

**File No. 126**

**MATTHEW 15:21–28**

Mark 7:24–30

**A GENTILE MOTHER COMES TO JESUS**

(SBS Bk 5 Story No. 5)

*Story Notes*

The freedom and power of Christ's miracles were in stark contrast with the stunted lives of the Pharisees whose religion paraded faithfulness but who treated God's word with contempt.

Jesus showed the disciples that true cleansing would have to deal with all evil. He had not come to improve on Judaism. Nothing Israel (or the disciples) did would improve their situation. They would have to have a cleansed heart. Surely, the effect of this would be to direct their minds to Christ all the more. How would such a thing occur? Only Christ could lead them into this.

A Canaanite woman showed the true characteristic of a person who would receive the favour of God. The word 'Canaanite' is used only here by Matthew, and perhaps deliberately, to show that those on whom a curse had been pronounced (Gen. 9:25; Isa. 23:11) were now more ready to receive the blessing of God than was Israel.

Jesus acted surprisingly towards the Canaanite woman in two ways. He did not respond to her urgent plea. His purpose was not to reveal human compassion but to do his Father's will and he had been sent only to Israel's children. The gospel would not be ready to take to all nations until he had died and risen. Then, he did respond to her logic of faith: "if we are dogs, may not our helpless young gather crumbs from the family table?" Jesus now knew that he should heal this woman. She would have a foretaste of the grace of the gospel that would go to all nations.

No insult need be implied in the reply of Jesus. He used standard terms of reference for their time. Certainly, the woman took no offence.

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