

Bible Study 2023-2024

Class #6

10/17/23

Matthew 15 (Cont)

- **Matthew 15:21** *“And Jesus went away from there and withdrew to the district of Tyre and Sidon. And behold, a Canaanite woman from the region came out and cried,”*
 - This presents another example of the difference between Matthew and Mark
 - **Mark 7:1-5** tells the same story with Mark’s version being a bit longer because he provides more explanation than Matthew
 - Mark writes, “for Moses said” while Matthew assumes that you know that Moses provided the Law

Matthew 15 (Cont)

- In this story, Jesus declares that all foods are clean and that there are no kosher laws in His new covenant
- Mark makes this clear because most of his audience did not know the Law
- Mark tells us that the woman was a Syro-Phoenician by birth, and Matthew identifies her as a *Canaanite* woman from Tyre and Sidon
- Jesus and his disciples went to a totally Gentile area (Lebanon) for a rest
- This means that Jesus was not surprised to when he was approached by this Gentile woman

Matthew 15 (Cont)

- Once again, He was teaching his disciples something that will impact them later in the Book of Acts
- The message was for them to begin their teaching to the Jews in a specific place, and later (after being rejected to preach to the Gentiles)
- Only after there is not a single Jew left to convert and all the bridges have been burned should they turn to the Gentiles

Matthew 15 (Cont)

- **Matthew 15:22-24** *“And behold, a Canaanite woman from that region came out and cried, ‘have mercy on me, ...the lost sheep of the house of Israel’”*
 - The **Canaanites** were the descendants of the Canaanite people (one of the seven tribes living in the Promised Land)
 - A Syro-Phoenician or a Greek was not the same as a Canaanite
 - Also, a Canaanite or a Greek are two different nationalities

Matthew 15 (Cont)

- It seems like there are contradictions within the texts, but this is not so when we look at their respective audiences
- For Mark, writing for the Romans, that area was divided into two regions: Syria and Phoenicia (this is where we get the word Palestine – the land of the Palestinians)
- If Mark (or Peter) had told their audience that the woman was a Canaanite, they would not have understood

Matthew 15 (Cont)

- Further, since she was a local woman, she (as a non-Jew) and therefore, would have been seen as a Greek to the Jews
- This was a term the Jews used for all non-Jews after the dominance of Alexander the Great
- Most Jews saw the Roman Empire as an extension of the Greek Empire
- Father said this is similar to how many in Southern California call all Spanish-speaking people from Central or South America, “Mexicans”

Matthew 15 (Cont)

- Thus, the woman in this story from Syro-Phoenicia was a Greek (non-Jew) which becomes the point of the whole story
- Matthew related to his Jewish audience in Palestine that she was from *Tyre* and *Sidon*, and thus a Canaanite (a term that went all the way back to Joshua)
- Here, we have a remnant of one of those ancient nations who have had centuries to convert to the Law and the one true God
- Jesus went into this Gentile Land, where He met this Gentile woman

Matthew 15 (Cont)

- There are no surprises here as she approached Jesus, and asked him to have mercy on her as He was the Lord, and son of David
- She had obviously heard that this famous rabbi, who some called the Messiah, was in town

Matthew 15 (Cont)

- **Matthew 15:25-26** *“But she came and knelt before him,...It is not fair to take the children’s bread and throw it to the dogs”*
 - Father pointed out that the disciples did not say, “Heal her,” but “send her away for she is a stinking Gentile!”
 - In **Matthew 10:5-6***, we saw how Jesus had sent His disciples out to preach, but only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel
 - When she asked for help, He responded that it was not right to take the children’s bread and give it to the dogs

Matthew 15 (Cont)

- Hearing this, we think that Jesus was being very unkind by calling her a “dog”
- But, we must understand this in context as at that time a dog was one of the most unclean animals (as was a swine)
- This means that Jesus was calling her “unclean” in the Jewish sense of the Law
- He was saying that it was not right to take the food from God’s people, and through it to unclean Gentiles
- At a typical 1st century dinner, the father of the family would take a big loaf of bread, thank God for it, and then break it into pieces for each of his children

Matthew 15 (Cont)

- The family would recline there and eat it as their portion of a normal meal
- Father said that this image would be like a father breaking the bread for his seven children and then throwing it out the window to a bunch of mangy dogs
- No good Jew in the first century would have owned a dog as a pet (fluffy)
- Dogs ran wild in the alleys of the towns
- Thus, Jesus was saying to her that it was not right to take the bread of the hungry children and give it to the dogs

Matthew 15 (Cont)

- **Matthew 15:27-28** *“She said, yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master’s table...And her daughter was healed instantly”*
 - The woman acknowledged that Jesus was right, but sometime some of the bread (crumbs) was left over, fall to the floor where the dogs may eat it
 - She implied that there was so much bread that the children could not eat it all, allowing for the dogs to eat the scraps left over

Matthew 15 (Cont)

- Father reminded us of the of 12 baskets of scraps left over, after feeding the 5000 men and their families, and the
- If we do not catch this fact in this story look at what Matthew presents next

Matthew 15 (Cont)

- **Matthew 15:29-31** *“And Jesus went on from there and passed along the Sea of Galilee.... and they glorified the God of Israel”*
 - Jesus came back to the Sea of Galilee, around the North East side into Gentile territory where great crowds came for healing
 - Matthew makes the point that Jesus is now among the Gentiles
 - Here He, once again, multiplies bread (a reference to the Eucharist), but this time for the Gentiles
 - The Fathers of the Church see the multiplication of the loaves as a type of the Eucharistic miracle that will come

Matthew 15 (Cont)

- **Matthew 15:32-34** *“Then Jesus called his disciples to him and said,...They said, seven and a few small fish”*
 - Here are seven loaves which refers back to the last place we see “seven” in the Torah (**Deuteronomy 7**)
 - It is there in the seventh chapter that we see a listing of the seven nations in the Promised Land
 - Seven is not only a number for the covenant, but it also becomes the number for the Gentiles in the Greek literature

Matthew 15 (Cont)

- **Matthew 15:35-39** *“And commanding the crowd to sit down on the ground,...Those who ate were four thousand men, besides women and children...and went to the region of Magadan”*
 - Father pointed out that another number in the Bible for the Gentiles is 4 referencing the four cardinal directions: North, East, South, West
 - In this passage, Matthew refers to these baskets by the Greek name *Kophinos*, which was a particular kind of basket used by the Gentiles
 - In the Jewish multiplication of the loaves, the baskets were called *Spuris* in Greek (Jewish basket)

Matthew 15 (Cont)

- Further, when Matthew refers to these two multiplications, he refers to five and twelve in the Jewish story; and seven and four in the Gentile story
- Matthew is showing us that Jesus is coming to the end of His earthly ministry before He leaves Galilee by opening the door to the Gentiles
- We will see Jesus going to *Caesarea Philippi* in **Matthew 16**, where He will be proclaimed as the Christ

Matthew 15 (Cont)

- It is important for us to see the pattern here, for later in Acts, we will see Paul doing the same thing in his ministry
- This becomes his model as he starts with the Jews, and when rejected, he turns to the Gentiles
- Most likely the Apostles did the same thing
- We will now continue with **Matthew 16**

Synoptics 23 – 24

- Matthew 16

Matthew 16

- **Matthew 16:1-4** *“And the Pharisees and Sadducees came, and to test him they asked him to show them a sign from heaven...So he left them and departed”*
 - The Jewish leaders asked for a sign from the sky, “heaven”
 - Jesus responds, “It is over”
 - You are demanding a sign even though you can tell by looking at the sky what kind of weather will be coming, yet, after witnessing all that I have done to date, you still do not know what is going on?
 - Are you saying that you do not know the signs of the times?

Matthew 16 (Cont)

- And now, you want another sign?
- He responded, “No way!”
- Since, as we know there was one sign to come (His resurrection), He told them that the only sign would be the, “The sign of Jonah”
- Then, He turned and walked away
- They must have asked each other why He was talking about Jonah
- We last heard Jesus say this in **Matthew 12:39-40**, after the Pharisees had accused Him of using the power of Beelzebul
- Father said that this dual use of Jonah was a framing device for this section

Matthew 16 (Cont)

- This comes after the Pharisees have rejected Jesus
- Even though some Jews and some Gentiles began to follow Him after they had witnessed the feeding of the 5000 Jews (Matthew 14:13-21) and the 4000 Gentiles
- And, after this event, Jesus is approaching the end of His Galilean ministry