

Gospel of Mark 14 – Chapter 7, verses 24 – 37; A Gentile comes to Jesus:-

In the Gospel of Mark we move on from the mission in Galilee to an encounter in foreign territory with a Gentile. The “territory of Tyre” in the Gospel of Mark. The addition of Sidon is not in the best ancient texts of Mark but does figure in Matthew’s version of the same story – Matthew chapter 15, verses 21 – 28. The territory of Tyre was the southern part of the Roman Province of Syro-Phoenicia and had once been part of the Northern State of Israel. At the time of the Lord Jesus it was still mainly inhabited by descendants of the Northern Israelite tribes; “the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matthew chapter 15, verse 24).

The healing of the deaf and dumb man in Decapolis was also in a region of Greek organisation and culture – another healing among the Gentiles.

Verses 24 – 26; The Woman and her Request:- We need to look to Matthew’s Gospel to find that the disciples were with the Lord Jesus when he “*withdrew*” (literal translation) to the region of Tyre. He tried to avoid publicity but as usual the local population heard about it and this Greek woman came seeking his help. She would be regarded as ‘unclean’ by the Jews and had no apparent claim on the Lord Jesus Christ as the Jewish Messiah. By falling down at his feet she was in effect worshipping him. Her request in the Gospel of Matthew begins with the Greek word “*Kurios*”, the usual translation being “Lord”, (Matthew 15, verse 25).

Verses 27 – 30; The Reply and its Implications:- The Lord Jesus used the term “*children*” to represent the Jews. His mission was first to the Jews in order that they might, in turn, fulfil their duty of becoming a blessing to all nations. (see Genesis chapter 12, verses 1 – 3; Exodus chapter 19, verses 5 – 6; compare Romans chapter 9, verse 1 – 5). As we noticed last week, in the early Church there was a question over the inclusion of the Gentiles in the preaching ministry of the Apostles. The example of Paul is clear – he first preached in the synagogues and only when rejected did he turn to the Gentiles:- Acts chapter 13, verses 44 – 48 and Romans chapter 1, verse 16. Referring to the Gentiles as “*dogs*” may have been as controversial then as it is now! The word used by the Lord Jesus is slightly less offensive as it literally means “*little dogs*”. House pets, under the table picking up the scraps that fall (or are dropped deliberately!!). The woman immediately picks up the idea and suggests that there may be a scrap for her and her child! Note the use again of the word “*Lord*”; a recognition of the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ. The woman’s faith was rewarded and her daughter healed. Note that this was a ‘healing at a distance’. Compare with John chapter 4, verses 46 – 53.

Verses 31 – 37; Another visit to Decapolis and the Healing of the Deaf and Dumb Man:- Mark is the most explicit of the Gospel writers at this point. He tells us that the Lord Jesus left the region of Tyre and passed through Sidon approximately twenty five miles to the north, going deep into Gentile territory. Then turning south he passed along the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee into the region of Decapolis – another area of Gentile influence. Among the many who were brought to the Lord Jesus for healing (Matthew chapter 15, verses 30 – 31) was this example, the man who was deaf and had a speech impediment. Maybe not totally dumb but certainly very handicapped (Mark 7 v. 37). In these symbolic acts the Lord Jesus is showing the man – remember he was deaf – what he was going to do for him. At his word the man was healed! Again the Lord Jesus did not want publicity but it was inevitable following these dramatic healings.

Lord, I was blind! I could not see
In Thy marred visage any grace;
But now the beauty of Thy face
In radiant vision dawns on me.

Lord, I was dumb! I could not speak
The grace and glory of Thy name;
But now, as touched with living flame,
My lips Thine eager praises wake.

Lord, I was deaf! I could not hear
The thrilling music of Thy voice;
But now I hear Thee and rejoice,
And sweet are all Thy words and dear.

For Thou hast made the blind to see,
The deaf to hear, the dumb to speak,
The dead to live; and lo! I break
The chains of my captivity.

William Tidd Matson 1833 - 1899