

The Life and Ministry of Christ, Part 21

After being rejected by many of His disciples, Jesus left the land of Gennesaret and entered the region of Tyre and Sidon, two prominent Phoenician cities on the Mediterranean. They were located on the costal plain of Lebanon. During King Ahab's reign, Tyre introduced Baal worship to Israel, which was later combated by Elijah. Its history was profoundly influenced by the practice of the Canaanite worship of Baal and Asherah. Both of these involved ritualistic prostitution, human sacrifice and ultimately the worship of Satan.

A Syro-Phoenician's Daughter Healed - Matthew 15:21-28; Mark 7:25-30

Mark calls the woman a Syro-Phoenician and Matthew calls her a Canaanite. Both designations indicate a Gentile background that was opposed to the true worship of God. Her nationality is significant because it shows Jesus reaching outside Israel to heal and deliver from Satan's power.

Matthew 15:21-22 NKJV 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."

Satan does not just attack God's people. This woman was not an Israelite. Notice how Jesus and His disciples responded.

Matthew 15:23-24 NKJV But He answered her not a word. And His disciples came and urged Him, saying, "Send her away, for she cries out after us." But He answered and said, "I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

When Jesus did not answer her, in desperation she turned to His disciples and cried after them. Somehow, she knows that she has found the fountain of life. She knows that Jesus can help her.

Matthew 15:25-26 NKJV 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."

Why does Jesus keep saying this? He told her, "*I was only sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.*" That statement excluded her and every Gentile from receiving anything from the Lord. Although His statement precluded her from His help, she persisted in faith to beg for His help.

Matthew 15:27-28 NKJV 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.

The bait of Satan is to cause us to be offended. Offense toward the Lord has hindered many from receiving God's best. Satan uses offense to build a wedge that prohibits receiving what the Lord can do. This woman refused to be offended. Somehow she knew that there was relief, healing and deliverance in no one but Jesus. Once again, Jesus' actions demonstrated the power of great faith. As a result of her faith in Jesus, her daughter was immediately healed.

In Decapolis a Deaf and Mute Man Healed - Mark 7:31-37

Mark 7:31-32 NKJV Again, departing from the region of Tyre and Sidon, He came through the midst of the region of Decapolis to the Sea of Galilee. Then they brought to Him one who was deaf and had an impediment in his speech, and they begged Him to put His hand on him.

This man from Decapolis was another Gentile and not of the lineage of Abraham. When ministering to the woman's daughter earlier in this chapter, Jesus said, "I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Now once again He is presented with a man who was deaf and had a speech impediment. Those who brought the man had faith that if Jesus touched him, he would be healed.

Mark 7:33-34 NKJV And He took him aside from the multitude, and put His fingers in his ears, and He spat and touched his tongue. Then, looking up to heaven, He sighed, and said to him, "Ephphatha," that is, "Be opened."

Jesus took him aside privately and did something very unusual, He put His fingers in his ears, and He spat and touched his tongue. In Mark 8:23, Jesus spat on the ground and made mud and put it in the eyes of the blind man. This spitting and the Lord's sighing seem to be connected to His distaste for what happened to this man. Jesus looked up to heaven and then Jesus looked at the man and sighed. Sighing seems to be an expression of exasperation similar to the human response He had when He groaned when He saw Mary weeping after Lazarus' death. This human response shows the emotion that Jesus carried over the suffering and intense needs of others. Then He spoke to the man in Aramaic, "*Ephphatha*," that is, "*Be opened*."

Mark 7:35 NKJV Immediately his ears were opened, and the impediment of his tongue was loosed, and he spoke plainly.

When considering this event, it is very possible that when Jesus looked toward heaven and sighed, He was considering the time when every sickness, disease and suffering will be dealt with.

Isaiah 35:5-6 NKJV Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, And the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then the lame shall leap like a deer, And the tongue of the dumb sing. For waters shall burst forth in the wilderness, And streams in the desert.

Mark 7:36-37 NKJV Then He commanded them that they should tell no one; but the more He commanded them, the more widely they proclaimed *it*. And they were astonished beyond measure, saying, “He has done all things well. He makes both the deaf to hear and the mute to speak.”

Jesus frequently told people not to disclose certain information about Him or what happened. In this case, Jesus did this miracle in private away from the multitude. At another time, He cast out demons and did not allow them to disclose Who He was. He told lepers, blind men, and others to be silent about their healing. He even refused to explain His own actions or mission. We are not told why the Lord charged everyone to keep the miracle to themselves. This seems to be a lesson in humility. Jesus was not seeking the applause or praise of men. His miracles were done to release captives, heal the sick and save the lost. As we have seen already the multitudes of people that came to Jesus for miracles and healing continued to increase. As we just witnessed, another large number of people came and Jesus had compassion on them.

Many Miracles and Four Thousand Fed - Matthew 15:29-31; Mark 8:1-9

The scene is similar to what happened when the five thousand were fed.

Matthew 15:29–30 NKJV 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.

Matthew 15:31 NKJV 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.

Jesus came to a mountain that was near the sea of Galilee. Mount Hermon has an elevation of 9,232 feet. They may have been on the lower slopes of Mount Hermon, north of the Sea of Galilee.

Matthew 15:32 NKJV Now Jesus called His disciples to *Himself* and said,

“I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now continued with Me three days and have nothing to eat. And I do not want to send them away hungry, lest they faint on the way.”

Because the people were finding answers to their needs through healing and Christ’s words, they stayed with Him, even though they were getting hungry and weak because they didn’t have enough food. Again, it is important to remember that it was not many days prior to this when Jesus fed the multitude with 5 loaves and 2 fish. Watch how they responded to Jesus’ statement.

Matthew 15:33 NKJV Then His disciples said to Him, “Where could we get enough bread in the wilderness to fill such a great multitude?”

Why did they say that? Did they not remember the five thousand and the five loaves and two fish?

Matthew 15:34 NKJV Jesus said to them, “How many loaves do you have?” And they said, “Seven, and a few little fish.”

Once again, the supply was too small for the multitude that was hungry. There is a spiritual message behind what Jesus is doing by feeding the multitude. Remember in the previous lessons Jesus said, “I am the bread that came down from heaven.” It is important for us to remember that Jesus is always enough for every situation.

Matthew 15:35–36 NKJV So He commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground. And He took the seven loaves and the fish and gave thanks, broke *them* and gave *them* to His disciples; and the disciples gave to the multitude.

The original language indicates that Jesus broke the bread and kept on giving the bread to His disciples. The miracle took place in the hands of the Lord. He continued doing the same thing with the fish. In your situation, Jesus is always able to supply regardless of how great the deficit or impossibility.

Matthew 15:37-38 NKJV So they all ate and were filled, and they took up seven large baskets full of the fragments that were left. Now those who ate were four thousand men, besides women and children.

The Sign-Seekers Rebuked - Matthew 16:1-4; Mark 8:11-12

The Pharisees and Sadducees came to Jesus in Dalmanutha (Dal-mah-noo-thah). This is probably near the western shore of the Sea of Galilee.

Matthew 16:1 NKJV Then the Pharisees and Sadducees came, and testing Him asked that He would show them a sign from heaven.

Listen to Jesus response.

Mark 8:12 NKJV But He sighed deeply in His spirit, and said, “Why does this generation seek a sign? Assuredly, I say to you, no sign shall be given to this generation.”

This is the same kind of human response Jesus had just before he healed the mute and deaf man. After everything they had seen they still did not believe, but asked for a sign from heaven.

Matthew 16:2–3 NKJV He answered and said to them, “When it is evening you say, ‘*It will be fair weather, for the sky is red*’; and in the morning, ‘*It will be foul weather today, for the sky is red and threatening.*’ Hypocrites! You know how to discern the face of the sky, but you cannot *discern* the signs of the times.

Matthew 16:4 NKJV A wicked and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign shall be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.” And He left them and departed.

The sign of the prophet Jonah is the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the grave. His resurrection offers irrefutable proof that Jesus is the Son of the Living God.

Leaven of Pharisees and Sadducees - Matthew 16:5-12; Mark 8:13-21

Matthew 16:5–6 NKJV Now when His disciples had come to the other side, they had forgotten to take bread. Then Jesus said to them, “Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees.”

Mark said they did not have more than one loaf of bread in the boat. Do you find it amazing that they were constantly thinking about food and their physical needs? Jesus was disappointed in their faith. All they could think about was their immediate physical need and not having enough bread.

Mark 8:19-20 NKJV When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of fragments did you take up?” They said to Him, “Twelve.” “Also, when I broke the seven for the four thousand, how many large baskets full of fragments did you take up?” And they said, “Seven.”

When Jesus told them to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees, they thought about food. What was Jesus talking about?

Matthew 16:11-12 NKJV How is it you do not understand that I did not speak to you concerning bread?—but to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.” Then they understood that He did not tell them to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

These groups had just challenged Jesus again to show them some sign. They were so blinded by their traditions and unbelief that they could not see that the Messiah of God was in their midst. They did not recognize that Jesus was the Son of God.

Why did His disciples have so much trouble understanding what He was talking about?

Why did Jesus do all of these miracles?