

# Encounters with Christ

Week 4 — The Canaanite Woman — Matthew 15:21-28; Mark 7:24-30

## Prepare...

As you begin, take a moment to pray and focus on the Lord as you come into his presence and study his word.

*<sup>35</sup>As Jesus approached Jericho, a blind beggar was sitting beside the road. <sup>36</sup>When he heard the noise of a crowd going past, he asked what was happening. <sup>37</sup>They told him that Jesus the Nazarene was going by. <sup>38</sup>So he began shouting, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" <sup>39</sup>"Be quiet!" the people in front yelled at him. But he only shouted louder, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" <sup>40</sup>When Jesus heard him, he stopped and ordered that the man be brought to him. As the man came near, Jesus asked him, <sup>41</sup>"What do you want me to do for you?" "Lord," he said, "I want to see!" Luke 18:35-41*

*Open my eyes, Lord I want to see Jesus.  
To reach out and touch Him. To show Him I love Him.  
Open my ears, Lord And help me to listen.  
Open my eyes, Lord I want to see Jesus.*  
—Robert Cull

**Begin...** by familiarizing yourself with the text. Read the passage two times.

Answer the questions: Who? What? When? Where? Why? How?

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Record in detail what you learn about the Canannite woman.

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Record any other questions or thoughts you have about the text. Are there parts you don't understand? What spoke to you the most?

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## Memory Verse for the Week...

*<sup>6</sup>Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. <sup>7</sup>Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:6-7*

## Jewish Messiah

Theologically, Jesus was sent to the Jews with the intent that the nation of Israel would accept the Messiah, receive the Spirit and evangelize/minister to the whole world.

Jesus' ministry was almost exclusively to the Jews—the Canaanite woman and the Roman Centurion are two rare exceptions.

Ironically, many Jews would lose God's blessing and salvation because they rejected Jesus, and many Gentiles would find salvation because they recognized and accepted him.

### Matthew 8:10-12

<sup>10</sup>"...I tell you the truth, I haven't seen faith like this in all Israel! <sup>11</sup>And I tell you this, that **many Gentiles will come from all over the world—from east and west—and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob at the feast in the Kingdom of Heaven.**

<sup>12</sup>But many Israelites—those for whom the Kingdom was prepared—will be thrown into outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

### A dog?

The word *dog* was a term the Jews commonly applied to Gentiles (non Jews) because the Jews considered pagan people no more likely than dogs to receive God's blessing. The form of the word *dog* is diminutive—it was referring to a household pet.

Jesus was not degrading the woman by using the term, he was reflecting the Jews' attitude so as to contrast it with his own. The woman did not argue. Instead, using Jesus' choice of words, she agreed to be considered a dog as long as she could receive God's blessing for her daughter.

### What was Jesus thinking?

#### Isaiah 55:8-9

<sup>8</sup>"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD. <sup>9</sup>"As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts."

#### Romans 11:33-34

<sup>33</sup>Oh, how great are God's riches and wisdom and knowledge! How impossible it is for us to understand his decisions and his ways! <sup>34</sup>For who can know the Lord's thoughts? Who knows enough to give him advice?

## Let's take a closer look...

1. This woman was a gentile (a person who is not Jewish)—a descendant of Israel's bitter enemies the Canaanites with no claim on the God of the covenant. But how does she approach and address Jesus? What does this say about her?

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2. In Matthew's account (Matt. 15:21-28). Jesus responded to this woman in four different ways. Note the **first THREE of Jesus' responses.**

vs. 23 \_\_\_\_\_

vs. 24 \_\_\_\_\_

vs. 26 \_\_\_\_\_

3. How would you have reacted to these responses?

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4. Jesus ministry was almost exclusively to the Jews. This Canaanite woman and the Roman Centurion—both gentiles—are two exceptions. Read the account of the Centurion in Matthew 8:5-13. How does Jesus' response to him differ from his response to the Canaanite woman? (Matt. 8:7)

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5. Jesus never wasted words or missed an opportunity to teach a lesson or make a point. Chronologically, Jesus' encounter with the Canaanite woman happened after his encounter with the Centurion. Who was with Jesus at the time of these encounters? What might Jesus have been trying to teach them?

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6. This Canaanite woman was desperate. She took a risk and sought out Jesus, but seemed to be met with a number of obstacles—Jesus' silence, the disciples' response, seemingly unkind words from Jesus. How did she respond to each of these obstacles:

a. Jesus silence (implied in vs. 23) \_\_\_\_\_

b. Jesus 1st comment \_\_\_\_\_

c. Jesus 2nd comment \_\_\_\_\_

7. What do these responses say about her?

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8. What was Jesus fourth response to the woman? (Matt. 15:28; Mark 7:29)

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9. In Matthew's account, Jesus says to the woman "your faith is great." (He also said this to the Roman Centurion!) Let's look at this woman's faith in contrast to Peter's in Matthew 14:27-32—an incident which happened prior to this encounter. Peter was probably with Jesus when he talked with the Canaanite woman.

What did Peter say to Jesus in vs. 28? \_\_\_\_\_

What obstacle did Peter meet with and what was his response? (vs. 30)

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What was Jesus' response to Peter? (vs. 31) \_\_\_\_\_

After Peter and Jesus climbed back into the boat and the wind stopped, the disciple's worshipped Jesus saying "You are really the Son of God." These disciples had been with Jesus for some time. Yet it took incidents like this for them to really grasp who Jesus was. In contrast, at what point in her encounter with Jesus did the Canaanite woman:

- a. recognize who Jesus was? \_\_\_\_\_
- b. worship him? \_\_\_\_\_

8. How did Jesus reward the Canaanite woman's faith?

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9. The Canaanite woman approached Jesus with great faith. Do you approach Jesus with great faith? Or do you, like Peter say, "If it is you..."

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10. Like the Canaanite woman, sometimes when we approach God, it seems we are met with silence. Even King David, a man after God's own heart, wrestled with God's silence. How did David respond to God's silence? (See Psalm 13:1-6 in sidebar.)

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11. How should we respond to God's silence?

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12. Do you, like the Canaanite woman and Peter, run into obstacles to your faith. What do you do with those obstacles? Do you persevere in prayer and faith, like the Canaanite woman? Or do you, like Peter, begin to sink when the water's get rough?

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13. What does James say about these obstacles? (See sidebar.)

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## What's the holdup?

### Psalm 13:1-6

<sup>1</sup>How long, O LORD ? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? <sup>2</sup>How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and every day have sorrow in my heart? How long will my enemy triumph over me? <sup>3</sup>Look on me and answer, O LORD my God. Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep in death; <sup>4</sup>my enemy will say, "I have overcome him," and my foes will rejoice when I fall. <sup>5</sup>But I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation. <sup>6</sup>I will sing to the LORD, for he has been good to me.

### James 1:2-4

<sup>2</sup>Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, <sup>3</sup>because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. <sup>4</sup>Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

## Personal Application

*Faith does not operate in the realm of the possible. There is no glory for God in that which is humanly possible. Faith begins where man's power ends.* George Müller