

Stage IV. The Great Galilean Ministry

J. Jesus Withdraws to the Gentile Regions Surrounding Galilee

The DAILY JESUS NEWS #121

1. Miracle #21: Jesus Responds to the 'Great Faith' of a Gentile Woman in Tyre MK 7.24-30 (Parallel Text: MT 15.21-28)

24 ^MJesus left that place and went to the vicinity of Tyre. He entered a house and did not want anyone to know it; yet he could not keep his presence secret. 25 In fact, as soon as ^{MT}a Cannanite woman of that region ^Mwhose little daughter was possessed by an impure spirit heard about him, she came and fell at his feet. ^{MT}She cried out to Jesus, saying:

"Have mercy upon me, Lord, Son of David. My daughter is horribly troubled by a demon."

25 ^MThe woman was a Greek, born in Syrian Phoenicia. She kept on begging Jesus to drive the demon out of her daughter. ^{MT}But Jesus did not answer her with a single word; and his disciples came and entreated him, saying, "Please dismiss her, for she is crying out after us.

26 Jesus answered: *"I was sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."*

Kneeling down before him, the woman said, "Lord, please help me."

27 Jesus answered her, ^M*"First let the children eat all they want, for it is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to the dogs."*

28 "Lord," she replied, "even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs ^{MT}that fall down."

29 ^MThen Jesus answered her, ^{MT}*"O woman, your faith is great! I command that it be done for you as you will. ^MBecause of this reply, you may go; the demon has left your daughter."*

30 ^{MT}So her daughter was healed from that hour. ^MShe went home and found her child lying on the bed, and the demon was gone.

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NOTE: We use superscript identification of the source gospel in "blended texts" as follows: Matthew = ^{MT}, Mark = ^M, Luke = ^L, John = ^J, Acts = ^A. This "superscript ID" is inserted at the beginning of the quoted text, identifying that Bible book until a different superscript appears. In addition, **the words of Jesus are italicized in red**. Old Testament quotations are CAPITALIZED.

	CONTEXT DIGEST
Location	Tyre, in the Region of Phoenicia, North of Galilee
Timeline	April (Month 26)
Jesus' Life Context	Stage IV: The Great Galilean Ministry
	J. Jesus Withdraws to the Gentile Regions Surrounding Galilee
Title	I. Miracle #21: Jesus Responds to the 'Great Faith' of a Gentile Woman in Tyre

COMMENT:

Today's reading marks another major transition in Jesus' ministry. Over two years had passed since Jesus began his public ministry. He concentrated his work in the Judean region for the first six months. Then he moved his focus up to Galilee, where he had ministered for another eighteen months. There he called and appointed the

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twelve apostles, and gathered a larger following of several hundred committed disciples who had remained devoted to him when many others had defected. The Pharisees had utterly rejected him in every way they could. Even the common people were being affected by the attitude of the Pharisees.

The final year of Jesus' ministry would be characterized by increasing opposition, culminating in the ultimate rejection of his Messiahship with his crucifixion in Jerusalem. He therefore focused the next six months of his ministry doing two things.

(1) Jesus withdrew from Galilee, and spent the majority of his time in the Gentile regions to the North and East. He had wiped the dust of Galilee off his feet. It was time to move on.

Some of the most famous and important events in his ministry occurred in these Gentile regions. These lands were originally promised to Abraham by God, and became Jewish territory when five of the Twelve Tribes settled in them under Joshua. It was mighty King David that brought them firmly under unified control some 400 years after Joshua, in about 1000 BC.

When the Kingdom was divided under King Jereboam in 920 BC, these regions became part of "Israel," or the Northern Kingdom. That Kingdom was destroyed by the Assyrians in 720 BC, though some people of Israelite descent remained living in the area. So, when Jesus withdrew to these regions he was in long-term Gentile territory, yet with a spiritual history that had once included a covenant relationship with God.

(2) During this season of withdrawal from Galilee, Jesus had much time to spend teaching and training the disciples. We will see that most of the events and teachings of Jesus in this period were crucial for discipleship, including foundational instruction about his cross, the Church, prayer, and servant-leadership. Jesus placed his highest priority on training the twelve during this season of withdrawal.

The gospels only record thirteen events over this roughly six month "withdrawal" period covering April through September, but they are highly significant. Our reading for today, which describes Jesus' 21st miracle, highlights one of just two times in Jesus' ministry that he praised a person for having "great faith" in him. Both were Gentiles.

The first was the Roman Centurion (DJN #78, LK 7.1-10), and the second was this Syro-Phoenician woman of Greek lineage. They make quite a contrast. He was wealthy, she was poor. He was a God-seeker, participating faithfully in synagogue worship, and even making a huge financial contribution to its construction. She apparently had no background in true worship, or the Scriptures. There is no partiality with God. As Jesus promised, ALL are welcome with him according to his grace, regardless of our background.

There are three things in common between these two people of "great faith."

(1) They both came to Jesus in desperation, because of a heart-breaking need. They were sincerely and highly motivated, for the lives of their children were hanging in the balance. Particularly the woman in this reading would not take "no" as an answer from Jesus. He loved her great faith, and delighted to draw it out of her so that his disciples, including us, could see a vivid example of what trusting him really means.

(2) They both believed in Jesus' grace to give them what they did not deserve in themselves. See where the woman in today's text expressed her faith in Jesus' grace.

(3) They believed in Jesus' power and authority. All he had to do was say the word, and their request would be granted. See where the woman expressed this faith in the text.

It is no accident that Jesus healed both of their children at a distance, merely by speaking the word. Believing in his absolute authority, and therefore his word, in spite of the circumstances, is the essence of great faith...according to Jesus.

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APPLICATION:

In healing this woman's daughter, Jesus repeated his pronouncement: **"I command that it be done to you according to your faith."** It is the only time in Jesus' ministry that he cast out a demon from a distance, with just a word. What a lesson this is for all of us!

This woman was utterly incapable of dealing with her daughter's demon on her own. The situation was seemingly impossible. Yet, she believed that Jesus could and would grant healing to her daughter if she persisted in asking. Jesus tested her faith. Her refusal to give up won his heart and delighted him. That is the kind of faith we need, too. We have so much more knowledge of Jesus and his commands and promises than she did, to strengthen and guide our faith.

Faith persists in believing in God's power to work in us, regardless of the circumstances.

In what aspect of your faith do you need to redouble your persistence in seeking him today?