

August 2, 2009

**FEEDING THE CHILDREN AND THE DOGS  
MATTHEW 15.21-39**

*Jesus, as the true Son of David, not only shepherds Israel but fulfills Israel's ministry to the nations by casting out demons and feeding the people.*

**1. JESUS AND THE PERSISTENT CANAANITE WOMAN (21-28)**

***The Canaanite woman (21-22a):***

Tyre and Sidon - coastal cities on the Mediterranean Sea. The "region" of Tyre and Sidon extended well beyond these particular cities down toward the north of the Sea of Galilee.

Woman is emphasized as a Canaanite. Sidon was the firstborn of Canaan (Gen 10.15), the cursed grandson of Noah (Gen 9.25). Canaanite were those who possessed and had to be driven out of the Promised Land.

Canaanites could be annihilated or incorporated into the people of God. They are "outcasts."

Remember the genealogy (ch 1). Rahab was a Canaanite woman incorporated into the people of God.

***The Son of David and demons (22b)***

Canaanites are idolaters, worshipers of demons (cf. 1Cor 10.20). Land is inhabited by demons. No surprise that a Canaanite would be demon-possessed. You are what you worship.

Why would she approach Jesus this way, calling him "Lord" and "Son of David" when she is a Canaanite? What does the Son of David have to do with Canaanite women and demons?

Cp 9.18-26 with a daughter and a woman. They are cleansed/raised from the dead to become the bride. Same type of scenario here.

Son of David, Solomon, is a husband king who marries the Gentile woman incorporating her into God's people (cf Song of Songs)

This Canaanite woman, like the queen of Sheba, recognizes the Son of David as her "Lord," her husband (for that is one sense in which "lord" can be understood; cf. 1Pt 3.6).

David (and his son) cast out demons. Cf. 1Sam 16. He is anointed as king and then given the ministry of exorcizing demons. Cp. Mt 12 and the people wondering if this is the Son of David.

***The responses of Jesus (23-28):*** 1<sup>st</sup> response - Jesus ignores her.

The disciples request: either (1) send her away or (2) deliver her.

The first is possible b/c they want to keep people from Jesus at other times; cf. e.g. 19.13

Could be that they are petitioning Jesus for her. Makes sense of his answer to them in v. 24. The focus of Jesus' mission is to be the shepherd to the lost sheep of Israel who have no shepherd (cf. 9.36).

Once Israel is cared for, *then* the Gentiles will come in. But all things must be in order.

3<sup>rd</sup> request - Jesus' response: v. 25. He calls her a dog and says that it is not right to give the children's bread to her.

Why does he answer her by talking about bread? Context of the kingdom and the kingdom is a feast. This belongs to Israel at the present time (Rom 1.16; Mt 21.43).

Matthew's triads would lead us to think that the discussion is over. But the woman is persistent and carries Jesus words to another conclusion; i.e. dogs receiving the crumbs/scraps from the masters' table.

Israel = children. Bread given to them as a priestly nation. Priests were recipients and distributors of bread. Woman recognizes that this bread is not just for Israel but for the nations.

Woman has “great faith.” Cp. Peter in 14.31 who had “little faith.” Cp. also 8.10, the Gentile centurion.

## **2. JESUS AND THE HURTING AND HUNGRY CROWDS (29-39)**

*The healing mountain ministry of Jesus (29-31):* Sea assoc. w/ the Gentiles.

Sits down on the mountain. Mountains in Mt: 4.23–5.1; 14.23; 17; 24–25; 28. Place where heaven and earth are joined; place of worship. Mountain scenes combine for one story to tell us the multiple things that happen when we ascend the mountain.

Jesus ascends and sits down. Pointing forward. What happens after this? The nations come to him for healing and feeding.

Healings: (1) enabling people to draw near to God (cf. Lev 21.16ff.), making them fit to be sacrifices; and (2) announcing the resurrection of the dead.

Response of crowds: “glorified the God of Israel.” God of Israel = the one true God.

*The feast on the mountain (32-39):* Geographical scene has not changed. This is one story.

Compassion on the people b/c they are hungry. Jesus’ concern for their physical well-being is not a second order concern.

Have not eaten in 3 days. No food = (a form of) death. Cf. Dt 28 for covenant curses. They are “dead” for 3 days.

3<sup>rd</sup> day = day of resurrection, it is the Lord’s Day (or Day of the Lord). On the Lord’s Day it is time to go to the mountain, be healed, and have a meal with Jesus.

Disciples are expected to feed the people. But they are in the wilderness. YHWH provides manna/bread in the wilderness.

Note how Jesus is specific in what he asks for: bread/loaves.

Given the number of loaves but not the number of fish. Cp. feeding of 5,000: 5 loaves, 5,000. Allusion to creating and delivering the armies of God who go out “five in a rank” (Ex 13.18).

Here 7 loaves with 7 baskets left over. 4,000 men fed and 4 specific maladies healed. 7 & 4 are prominent here.

7 = creation number. Assoc. w/ food/bread here and points to the bread of the old creation (Israel who has bread and *is* bread). Cf. Pss 14; 53. Jesus as the true Israel is “the bread of life” (Jn 6).

4 = geographical expanse that covers the whole earth; “four corners of the earth.”

All of these numbers, while literal in this story, are used by the great Storyteller to tell us that this feast which is realized in Israel’s Messiah on this mountain will extend to the 4 corners of the earth and, indeed, be for all of the nations. Cp. 28.18-20.

Fish not numbered. Sea creatures, Gentiles, who are unnumbered. Israel is numbered (see Numbers).

Parallels between feeding and Supper (v 36): Jesus gave thanks, broke the bread, gave to disciples; cp. 26.26f.

Commanded them to sit. Jesus was only one said to be sitting earlier. Now they are sitting with Jesus in heavenly places (Eph 2.6).

Disciples receive in order to distribute to others. This is their vocation. They work so that others may have rest.

The people eat and are filled/satisfied. Only after this are they then sent away or dismissed. Jesus has brought them in, healed them, fed them, and then he send them out.

After this, Jesus himself goes away. He will come again and do the same thing, but for now the people are dismissed to do what they are supposed to do as healed and fed people: go out and heal and feed others.

1. *Sometimes Jesus doesn’t answer our prayers because he is calling us to persistence and perseverance.*