

A Study of the Book of Matthew: Chapter 15 v. 21-28

- **15:21 “Then Jesus went out from there and departed to the region of Tyre and Sidon.”**
 - Jesus is going into Gentile regions northwest of Palestine. He is going not to preach, but to get away.
 - This is not the first time Jesus has attempted to withdraw from the religious leaders and the crowds before (**Matthew 14:34–35**).
 - This time Jesus leaves Israel and enters pagan Gentile territory.
 - Why did he go here?
 - This is the region to which Jesus had referred when condemning the unwillingness of fellow Israelites to repent (**Matthew 11:20–24**).
 - In a fulfillment of those words, this thoroughly pagan region will produce a famous example of faith.

- **15:22 “And behold, a woman of Canaan came from that region and cried out to Him, saying, ‘Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David! My daughter is severely demon-possessed.’”**
 - Mark tells us that **“He entered a house and wanted no one to know it, but He could not be hidden.” (Mark 7:24)**.
 - A Canaanite/Gentile woman, outside of Palestine, recognized Jesus and even called Him the Son of David. She is begging for mercy.
 - What does this term “Son of David” mean?
 - Mark says, **“a woman whose young daughter had an unclean spirit heard about Him, and she came and fell at His feet.” (Mark 7:25)**
 - She wants Jesus to free her daughter from a demon.
 - Demon possession was common around the known world of this era.
 - The existence of demons was not debated. Too many people had seen a person oppressed by a demon to doubt it.
 - **“she came and fell at His feet”**
 - The author of Matthew uses this action as one befitting a king.
 - The unrepentant slave bows before the king in the parable of unforgiving servant (**Matthew 18**)
 - The mother of James and John kneel before Jesus as a king of a kingdom (**Matthew 20:20**).
 - For the woman to treat Jesus in this manner is in keeping with her referring to Jesus as the Son of David.

- **15:23 “But He answered her not a word. And His disciples came and urged Him, saying, ‘Send her away, for she cries out after us.’”**
 - She tells Christ that her daughter is severely oppressed by a demon.

- At first, Jesus remains silent.
 - Is this typical behavior for Jesus?
 - His response might seem confusing, at first, but proves to have an important lesson attached (**Matthew 15:23, 28**).
 - The woman will not take His silence for an answer, however, and continues to cry loudly.
 - The disciples eventually lose patience and ask Jesus to send the loud woman away.
 - This will end up being a test of her faith.
- **15:24 “But He answered and said, ‘I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.’”**
 - He was not sent to those who were not Israelites. It was part of the divine plan that Jesus’ personal ministry be limited to the Jews. They were the chosen race, and should be the first to receive the benefit of the gospel and its preaching.
 - Only after His own people officially reject Him will the offer be made for all to come into the family of God through faith in Christ (**John 1:11–12**).
 - Jesus uses the same language with her as when He sent disciples out in pairs to the towns and villages of Galilee (**Matthew 10:5–6**).
- **15:25 “Then she came and worshiped Him, saying, ‘Lord, help me!’”**
 - Jesus has made His position about performing miracles in Gentile territories very clear.
 - But, she does not give up, but bows in worship to Him, begging Him to help.
 - (She has heard His initial refusal, but she refuses to leave. In fact, she pesters to the point the disciples lose patience and ask Jesus to deal with her.)
 - Side note - This woman has something in common with two women who asked for help from prophets in the Old Testament.
 - The Sidonian woman with Elijah (**1 Kings 17**)
 - The Shunammite woman with Elisha (**2 Kings 4**).
 - God honored their perseverance and their faith. Jesus will do the same—His initial delay is for a purpose (**Matthew 15:28**).
- **15:26 “But He answered and said, ‘It is not good to take the children’s bread and throw it to the little dogs.’”**
 - Jesus is not trying to insult her.
 - Christ's intent is to test the woman's commitment to her request, and her faith in Him.
 - Jesus is merely making a point from a domestic happening - a common meal.
 - Dogs wait until the meal is completed, then they get scraps.
 - The children (the Jews) are being fed and the dogs (the Gentiles) would have to wait. She does not take offense to what Jesus says but adds to His statement.
 - Jewish people sometimes called Gentiles "dogs" to show their disrespect for them.
 - The word Jesus uses is not as harsh as it sounds when translated into English. The Greek term He uses literally means "little dog."

- He is comparing the nature of God's relationship with His chosen people Israel to those in the rest of the world.
 - He says this to prove the woman's humility and faith, knowing He will shortly reward both (**Matthew 15:28**).
- **15:27 “And she said, ‘Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters’ table.’”**
 - He has said something to the woman that sounds harsh.
 - In the previous verse, according to Jesus, for Him to heal her daughter would be as inappropriate as taking food from a child to give to a pet dog (**Matthew 15:26**).
 - Now she really shows her faith in knowing what Jesus can do.
 - She is persistent because of her faith in Jesus, and because of her love for her little girl.
 - She replies that while the meal is in progress there are crumbs that do fall, and the dogs scoop them up. She recognizes that Jesus came to the Jews, but could He not let a crumb fall for her? This is real faith!
 - Christ sees great faith in her response. She acknowledges that He is the Master and suggests that He can serve whomever He chooses with the crumbs of His time and power in this moment outside of Israel.
 - She is asking for what the "children" have either ignored or rejected.
 - This reflection, it seems, was the purpose of Jesus' initial delay (Matthew 15:28).
 - Compare this to what Jesus said in **Matthew 11:20–24**.
- **15:28 “Then Jesus answered and said to her, ‘O woman, great is your faith! Let it be to you as you desire.’ And her daughter was healed from that very hour.”**
 - Here is another passage in which a person is noted as having “great faith.”
 - The centurion in **Matthew 8:10** had great faith and now the Canaanite woman has great faith.
 - What else do these two people have in common?
 - Jesus talks about those with “little faith” in **Matthew 6:30; 8:26; 14:31; 16:8; 17:20; 21:21**.
 - Who is he talking to/about in these verses?
- A couple question:
 - Was it Jesus’ intent to deny her this miracle?
 - Considering the previous verse dealing with about being clean and unclean, could there be an application to this occurrence with a Canaanite woman?