

The Syrophenician Woman

January 10, 2010 – Pastor Dr. Ronnie Wolfe

Matthew 15:21-28 Mark 7:24-30

I. THE LOCATION

- A. Tyre and Sidon, outside the Jewish country and into the land where the Syrians lived. This was in Phoenicia, a Gentile country.
- B. In Israel, Jesus is proclaiming that he is the Messiah, and the Jews are rejecting it
 - 1. John 1:11 *He came unto his own, and his own received him not.*
 - 2. John 6:48 *I am that bread of life. 49 Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. 50 This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. 51 I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. 52 The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat?*
 - 3. See Matthew 13:53-58
- C. But now Jesus goes into a Gentile country, and this woman comes to him in complete faith as the Messiah.
 - 1. Isaiah 11:10 *And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious.*
 - 2. It is not time for God to turn now to the Gentiles, but he is giving his disciples a little taste of the Gentile reception of the Gospel.

II. THE LANGUAGE

- A. The Gentile woman asks for mercy.
 - 1. She knows that she is not of the lost sheep of the tribe of Israel. She knows that, even though she may have been a Jewish proselyte, she does not deserve to be called a Jew or blessed at the hands of God as a Jew; so she asks for mercy.
 - 2. Jesus was sent as a prophet and a servant to Israel – Romans 15:8 *Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises [made] unto the fathers:*
 - 3. Mercy is that which God gives to us that we do not deserve. The disciples knew that this woman did not deserve mercy, yet they admonished the Lord to use mercy toward her in order to get rid of her. They could hardly stand the sight of her, no doubt.
 - 4. Every man, woman, boy, and girl on the face of the earth is a sinner, and God detests and hates sin, but we plead his mercy, because we do not deserve anything that he gives us.
- B. Son of David.
 - 1. She calls Jesus “thou son of David.”
 - 2. This is a term that suggests that she knows that salvation is of the Jews (John 4:22), and she has no business demanding anything from him; but she understand (as the

- Jews should have) that Jesus is the direct descendant of David, the king of Israel, which was a prophecy of the Jewish prophets and was perpetuated by God himself miraculously.
- C. Send her away
1. The disciples desired that this Gentile woman would be sent away. She had bothered them long enough, but perhaps they could not cast out the demon, or they may have thought that she did not deserve this miracle.
 2. They may have wanted Jesus to take the responsibility of healing this woman's daughter, because she was not going to leave any other way.
- D. Lord, help me
1. Isn't this the cry of every sinner who comes to the Lord for salvation?
 2. Isn't this the helpless condition of every person on the face of the earth? Do we not all need to fall on our knees before the Lord (as she did) and cry out "Lord, help me."
 3. We do not say it enough!
- E. The children's bread
1. The children's bread were the oracles of God
 - a. Romans 3:1-2 *What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? 2 Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.*
 2. Jesus had come to minister the word of God to the Jews, not to the Gentiles.
 3. It was not the Gentiles' ministry to carry the Gospel to the world; it was the job of the Jews.
 4. Jesus came to give bread to the Jews, not Gentiles.
 5. He came to teach the 12 disciples and to eventually give them the Great Commission.
 6. This woman knew that the Jews had the bread and that she could have only the crumbs.
 - a. John Gill offers a Jewish tradition about the children. He says the meal was set before a child, and if the child is obedient, he will eat the meal and the crumbs will be given to the dogs . . .
 - b. But if the child is disobedient, the meal will be given to the dogs and the child will get the crumbs.
 7. Where is the bread, and where are the crumbs?

III. THE LESSON

- A. Faith has no genre
1. Faith is for every nation
 2. The Great Commission is "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature . . ." Matt 28:19.
 3. These Jews had no claim on the Messiah.
 4. Romans 10:12 *For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.*
 5. Jesus is Lord of all – Acts 10:36 *The word which [God] sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ: (he is Lord of all:)*

Conclusion

Will you come today as the Syrophenician woman did many years ago? Will you come undeserving and humble? Will you come with your greatest need to him? Will you call out to him with faith?

Jesus said, "Oh woman, great is thy faith." She did not desire the whole meal; she simply needed a few crumbs.

Matthew 17:20 *And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.*

Soon, through Israel's disobedience, Jesus will give the meal to the Gentiles and leave the crumbs for Israel. Isaiah 55:6 *Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near:*