



A salt farm

Salt and light

Jo Jones *reflects on* Matthew 5:13-20

At the time of Jesus, salt was essential in the Middle East for preserving food. As a result it was immensely valuable and salt roads were important trade routes. In Jewish teaching, salt was to be given with offerings at the altar to purify them, as a “covenant of salt” – a sign of the binding relationship between God and God’s people (Leviticus 2:13; Numbers 18:19).

In the Beatitudes, which precede today’s Gospel reading, Jesus taught that those who are blessed are very different to those who are honoured

by the powerful people of the world. After declaring to his disciples, “You are the salt of the earth” Jesus teaches that he has come “not to abolish but to fulfil” the Law and the prophets. However, he rejects obeying the Law as a pedantic keeping of regulations by self-righteous people. Rather, to obey the Law is to love God and all that God loves. In this “new” world, the disciples, and we who come after them, are to be the salt, with the layers of meaning that implies. We bring health and preservation. Moreover, as we offer our lives to God, just as the salt was added to the offerings at the Temple, we are a sign of the covenant between God and the world.

If we live this out, the taste will go far – and our light will shine out. 🌟

Lord, help us to remain true to your Law as fulfilled in Jesus, and so bring to our world, with all its troubles and heartbreak, the taste of your love, so that all may be blessed. Amen.

Names of Jesus

Part 1 – what’s in a name?

by Heather Smith

Names in the Bible signify something about those who bear them and about God’s dealings with them. Think of Abram and Sarai, whose names were changed by God to Abraham and Sarah, and of Peter, whom Jesus renamed from Simon.

When the angel visits Mary to tell her she will bear God’s son, he tells her to name him Jesus. Meaning “God saves” or “the Lord is salvation”, it is a Latinised version

of the Greek *iesous*, which in turn refers to the Aramaic *Yeshu’a*, a short version of *Yehoshu’a* (Joshua). The idea of Jesus as one who saves is, therefore, fundamental in the Gospels.

There are around two hundred names attributed to Jesus. Those who wrote the biblical texts could not pin him down to one phrase or name. They must have seen new aspects which required a different descriptor, perhaps drawing on something in the Old Testament that suddenly made sense in a new way. 🌟

Animals in the Bible

The leviathan

by Caroline Fletcher

We use the word leviathan to describe a range of huge or powerful things from massive ocean-going ships to dictatorial states. However, the word originates from the Bible where it describes a formidable, aquatic creature with a mysterious identity.

Some believe this biblical Leviathan to be a crocodile and point, for instance, to Job’s description of its impenetrable “coat of mail”. However, in other

parts of the Old Testament it is described living in the sea and seems more like a whale. Possibly Leviathan was a fluid term used to describe any large, water-based animal.

Others think of it as a mythological creature rather like a sea serpent, pointing out that Job has sparks of fire coming from Leviathan’s mouth and smoke from its nostrils!

Whatever the truth, these creatures are only ever mentioned to emphasise God’s power: even the most immense and terrifying beasts come under the Creator’s authority. 🌟

“Work as if everything depended on you, and pray as if everything depended on God.”

Dwight L. Moody (1837-1899), American evangelist and publisher