients for yourselves. You are to consider it holy for the Lord God only' (Exodus 30:34 to 37).

The Lord was very precise when He gave the ingredients for the above incense. Balsam gum resin is an aromatic, resinous or oily liquid used as a balm for medicinal purposes. It softly penetrates the skin to soothe pain. Onycha was derived from the operculum of a strombus marine mollusc that emits a powerful penetrating aroma when burnt. An operculum is a plate that closes the opening to a shell when the mollusc retracts. Galbanum is gum resin taken from a Persian species of giant fennel that has fragrant yellow flowers. Frankincense is an aromatic gum resin taken from the coniferous boswellia tree. The salt would have preserved the onycha, preventing it from becoming rancid. Apart from salt, all of these ingredients emit a very strong perfume. The Covenant of Salt was symbolic of the new covenant made in the blood of Jesus. Jesus is called the Son, or Descendent of King David. 'You ought to know, the God of Israel gave the kingdom of Israel to David forever, to him and to his descendents by a Covenant of Salt' (2 Chronicles 13:5). Jesus said He was making a new covenant, not in salt but in His blood. He said, "This is My blood of the new covenant which is poured out for many for the remission of sins" (Matthew 26:28). The act of cutting the new covenant with Jesus was spoken of by the prophet Zechariah. 'Rejoice greatly daughter of Zion (Christians). Shout, daughter of Jerusalem (Jewish people). Behold your King (Jesus) comes to you! He is righteous and having salvation, humble and riding on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey (fulfilled, Matthew 21:5 & 7) ... He (Jesus) will speak peace to the nations. His dominion will be from sea to sea and from the (Jordan) River to the ends of the earth. As for you (nation of Israel), because of the blood of your covenant, I have set free your prisoners from the pit in which is no water' (Zechariah 9:9 to 11).

Salt is mentioned in the Bible forty-one times. Salt purifies and preserves food by dehydrating cells, inhibiting the growth of bacteria. Salt also draws blood out of the cells of fresh meat, causing the meat to become kosher. All these thousands of years after the first Scriptural incense and the Covenant of Salt, the Jewish people still celebrate the same covenant with the Lord each Sabbath. Since the temple was destroyed in 70 AD, included in each Sabbath celebration are four important symbolic items to remember the worship once held within the temple. (1) Two small aromatic candles to remember and observe the Sabbath Day to keep it holy (Exodus 20:8; Deuteronomy 5:12) and to remind the Jewish people how the temple Menorah was lit. (2) Watered down wine was strongly symbolic of the way Jesus denied Himself and was afflicted then His blood was shed. God said, "It is a Sabbath Day of solemn rest to you and you will afflict your souls ... and you will deny yourselves" (Leviticus 16:31; 23:32). (3) Two plaited loaves of bread (called challah) symbolises the double portion of manna given to the children of Israel for the Sabbath (Exodus 16:22). The bread is dipped in salt or sprinkled with salt to symbolise purification and preservation, and to remember the Lord said all the offerings were to be salted. The bread also reminds the Jewish people of the table of shewbread in the temple. (4) Food on the table is a picture of the sacrificial altar in the temple. Singing praises before and after the Sabbath meal was initiated by the Levites. The Covenant of Salt was an ordinance for the Jewish people for as long as the earth remained. The Sabbath worship was God-ordained, God-taught and God-instructed worship. It is very different from the way Christians worship God and perhaps Christians could look at the way God taught the Jewish people to worship Him, His way. Two elements included in the Sabbath celebrations are the bread and wine, which is included in most Christian services.

The word 'salt' as used in the Bible was the plain white salty grains taken from salty water. In Hebrew it is 'mlch'. This salt is the seasoning not chemical 'salts' containing acids. Salt could be taken from the Salt Sea so it was abundant in Israel. Salt was so abundant, Abimelech created a desert by sowing the whole city of Shechem with life destroying salt. 'Abimelech fought against the city all that day. He took the city and killed the people who were there. He beat down the city and sowed it with salt' (Judges 9:45). 'God turns rivers into a desert, water springs into a thirsty ground and a fruitful land into a salt waste because the wickedness of those who dwell in it' (Psalm 107:33 & 34). Lot's wife died when she was overcome with tons of salt because she lingered behind and looked back at her home and belongings being destroyed by fire. 'Lot's wife looked back from behind him and she became a pillar of salt' (Genesis 19:26). Thousands of years later, Jesus

warned us, when He returns for His Bride we are not to look back at things we own or try to take anything with us. He warned us to, "Remember Lot's wife" (Luke 17:30 to 32). Holding onto earthly possessions could overcome us and cost us our eternal life. Elisha used salt to purify Jericho's water supply (2 Kings 2:19 to 22). During the days of Ezra and Nehemiah, the Persian king Artaxerxes controlled the salt distribution (Ezra 7:21 & 22). According to historian Josephus, during the days of Jesus and the Apostles, Herod controlled the gathering and distribution of salt which was highly taxed.

The oceans and seas around the world contain about fifty million billion tons of pure salt. Every year, the world's population consumes about forty million tons of salt, which is cheap and abundant in most of the world today. At one time, salt was very rare, expensive and valuable and was once used as currency or wages. We find the word salary from the Latin word *salar*, which was used during the time when the Roman soldiers were given a ration of salt as part of their salary. Slaves were bought and sold using salt as payment, so we find our phrase, 'This person is worth their salt'. More wars have been fought over salt than over gold and only when mankind worked out a way to mass-produce salt, did the wars over salt cease. Some countries have to import salt because they have no salt deposits, but it is still very cheap.

'Can food that has no taste be eaten without salt? Is there any flavour in egg-white?' (Job 6:6). There are four functions of salt – for flavour, for preserving food, for purifying and cleansing and for healing. Salt is a natural antiseptic and it is a natural preservative. All believers in Jesus are required to do for our society what salt does naturally, as Jesus said, "You are the salt of the earth. If salt has lost its flavour, what good will it be? It is good for nothing but to be cast out" (Matthew 5:13). The Jewish people Jesus was speaking to when He said this would have known what He meant because they were all taught from the Old Testament and the Jews were still worshipping at the temple and salting their offerings. Jesus was calling all those who believe in Him to be a witness for Him 'as salt' all over the earth. If we compromise with ungodly people on the earth, we will be without 'flavour' and will lose our ability to be a witness to the world, then we are no good and will be cast out. When people accept Jesus as their Messiah, Lord and Saviour, they are grafted into the spiritual olive tree (Romans 11:16 to 24). We are adopted into the Jewish family of God and are part of His Covenant Body of believers, therefore we have the same privileges and responsibilities as Jewish people. We are responsible to purify and cleanse our society by standing up for righteousness. The Lord's presence in us along with our prayers should be a purifying influence that restrains evil forces. We should try to preserve our society by holding back the forces of corruption in social, educational, political and moral areas and not allow them free reign. We should be what salt is to food, flavoursome by being Godly, helping preserve righteousness, purifying and cleansing society through prayer, giving from our abundance to reach and heal the spiritually lost.

Salt is good as a symbol for spiritual growth but it is necessary for our physical body too. If we do not eat enough salt, we can experience stomach cramps. If we consume too much salt, it will affect our kidneys and blood pressure. A good balance of our salt intake will keep us healthy. Salt is good for many other things too. It gives bread, processed meat and cheese an even texture. Salt controls the fermentation in preserved foods such as pickles, cheese, sausages, smoked and dried meats and fish. Bathing a wound with saline (salted water) helps to kill the bacteria around the wound. Gargling with saline helps heal a sore throat. Using saline as a mouthwash can help heal an infected gum. Bathing a stye on an eyelid with mild saline solution can heal the stye. In ancient times, newborn babies had salt rubbed all over them. For hundreds of years, salt was added to a baby's bathwater. Salt cannot be destroyed by time or flickering flames, although a roaring inferno would burn salt up. In the same way, God's people are salted by fire but are not consumed. However, the roaring inferno of the eternal lake of fire is complete destruction. The Lord gave instructions for burnt offerings and sacrifices to be seasoned with salt and the offerings were not acceptable unless they were salted. The onus was on us to ensure there was salt. 'You will not allow the Salt of the Covenant of your God to be lacking. You will offer salt with all your offerings' (Leviticus 2:13). 'Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable spiritual service' (Romans 12:1). 'Everyone will be salted with fire and every sacrifice will be seasoned with salt' (Mark 9:49). When the salt was added, the sacrifices were accepted by God. God said to the Jewish people, "Behold, I have refined you but not as silver. I have chosen you in the furnace of affliction" (Isaiah 48:10). This also applies to the believers who have been grafted into the spiritual olive tree. As we grow in God, we too will be 'salted by fire' so we can be like salt, pure, flavoursome, cleansed, healed and able to be God's witnesses to the ends of the earth. 'You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you. You will be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem in all Judea and Samaria (Israel) and to the uttermost parts of the earth' (Acts 1:8).

Amen and God bless you.

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