

## **Life and Ministry of Jesus Christ The Syro-phenician Woman of Canaan**

Last time...Jesus has a confrontation with some Pharisees and scribes regarding the traditions of men vs the Word of God

After the Bread of God teaching, another radical teaching regarding what defiles a man

This time...an encounter with a Syro-phenician woman of Canaan

We will be in Mark 7 and Matt 15

### **Matt 15**

v21 departed...Tyre and Sidon:

After the confrontation with the Pharisees and scribes regarding the traditions of men that make the Word of God of none effect, Jesus leaves Capernaum and goes to...Gentile territory, Phoenicia, the Roman province of Syria

Tyre is 35 miles northwest of the Sea of Galilee, Sidon is 25 miles north of Tyre  
Both are on the Med coast in modern day Lebanon, south of Beirut  
[ map ]

Tyre

- city of the Phoenicians, the greatest mariners of ancient world
- flourishing trade center with colonies all across the Med Sea
- a city of great splendor and material prosperity...  
“golden era” started about the time of David (1000 BC)
- worshipped a pantheon of gods:
  - Adonis, Asherah, Baal, Astarte (queen of heaven)
- one of the targets of “Woe for Crimes against the Lord” in Ezk 26-28
  - noteworthy is Ezk 28:12-19...the king of Tyre is Lucifer

Sidon

- another city of the Phoenicians
- favorite daughter – the infamous Jezebel
- also a target of “Woe for Crimes against the Lord” in Ezk 28

Why did Jesus go there?  
Let's jump over to Mark 7

## Mark 7

v24 have no man know it...could not be hid:

Looking back at the recent history in the ministry of Jesus

- He sends the 12 disciples (2x2) on the 1<sup>st</sup> missionary trip without Him
- He learns of the murder of John the Baptist
- He leaves the tetrarchy of Herod Antipas with the 12 to get some rest
- In Bethsaida, they are immediately greeted by a multitude
- Jesus is moved with compassion to minister to them
- He feeds 5000 men (plus) with a poor boy's lunch of 5 loaves and 2 small fishes
- The leaders of the multitude want to take Him by force and make Him king
- Jesus immediately evacuates his 12 disciples, then comes walking to them on the water, escaping the king makers
- Jesus heals many in the region of Magdala
- He and the 12 go to Capernaum where He teaches the Bread of God in the synagogue
- Most of His disciples have their minds blown and abandon Him, no longer willing to follow Him
- Pharisees and scribes confront Him about the disciples eating with hands not ceremonially washed
- Jesus teaches another radical teaching about true defilement and traditions of men vs the Word of God, that offends the Pharisees and scribes

In all of that recent history

- No rest for Him or the 12 (Mark 6:31)
- His popularity reaches its zenith, then dives
- The rise of hostility and opposition by the religious leaders and people

So why did Jesus go to Phoenicia secretly, under the radar?

1. Rest...much needed and long overdue
2. Time for instruction with His 12 disciples; He needs to pour His heart into them
3. Time to let things simmer down in Galilee; things are tough there now as well as in Jerusalem
4. In the foreknowledge of God, He has an appointment to keep with a Gentile woman

Jesus and His 12 are welcomed into a house...

functioning as a retreat center, if you will...

but His fame (Matt 4:23-24) was such that He was easily recognized, even here

v25-26 woman, whose young daughter:

As the news spreads that Jesus of Nazareth is in town, one unnamed woman, captured forever in the testimony of God, comes to Jesus and falls at His feet, begging Him to cast a demon out of her young daughter

This woman

- is Greek – Gentile, a non-Jew (in context: not bound by the traditions of the elders of Israel that make of none effect the Word)
- is Syro-phoenician – nationality of ancient Phoenicia, now the Roman province of Syria
- has heard the testimonies of the miracles of Jesus
- believes in her heart that Jesus can cast the demon out of her daughter
- comes to Jesus with the humility and submission of a servant to her Master

Let's go back to Matt 15 (Gospel written to the Jews) for some more details

## **Matt 15**

v22 woman of Canaan...Have mercy...Lord...Son of David:

This Gentile woman is of Canaan

Her national religion is pagan, the god of her nation is Baal

Her heritage is [Gen 9:20-27](#)

This woman, a “servant of servants” comes

- humbly to the Blessed LORD God of Shem
- asking for mercy/compassion (Baal has none)
- calling Jesus of Nazareth
  - “Lord” (*kurios* = supreme authority)
  - Son of David (a very Jewish title of the Messiah... of SAIJJ&D, the Jews)
    - 2 Sam 7
    - Is 7:14 virgin conceive, bear son name Immanuel
    - Is 9:6 W, C, mG, eF, PoP

This is remarkable!

How could she say this?

She has heard the Word of God and of the miracles of Jesus

She believes the Word of God and testimony of Jesus...

As did we and other Gentiles

1 Thes 1:9 ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God

[Eph 4:17-23](#)

v23 He answered her not a word:

Seems Jesus is being rude, giving the woman the silent treatment.

Is Jesus, Who is always moved with compassion, being rude to this  
Gentile woman who has humbly come begging Him to heal her  
daughter of demon possession?

Is this because she is of Canaan, the cursed son of Ham?

What is one of the reasons Jesus would have come here with his 12 disciples?

Instruction for them

Pouring His heart into them

Therefore, Jesus is not being rude to this woman, He is testing/revealing (to them)  
the hearts of His 12 in this, a teaching moment

What is the heart of the 12?

Irritated and annoyed with this Gentile woman (2 strikes in Jewish mind)

“She is bothering us and will not leave us alone, she persists in her  
crying; send her away!”

The same heart that wanted to send away the multitude in Bethsaida to go  
find for themselves...not compassionate, not servant's hearts

Jesus knows He is headed to the Cross and then back to the right hand of the  
Father

These 12 (minus 1, plus 1) will be the beginning of His “new work” and  
New Covenant (Jer 31:31-33)

They must see, hear, think, and do as He does

We are a part of that “new work”...we must see, hear, think, and do as  
Jesus does too!

Why we study the Bible verse-by-verse...to not be conformed to the world  
but to be transformed by the renewing of our mind with the  
mind of Christ

So Jesus speaks...to the 12...within the earshot of the woman  
(for yet another reason)

v24 I am not sent:

The Lord reminds the 12 of His mission from the Father – to fulfill the promises to the fathers (AI&J) and their descendants, the beloved of the Lord for the father's sake (Rom 11:28)

Deut 18:18-19      to whom the Father sent Him  
Ezk 34:11, 16      He will search and seek that which was lost

Rom 15:8      Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises *made* unto the fathers

Gal 4:4-5      when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons

Notice:

- Jesus is neither irritated nor annoyed as are the 12
- He did not send the woman of Canaan away
- The Creator entered into His creation as a man, humbling Himself to be confined in space and time, as is all of Adam's race
- Therefore, He can only be in one place and one time, and He only has a finite amount of time to do the Father's work
- Why
  - John 14:12      Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater *works* than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father
  - John 16:7      Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you

Now, about that other reason why Jesus said what He did within earshot of the woman of Canaan...

v25 worshipped...Lord, help me:

With sincere, genuine, unencumbered devotion, the woman worships Jesus  
Matt 4:10...therefore, Jesus is God  
She worships Jesus as Lord...*kurios*, supreme authority

Her worshipful cry to Him is simple, brief, desperate: "Help me!"  
To which Jesus says something else that might seem rude

v26 not meet...children's bread...dogs:

Jesus says to the woman who is worshipping Him,

“It is not right or proper to take the bread (Bread of God, Him) of the children (the Jews, who are increasingly hostile to and opposing Him) and give it to the dogs.”

Ouch!

Is Jesus being rude and disrespectful to this woman of Canaan who is at His feet begging for His help on behalf of her young daughter?

There are no curse words in Hebrew; the ugliest thing a Jew could say to someone was to call them a dog

Jews referred to Gentiles as dogs...”wild dogs” that were

- undomesticated
- vicious
- hated

ala Rev 22:15 without *are* dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loves and makes a lie

But the Greek word used by Jesus means “puppies”, a family pet  
Jesus is NOT cursing the woman, He is NOT being rude or disrespectful...for she is created in His image  
(Gen 1:26-27, Gen 9:6)

So what is Jesus doing?

He is drawing out and testing her expressed faith in Him...  
to save her soul because He loves her

Let's go to Mark 7 for another insight

## **Mark 7**

v27 Let the children first be filled:

The woman of Canaan is no doubt hanging on every word Jesus says

Reading our Bibles carefully...Let the children first be filled

The children (Jews) are...first, not only  
Rom 1:16

The woman hears...with understanding...and “goes with it”

v28 Yes , Lord, yet the dogs under the table...crumbs:  
The woman neither contradicts nor argues with Jesus...she agrees with Him,  
the Jews are the children and they are first

But the puppies

- under the Master's table
- therefore...the Master's puppies

eat the children's crumbs

Note: the last piece of bread was used as a napkin to wipe the hands and  
then tossed under the table to the puppies

Without a fullness of knowledge (1 Cor 8:1), therefore by faith (Heb 11:1),  
this woman speaks of the mystery of God – that salvation is for the  
Gentiles too, to the glory of the Messiah and the Father (Eph 3:1-11)

Let's jump back to Matt 15 for how the Holy Spirit inspired Matthew to record  
the woman's response

### **Matt 15**

v27 Truth...master's table:  
Truth, You speak the Truth, Lord, about the children's bread!  
Nonetheless, the puppies eat the crumbs that fall from their Master's table  
(for they are the Master's puppies)

The Master of the children and of the table is also Master of the puppies

This woman of Canaan with a desperate need is not to be deterred, for she has a  
great faith in Jesus' ability and willingness to help her  
All she needs is but a crumb of the goodness and power of the God of Israel to  
heal her beloved daughter

v28 O woman, great is thy faith:

Jesus, having drawn out this woman's faith, sounds very excited

O woman: a term of endearment

Great is thy faith: *mega* faith, like the faith of the centurion in Capernaum, the likes of which not seen in Israel

And the Lord casts the demon out of her daughter...immediately

The woman of Canaan is now...a daughter of Abraham, an heir of the promises of God to Abraham

Gal 3:26-29 For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye *be* Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

What a marked difference in her interaction with Jesus than how the Jews have been interacting with Him!

Jesus knew from before the foundation of the world

- this appointment and what He would do
- the heart and great faith of this Gentile woman of the line of cursed Canaan

We will conclude in Mark 7

## **Mark 7**

v29-30 the devil is gone:

is gone...the present is not as the past

In the white space between v28 and v29 Jesus banished the demon from the woman's young daughter

She went home, as instructed by Jesus

(He sends her away only after having drawn out her faith and healing her daughter...unlike when and how the 12 had wanted Him to)

Upon her arrival, she finds peace from the W, C, mG, eF, PoP has replaced the grievous harassment of the devil with His peace

Her persistent, pleading, unwavering faith was rewarded



## **Application**

Jesus is teaching us to come to Him!

Come,  
worship Him,  
agree with Him by faith,  
and do not leave until you get His help

Heb 4:16      Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain  
mercy, and find grace to help in time of need

Matt 7:7-11

Many Jews who hear without understanding or faith  
have asked Jesus of Nazareth to heal them

Luke 1:5-13

This Gentile woman who hears with understanding and faith  
asked the Son of David the Lord to heal

Luke 18:1-14

pray with relentless perseverance, pray believing  
As God's children

No longer cursed, rest in the promises of God in this spiritually hostile world in which  
we are strangers and pilgrims