

Episode #819 Matthew 15 Part 3-A Sheep or a Dog

I. The purpose of the gospel of Matthew is to present Jesus as the Christ, the King of Israel. It is another grand treatise like John to prove to Israel Who Jesus really is. It is the book of being “in Israel,” in contrast to believers today who are “in Christ.”

II. When a Gentile, Canaanite woman asked the Lord for healing for her daughter, He refused to answer her a word. When His disciples asked Him to give her a word and send her away, one way or the other, because she was bugging them, He revealed the truth: He was not sent but to the perishing sheep of the house of Israel.

III. The Sheep and the Dogs. Matthew 15:21-28.

A. Verse 24. His answer to His disciples.

1. This was still a statement to His disciples, not to her, so she could not have faith in this word. She needed a personal word to her before she could have faith, Romans 10:17.
2. Sent is *apostello*, commissioned with authority. The Lord would not act outside of the authority He had been given, and thus is an example to us. There are plenty of people today who try to act for God out of authority never given to them. They need to learn a lesson from the Lord.
3. Lost is *apollumi*, the perishing sheep. He had come to rescue them!
4. “House of Israel” occurs many times in the Old Testament, but only twice in the New Testament in the words of the Lord in Matthew; here, and in Matthew 10:5-6, when instructing the twelve before sending them out.
5. There are many who reject and refuse to believe the Lord’s words here. They wish to believe that He was sent for all. His death was for all and salvation today is for all, yet His ministry was particularly for Israel. See Romans 15:8.
6. In the gospels, the Gentiles did not even have the subservient place they received in the Acts period. This started with Cornelius in Acts chapter 10, and then was advanced by Paul in chapter 13. Yet even then it was a subservient place, as Paul makes clear in Romans 11:17-18. Ephesians 3:6 makes all nations joint and equal before God. Yet many want the equality of nations to extend back to the Lord’s ministry!
7. Some have come up with the ludicrous idea that the Lord was doing this just because some of His enemies were there, and He wanted to act like them at first in order to show later that He was not in fact like them (when He did heal the woman’s daughter) and to mock their attitude.
 - a. This idea is pulled out of thin air, as there are no enemies in the context, either that any were present, or that the Lord refers to.
 - b. If we are allowed to just imagine enemies out of thin air and dismiss positive statements of Scripture because of them, then why not dismiss Ephesians 2:8, that Paul was just mocking the words and actions of his enemies and did not mean this at all? Didn’t James say the opposite in James 2:14, 17? Surely Paul didn’t mean it!
 - c. What passage in Scripture is safe if we can just imagine enemies the writer is mocking so he didn’t mean it? Such shoddy workmanship is clear cause for shame (II Timothy 2:15).

- B. Verse 25. She worshiped Him, *proskuneo*, which we insist has religious significance. She says “Lord,” not “Son of David” here, if that makes any difference.
- C. Verse 26. Here at last was a word to her she could believe! His miracles were for God’s children Israel, His chosen people. She was a dog, but the Greek for “dog” is *kuon*, yet here it is *kunarion*, a little dog or a puppy. This was a hard word, but it was a word from God. How many today would believe God if He called them dogs?
- D. Verse 27. The woman’s response.
 - 1. These are clear words of agreement, yet some translations have altered this, making her disagree with Him! The Living Bible & the latest NIV read, “Yes, it is!” Turns the woman’s statement from faith (taking God at His Word and responding accordingly) to denial and lack of faith. Then the Lord praises her for faith for telling Him He is wrong! The translators of these versions did not understand faith. The same as Eve: thinking you caught God out in an untruth.
 - 2. “Yet” is “for,” meaning that He is right, but there is another fact to consider.
 - 3. She uses the word “puppies” again. They considered dogs as mangy, unclean, scavenging creature. Yet children would take the little puppies into the homes to play with them. They would always be cast out when grown, however. The puppies would eat from that which dropped from the table. The woman takes the dog’s place and requests the dog’s portion. She does not ask for the children’s bread, but the crumbs. If she had disagreed with Him (Living Bible and NIV), she would have said it is fitting to throw the children’s bread to dogs. She had far more faith than these translators.
 - 4. “Master’s” is the same word as “Lord” earlier. She acknowledges Him.
- E. Verse 28. Why was her faith great? Not because she came to the Lord, for many did this. Not because He didn’t mean what He said and she realized it. Not because she disagreed with the Lord and changed His mind! Because she took the Lord at His word and responded accordingly. Some will never have the Lord as their Savior because He calls them sinners and yet they will not take the sinners’ place. We would say “right that second” or “that very minute” she was healed, but they did not count time nearly so closely as that, “that hour” being close enough in their minds.

IV. Conclusion: The Lord’s mission in the gospels was not to all nations, but only to the children of Israel. This Canaanite woman received what she asked for, not because she asked the Lord for it, but because when she finally received a word from God, she responded accordingly and believed it. This is the reality of faith, and this is the kind of belief we all ought to have in everything God has said.