

## ***FPFWC Christian Development***



### **The Measure of Faith**

April 2024

Spring Quarter

**April 27, 2024**

**Lesson #4 – Faith of a Canaanite**

SCRIPTURE TEXT – Matthew 15:21-28

**ICE BREAKERS-**

1. Why is it important that a believer continue bringing long-term, unanswered prayer requests before the Lord on a regular basis?
2. How can insensitivity be a self-destructive attitude?

***Key Verse: “Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.”—Matthew 15:28***

**LESSON BACKGROUND –**

The Gospel of Matthew does not explicitly identify its author. The early church, however, attributed authorship to Matthew, a tax collector who became one of the apostles (Matthew 9:9; 10:3). Other Gospels mention this person by his given name: Levi (Mark 2:14; Luke 5:27–28), named after one of the sons of Jacob (see Genesis 29:34; 35:23).

As a tax collector, Matthew worked with the foreign occupiers of Palestine: the Romans. During the first century AD, tax collectors (also known as *publicans*) were despised by their fellow countrymen (example: Luke 18:11). They were seen as traitors to the Jewish people because they assisted the Romans in taking tax money. They were also held in low regard because they frequently enriched themselves at the expense of others (example: 19:2, 8).

The only other information we have about this apostle is that he was the “son of Alphaeus” (Mark 2:14). The apostle James was also the “son of Alphaeus” (Matthew 10:3; Mark 3:18; Luke 6:15). These two may have been brothers, but none of the Gospels make that relationship apparent like they do with other sets of brothers (Matthew 4:21; 10:2; Mark 1:19).

Matthew’s Gospel contains the most quotations from the Old Testament of the four Gospels. The Gospel of Matthew has about 65 Old Testament quotes; Mark has about 30; Luke has about 26, and John has about 16. As such, students frequently call Matthew the “most Jewish” of the four Gospels. It is thought that Matthew intended his Gospel to be received by a primarily Jewish audience.

Although this Gospel emphasized the Jewish context of Jesus’s ministry (see Matthew 10:6; 15:24), its message reveals that the gospel of Jesus Christ was intended for both Jew and Gentile. Matthew is the only Gospel to record the visit of the Gentile wise men (2:1–12). It is also the only one to include Jesus’ commission to His disciples that they “teach all nations” (28:16–20).

The events leading to today's Scripture reveal the intended expansion of the gospel message. As Jesus' ministry in Galilee drew to a close, it became evident that His people would reject Him and His mission (see Matthew 13:53–58). His disciples displayed little faith regarding His identity (see 14:22–32). They also failed to understand His teaching (15:12–20). Even the religious leaders were offended by Jesus' message (15:1–9). The people most expected to accept Jesus and His mission failed to understand. Mark 7:24–30 is a parallel account of Matthew 15:21–28.

## **LESSON COMMENTARY**

**15:21.** This begins the third cycle of Matthew's "He withdrew, He helped, He was opposed" structure running through 16:28 (see the table at 13:53–58, "Parallel Cycles in Matthew 13:53–16:28"). **The district of Tyre and Sidon** provides an important geographical note. Both cities were on the Mediterranean coast, Tyre being about 30 miles northwest of Capernaum, Sidon about 25 miles north of Tyre, and both in the Roman province of Syria. **The district** suggests that Jesus may not have gone all the way to the cities, so that the farthest north He traveled may have been to the district of Caesarea Philippi (16:13).

### **2. Jesus Helped: By Assisting the Canaanite Woman and Feeding Many (15:22–39)**

**15:22–28.** The **Canaanite woman** (v. 22) makes an unlikely heroine, as Canaanites were the indigenous people almost displaced by the Hebrews and their perpetual enemies (Jos 3:10; Jdg 1:1). How she addressed Jesus, however, sounded very Jewish (see the plea of the blind men in Mt 9:27–28 and 20:30–31) and indicates well-rounded knowledge of His mission and power. Once again the disciples show how calloused they were (see 14:15), and Jesus seemed ready to dismiss her (**I was sent only to ... Israel**, vv. 23c–24). When she became more insistent (v. 25), He gave a further explanation in v. 26. The **children's bread** is probably a metaphor for the covenant blessings intended for the Jewish people, and **dogs** a reference to Gentiles as those outside of the covenant community of Israel. Her response in v. 27 indicated a surprising level of insight regarding the relationship of the Jewish people's covenant blessings and the benefits they provide for Gentiles (see Gn 12:3; Rm 11:17–18; Eph 2:11–22). The salvation-historical priority of Jesus was to reach the Jewish people, but as the Great Commission (Mt 28:18–20) indicates, even Gentiles benefit from the Jewish Messiah.<sup>1</sup>

**LESSON NUGGET – Persistent People** – Again, the disciples were wrong. Jesus seemed to ignore the woman, but He wanted only to increase her faith. His delays are not His denials. Jesus was ministering in gentile territory, and the people "glorified the God of Israel"

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**Sources: *Moody Bible Commentary, Standard Lesson Commentary, The Word for Today Bible, and The Essential Everyday Bible Commentary***