

Jesus Went to the Area of Tyre and Sidon

In our last topic, we saw that we want to prepare our physical and spiritual children for the fact that they may suffer persecution as they faithfully serve Christ. However, the Lord will give them strength so that they can rejoice even in persecution. In our topic today, we are going to see that Jesus took the disciples to the area of Tyre and Sidon.

Jesus spent most of His ministry time in the areas of Galilee and Judea. However, we see that Jesus left Galilee and went to the area of Tyre and Sidon which was a Gentile area. Matthew 15:21-23 says, “Then Jesus went out from there and departed to the region of Tyre and Sidon. 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.’ But He answered her not a word. And His disciples came and urged Him, saying, ‘Send her away, for she cries out after us’.” Here, we see that Jesus wanted to teach the disciples the need to reach out to the Gentiles. Jesus kept quiet so that the disciples could show their attitudes toward the Gentiles. Jesus also wanted to show that Gentiles could have great faith.

Tyre and Sidon are known by many people as the cities from which the Phoenicians sailed as they traded throughout the Mediterranean Sea. One of the women, that Jesus and the disciples met as they went to this area, was a woman of Canaan. This meant that she was a descendent of Canaan, the son of Ham. Noah had given a curse to the descendants of Canaan. Genesis 9:25-26 says, “Then he said: ‘Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants he shall be to his brethren.’ And he said: ‘Blessed be the LORD, the God of Shem, and may Canaan be his servant.’” In contrast, the Jews were descendants of Shem who had been given a blessing by Noah. However, Jesus wanted the disciples to understand that He had a great compassion and concern for people of all nations.

We read that the woman cried out to Jesus and asked Him to show mercy to her by healing her daughter who was severely demon-possessed. Jesus was usually quick to respond to those who asked for mercy; this time, He chose to be silent so that the disciples would reveal their attitudes. Finally, the disciples spoke to Jesus. However, they did not ask Jesus to show compassion to the woman. Instead, they told Jesus to send the woman away because she kept crying out for Jesus to show mercy and heal her daughter. Here, we see that the disciples had not yet learned to show compassion to the Gentiles. Jesus had to provide an example to them so that they could learn to reach out to people of all nations.

Jesus then spoke to the woman. Matthew 15:24-28 says, “But He answered and said, ‘I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.’ Then she came and worshiped Him, saying, ‘Lord, help me!’ But He answered and said, ‘It is not good to take the children’s bread and throw *it* to the little dogs.’ And she said, ‘Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters’ table.’ 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, we see

that Jesus chose to show the faith of the woman to the disciples in a rather unusual way.

Jesus just said to the woman, “I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” Ezekiel said in Ezekiel 34:2, ““Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy and say to them, “Thus says the Lord GOD to the shepherds: ‘Woe to the shepherds of Israel who feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flocks?’””” Then, Ezekiel 34:11-12 says, ““For thus says the Lord GOD: ‘Indeed I Myself will search for My sheep and seek them out. As a shepherd seeks out his flock on the day he is among his scattered sheep, so will I seek out My sheep and deliver them from all the places where they were scattered on a cloudy and dark day.’””” Jesus was obedient to the Father and was reaching out to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

However, Paul said in Romans 1:16, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.” Jesus did go to the Jews first, but He also came to this earth to pay the penalty for the sins of all people and provide salvation to all who would turn to Him in repentance and faith. This was the lesson that Jesus wanted to illustrate to the disciples that day. At that point, the woman came to Jesus and worshiped Him. She just said, “Lord, help me.” Then, Jesus made one more statement to the woman so that He could show the greatness of her faith to the disciples. He just said, “It is not good to take the children’s bread and throw *it* to the little dogs.” Jesus’ only recorded use of the word translated “little dogs” was with this woman as recorded here, and in Mark 7:27-28. It spoke of little dogs that were family pets; during meals, they would sit on the floor near the table where the family ate.

The family would then feed the small pieces of bread that the children did not finish to these small dogs. The fact that Jesus used this word made it much easier to show her great faith as she answered, “Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters’ table.” First, we see that it gave her the opportunity to again personally address Jesus as Lord. However, it also gave her the opportunity to use the same word for little dogs and state that they received the crumbs from the table of their master. In this way, she was saying that she recognized Jesus as her Master. This was the opportunity for Jesus to point out the greatness of her faith to the disciples.

Here, we see that Jesus honored her great faith by saying, “O woman, great *is* your faith! Let it be to you as you desire.” By this statement, Jesus showed the disciples that Gentiles could have great faith. We also see that Jesus added other words to the woman. Mark 7:28-30 says, “And she answered and said to Him, ‘Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs under the table eat from the children’s crumbs.’ Then He said to her, ‘For this saying go your way; the demon has gone out of your daughter.’ And when she had come to her house, she found the demon gone out, and her daughter lying on the bed.” In addition to honoring the great faith of the woman, Jesus also granted the request of the woman. Jesus cast the demon out of her daughter just by speaking the word. The woman also showed her faith by going home because it showed that she had faith that her daughter was set free from the demon. She found her daughter was freed just exactly as Jesus had promised to her.

Once Jesus had shown the disciples that Gentiles could have great faith, He and the disciples

returned to the area east of the Sea of Galilee. Matthew 15:29-31 says, “Jesus departed from there, skirted the Sea of Galilee, and went up on the mountain and sat down there. Then great multitudes came to Him, having with them *the* lame, blind, mute, maimed, and many others; and they laid them down at Jesus’ feet, and He healed them. So the multitude marveled when they saw *the* mute speaking, *the* maimed made whole, *the* lame walking, and *the* blind seeing; and they glorified the God of Israel.” We see the way that Jesus traveled from the region of Tyre and Sidon as He returned toward Galilee. Mark 7:31 says, “Again, departing from the region of Tyre and Sidon, He came through the midst of the region of Decapolis to the Sea of Galilee.” The word “Decapolis” means *ten cities*. These cities were mostly on the east side of the Jordan River and were primarily Greek cities that had been established during the time of the Greek Empire.

As Jesus traveled through this area, we see that He went up the mountain. Mt. Hermon is located east and a little north of the city of Tyre, so this is probably the mountain to which this refers. We see that large crowds came to see Jesus and brought many people with physical needs with them because they wanted Jesus to heal them. These included many physical needs that doctors were not able to help. Since most of the people living in this area were Gentiles, this probably included many Gentiles, as well as Jews. Jesus healed all who were brought to Him.

The people were amazed when they saw Jesus heal these people because they knew that no doctor could help many of the people who were brought to Jesus. People who had not been able to talk (mute) were suddenly able to talk. The word translated “maimed” means *crooked* and spoke of those who had arms, legs or other parts of the body that were disabled because of injuries or birth defects. Jesus healed all of those who come to Him with this type of physical disability or injury so that they were completely healed. Some of those that had been brought to Jesus were lame and unable to walk. Jesus healed them as well so that they were healed and could now walk normally. There were also people who were blind and Jesus gave them physical sight. Earlier in Matthew 8:16-17, we read, “When evening had come, they brought to Him many who were demon-possessed. And He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were sick, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying: ‘He Himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses.’” In that passage, we see that Jesus healed those who were demon-possessed. In this passage, we see that Jesus healed all those who came with physical disabilities.

The multitudes were filled with amazement as they saw Jesus heal all of these physical disabilities. They were forced to realize that Jesus came from God because these were disabilities which could not be healed by any human person. This caused the people to give glory to God. We also want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain that Jesus did the things that were impossible for any human being, so that they can help others come to understand that Jesus is God. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain that Jesus is truly God.