

THESIS ABSTRACT

Masters of Arts in Biblical and Theological Studies

Adventist University of Africa

Theological Seminary

Title: A NARRATIVE ANALYSIS OF MATTHEW 15:21-28 AND ITS
MISSIONAL IMPLICATIONS FOR CONTEMPORARY CHRISTIAN
MISSION

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Scholars are of different opinions on the issue of how the woman in Matthew 15:21-28 was treated by Jesus. Some say the responses of Jesus were negative while others argue they were positive. In view of the divergent interpretation of the story of the Canaanite woman in this passage by scholars, this thesis sought to study the passage. In this undertaking a narrative analysis of Matthew 15:21-28 and its missional implications was carried out. The narrative analysis, which aligned with the Historical-Grammatical Method of Biblical interpretation, focused on rhetorical figures like inclusions, chiasms, parallelisms, repetition of keywords, settings, characterization, point of view, and plot development was undertaken to achieve the goal.

After careful analysis of Matthew 15:21-28, the study ascertained that the responses of Jesus which were seen as negative were positive. This clarified that the mission of Jesus was not selective. It included even the Gentiles. This decision was informed by the fact that Jesus never chased away the woman as was requested by his disciples. He finally applauded the faith of the woman.

This study ascertained that the responses of Jesus were positive and needed the woman to show her faith in Jesus. It explored the mission of Jesus to the Gentiles. The study further contributed to the proper understanding that the mission of Jesus included the Gentiles and drew implications for guidelines for cross-cultural ministry.

The Seventh-day Adventist church in Zimbabwe needs to admit that the mission of Jesus included the Gentiles so it must include even those who seem to be excluded by gender, cultural, social, political, or religious boundaries. Intentionally the mission has to target those who seem to be excluded and the policies and attitudes that suggest exclusion should also be examined and discontinued.

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IMPLICATIONS FOR CONTEMPORARY
CHRISTIAN MINISTRY

A thesis

presented in partial fulfillment

of the requirement for the degree

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by

Nduna Mpofu

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I would like to dedicate this thesis to Sikhupukile Mpofu (my wife)
and to Chantel Miranda Mpofu, Mpendulo Praise Mpofu,
Rejoice Mvuselelo Mpofu (my dear daughters), and
to Siphosenkosi Abide Mpofu (my dear son) for
their encouragement and unwavering support
during this academic journey

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Background of the Study

The narrative of the Canaanite woman in Matthew 15:21-28 is a well-known and intriguing episode in the book of Matthew. The encounter between Jesus and this gentile woman raises important questions about Jesus' mission, his attitude towards non-Jews, and the role of faith in healing. In discussing the response of Jesus to the woman, David L. Turner advocates multiple responses of Jesus to the woman. First, he says the response of Jesus to the Canaanite woman was silence¹ which could be an intriguing aspect of this Narrative. Turner goes on to posit that the second response of Jesus suggests that He is sent solely to the house of Israel.²

Further, Turner emphasizes, that the woman was compared to dogs when Jesus said He could not take food for children and cast it to the dogs.³ Thus, Turner raises some problems with the mission of Jesus to non-Jews. Similarly, Grant R. Osborne and Clinton E. Arnold suggest that Jesus used the term "dog" in a Jewish sense and this is supported by his refusal to include the Gentile woman in his mission.⁴ The Jewish sense articulates that Gentiles are scavenger dogs that are unclean and homeless. The Greek word used by Jesus is *κυνάρῳ* not *κύων*.

¹ David L. Turner, *Matthew*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 386.

² Turner, *Matthew*, 386.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Grant R. Osborne and Clinton E. Arnold, *Matthew*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary Series on the New Testament 1 (Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan, 2010), 1: 599.

Κυνάρτιος refers to little house pets that are kept in the home by their owners while κύνων are scavenger dogs that were homeless at that time. However, Osborne and Arnold quoted from Dufton who said the Gentile woman in her discussion with Jesus is the one who switched to κυνάρτιος.⁵ By this he indicates that Jesus used κύνων then the Gentile woman switched to κυνάρτιος. Nonetheless, even though Osborne and Arnold agree with Dufton, he admits that no linguistic evidence supports this switch.⁶ Without the linguistic evidence to that effect the passage leaves room for further research to clarify important issues for the sake of mission.

Commenting on the same vein Robert H. Mounce declares that there was strange silence from Jesus. Jesus continued to walk while the woman was following behind crying about her daughter who was demon-possessed. Furthermore, the disciples took turns requesting Jesus to send her away for they said she was crying after them. The woman conducted herself respectfully but her concern was initially not given priority. She was told it is wrong to take food meant for children and cast it on the dogs.⁷

In his account of the same text, France says this pericope must be read as a whole. If this pericope was not going further than verse 26 it was going to cause a lot of problems in the Gentile world. After verse 26 the Gentiles are given good commendations by Jesus because of their faith.⁸ William Hendriksen says Jesus did

⁵ Osborne and Arnold, *Matthew*, 600. I agree with Dufton that here the woman switches to the household pets.

⁶ Ibid. There is no linguistic evidence to support this, but the switch to the image of dogs eating the crumbs from the master's table supports this image of the pet.

⁷ Robert H. Mounce, *Matthew*, New International Biblical Commentary 1 (Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson Publishers, 1991), 153.

⁸ R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, Mich: William B. Eerdmans Pub, 2007), 153.

not only seem to remain indifferent to the woman's request, neither did he heed the urgent request of his disciples.⁹ This denotes that Jesus gave more room for the discussion to go on with the Gentile woman. Additionally, he suggests that Jesus' silence is not a denial to assist the gentile woman. Jeanine K. Brown argues that Jesus' response of saying he is sent solely to the lost sheep of Israel is not directed to the woman but to his disciples.¹⁰ This suggests that the responses that appear to be negative need to be looked at closely. Thus, this story could have significant missional implications for the contemporary church, especially in the area of cross-cultural outreach.

As could be observed from the preceding discussion, different methods of interpretation have been used to address this text but scholars remain divergent in conclusions. The differing interpretations seem not be utilizing a narrative analysis in their approach to Matthew 15:21-28, and their proposals on missional implications for the contemporary Christian Mission.

Problem Statement

The scholars are of different opinions on the issue of how the Canaanite woman in Matthew 15:21-28 was treated by Jesus. One group says the response was negative while some say it was positive. This poses a problem since a Bible passage has one intended meaning. Therefore, these differences necessitate further study of

⁹ William Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to Matthew*, 7. print., New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Book House, 1984), 291. Jesus did not only remain adamant about the request of the woman neither did he heed the urgent request of the disciples. He gave more room for discussion as if he was saying go ahead Gentile woman and show your faith which is not found in Israel.

¹⁰ Jeannine K. Brown, *Matthew*, Teach the Text Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 2015), 180. The statement by Jesus which says I am not sent but to the lost house of Israel was not directed to the Gentile woman but to the disciples who were advocating that Jesus must send the woman away. This suggest that Jesus was willing to send the woman away but he advocated for more conversation with the woman so that her faith can be open to everyone.

this pericope by using narrative analysis. This is to ascertain whether Jesus' responses to the Canaanite woman were positive or negative and how this impacts cross-cultural missions. Specifically, one could ask: Does this passage signify that Jesus' mission has nothing to do with those who are not in the Jewish community? Would Jesus' response have been the same if this woman had been a male or a Jew? What Missional Implications does the passage have for the Seventh Day Adventist Church Mission in Zimbabwe?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to conduct a narrative analysis of Matthew 15:21-28 in the quest to understand why Jesus began his response to the woman's request in the manner he did. This study will also explore how Jesus' mission to the Gentile world is understood by himself and his disciples.

The Significance of the Study

This research will contribute to the proper understanding that the mission of Jesus included the Gentiles. It will also draw implications for guidelines for cross-cultural ministry. Finally, it will assist the SDA church in how they should relate to those outside the church in our contemporary Christian ministry.

Delimitation of the Study

This study will focus on the narrative of the Canaanite woman in Matthew chapter 15:21-28 and its missional implications in the contemporary Christian mission of the SDA church in Zimbabwe.

Methodology of the Study

The study is a narrative analysis of the Bible passage. The narrative analysis employed aligns with the historical-grammatical method, unlike narrative criticism

which tends towards historical criticism. Firstly, the narrative analysis will cover a literature review. Secondly, it will consider literary analysis, which involves the repetition of keywords, phrases, themes, patterns, and actions which will be examined. It will look at verbal threads, and rhetorical devices including inclusions, chiasms, parallelisms, and rhetorical questions. It will consider the structure of the passage. How does the narrative start and end? The images, symbols, and metaphors in the text will be considered. The setting in terms of geography, how settings recall important events in the history of Israel, and how they apply to contemporary Christian ministry.

The social, cultural, and religious settings will also be looked into. Temporal settings will be considered. The characterization will be covered which will be dealt with in terms of what the characters say, their tone, or the attitude meant in their speech. The way settings influence character will also be considered. Character development will be examined to see if the characters remain the same. The point of view if it is narrated in what a character says or does will be looked into. The point of view of the narrative will be considered to see whether it brings a difference in behavior or the discovery of anything important. The plot will also be examined to see what conflicts are in the passage and how the characters solve the dilemma. The shape of the plot will be dealt with up to the resolution. The reader's expectations will be considered whether they are fulfilled or frustrated as the narrative proceeds, and the new point of view, the one who tells the story wants the reader to adopt and how the reader views the reality differently to apply it to the contemporary Christian mission. Finally, the summary, conclusions plus recommendations. The narrative analysis was preferred in this passage because other scholars have used exegetical methods but came out with divergent results. The other reason is that the passage is a narrative,

and it can be best addressed in a narrative way to draw up a better conclusion taking into consideration that narrative analysis is a historical-grammatical method of Biblical interpretation just as Biblical exegesis.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

There are varied conclusions from scholars about the story of the Canaanite woman who came to Jesus seeking the healing of her daughter from demon possession. Some even conclude that the woman was treated harshly by Jesus. They even come to a point of doubting the mission of Jesus to non-Jews. This chapter will review literature from different scholars on the story of the Canaanite woman in Matthew 15:21-28. It will look at the withdrawal of Jesus from the Jewish territory, the regions of Tyre and Sidon which He visited. It will also look at the woman who approached Him, the dialogues from the woman's first requests to all the responses of Jesus up to the healing of the woman's daughter. Finally, the summary of the whole chapter will be dealt with.

Going back to the account of Matthew which points out that up to this point, Jesus had been meeting with the Jews within Galilee though there has been some mention of large groups of people from Decapolis coming to him.¹ The main focus of Jesus at this time was in the house of Israel. France mentions that Jesus came out from Galilee after hearing of the aggression of Antipas, while it took him outside Galilee, it did not take him far from the Galilean Jewish crowd. They followed and found him,

¹France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 540. France spells it out that in Matthew's account of the Galilean mission so far, Jesus has met with and commented on the faith of a Gentile army officer within Galilee and has deliberately made one trip across the lake into the Gentile area of Decapolis. Otherwise he has been depicted as meeting only with Jewish people within Galilee.

and he also says that it did not involve any contact with the locals there.² This suggests that Jesus' main focus was the Jewish people at that time.

Looking at the mission of Jesus, France goes on to talk about what he calls a marked change of focus. He says Jesus withdrew not just out of Galilee but outside the Jewish territory.³ This means Jesus moved out of the Jewish region and headed towards the Gentile region. In the same vein, Hendriksen says Jesus retires and withdraws himself to the Gentile region. He left the land of Israel. This time it was not a case of an outsider coming to him, he went out to them.⁴ According to Hendriksen Jesus withdrew himself intentionally to a Gentile region. The Gentiles did not come to him but He is the one who went out to them in their region. Jesus left the Jewish territory to go to a Gentile territory. According to Stanley E. Porter, Eckhard J. Schnabel, and Grant R. Osborne Jesus' withdrawal to the Gentile region was caused by a negative context of opposition and death.⁵ This means that Jesus had opposition and death threats in the Jewish community. He chose to withdraw to a Gentile territory. Porter, Schnabal and Osborne say by withdrawing Jesus was symbolically rejecting the Jews.⁶ Because of the opposition he faced in the Jewish community Jesus chose to leave them and go to a Gentile territory. The Jews did not accept the mission

² France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 540. His escape from Galilee after hearing of the hostility of Antipas while it took him outside Galilee proper, did not take him away from the Galilean Jewish crowd, who followed and caught up with him nor did it involve any contact with the local people.

³ Ibid. But now there is a marked change of focus. Jesus withdraws not merely outside Galilee but outside Jewish territory altogether.

⁴ Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to Matthew*, 580. Jesus retires and withdraws himself to definitely gentile territory. He leaves the land of Israel. This time it is not the outsider coming to him but him going to a Gentile territory.

⁵ Stanley E. Porter, Eckhard J. Schnabel, and Grant R. Osborne, eds., *On the Writing of New Testament Commentaries: Festschrift for Grant R. Osborne on the Occasion of His 70th Birthday*, Texts and Editions for New Testament Study (Leiden ; Boston: Brill, 2013), 597. Withdrawing there were negative context of opposition and death.

⁶ Ibid. Withdrawing symbolically rejecting them.

of Jesus. They opposed it to the point of threatening his life. Osborne and Arnold also talk of Jesus' geographical movement.⁷ This is a movement from one area to another. In the words of Craig L. Blomberg Jesus withdrew from Israel ideologically and geographically.⁸ Jesus could have withdrawn ideologically and remained in the territory or he could have withdrawn geographically but remained with the same ideology. But in this case, he withdrew both ideologically and geographically.

In the words of Brown Jesus withdraws from controversy.⁹ It means the Jewish people were full of controversy. This caused Jesus to choose to leave their territory and go to the Gentiles. Stuart K. Weber and Max Anders say Jesus took a forty-mile journey northwest to Tyre on the Mediterranean coast and another 20 miles far north to Sidon.¹⁰ The total distance covered was over 40 miles from the Jewish area. The distance traveled indicates that Jesus was withdrawing from the Jewish territory. The total distance covered was over 60 miles out of the Jewish area.

According to Albert L. Lukaszewski, the word ἀνεχώρησεν¹¹ becomes too weak to be translated as to retire rather it should be translated as taking refuge from some peril. This means the controversy that was there with Jewish people caused

⁷ Porter, Schnabel, and Osborne, *On the Writing of New Testament Commentaries*, 598.

⁸ Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew*, The New American Commentary 22 (Nashville, Tenn: Broadman Press, 1992), 420. Jesus has withdrawn from Israel ideologically verse 1-20 he again withdraws geographically.

⁹ Brown, *Matthew*, 179. Jesus withdraws from controversy.

¹⁰ Stuart K. Weber, and Max Anders, *Holman New Testament Commentary* (Nashville, Tenn: Holman Reference, 1998), 340. Jesus took a forty mile journey north west to Tyre on the Mediterranean coast and another 20 miles or so far north to Sidon.

¹¹ Albert L. Lukaszewski et al., ed., *The Lexham Syntactic Greek New Testament: SBL Edition* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2011), Mt 15:21. Wilcken remarks that the Christians were those who fled from the world – “retire” is too weak for ἀνεχώρησεν. The connotation of “taking refuge” from some peril will suit most of the New Testament passages remarkably well.

Jesus to leave the Jewish territory and go to the gentile region to seek some refuge for a while.

Tyre (Mat 15:21)

Jesus is found departing to a city called Tyre. According to Walter Bauer, Tyre was a city in Phoenicia.¹² Osborne and Arnold talk of Tyre as a major Hellenistic city.¹³ This was a city out of the Jewish territory. He goes on to suggest that this territory was to prepare disciples for Gentile's mission.¹⁴ This means the movement of Jesus to this region was intentional. The disciples needed to be prepared for the Gentile mission which they had not accepted at that time. According to Weber and Anders, Jesus took a forty-mile journey northwest on the Mediterranean coast and another 20 miles or so far north to Sidon.¹⁵ This is a faraway place from the Jewish territory. This is where Jesus decided to go and take refuge.

According to the Lukaszewski Tyre was a town which on the Phoenician coast established during the third millennium B.C and it was situated approximately 35 kilometers out of Sidon. Bloemberg in referring to these cities asserts that Matthew uses Old Testament names to conjure up their evil connotations from bygone eras.¹⁶ This reminds us of the relationship between the Jews and the Canaanites. Evans

¹² Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (BAGD), trans. and adapted by William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich. 3rd ed., rev. and augmented by F. Wilbur Gingrich and Frederick W. Danker. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 1021. Tyre is a city in Phoenicia

¹³ Porter, Schnabel, and Osborne, *On the Writing of New Testament Commentaries*, 598. Tyre and Sidon were major Hellenistic cities.

¹⁴ Ibid. Prepare disciples for gentile mission

¹⁵ Weber and Anders, *Holman New Testament Commentary* 340.

¹⁶ Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew*, 243. Matthew uses the Old Testament place names, as he does with the word Canaanite in order to conjure up their evil connotations from the bygone eras

alludes that Tyre and Sidon are linked to Philistia, the nation that harassed Israel as he tried to occupy the land of Canaan.¹⁷ In writing his gospel Matthew reminds his readers about their state with the Canaanites.

Sidon (Matt 15:21)

The Lexham Greek Bible points out that the city of Sidon got its name from Sidon, the firstborn of Canaan who was the grandson of Noah, who founded it. It is said to be one of the ancient Canaanite coastal cities. This is a very old Phoenician city stretching back to the grandson of Noah. The Canaanites people lived there. This is the community that Jesus decided to visit. In describing this city Osborne and Arnold say like Tyre, Sidon was a major Hellenistic city.¹⁸ According to Morris Sidon was twenty-five miles north of Tyre, and that city was the same distance from Jesus' Galilean troubles, so this represents a considerable journey on foot.¹⁹ This was quite a long distance which Jesus covered by foot out of the Jewish territory.

And Behold (καὶ ἰδοὺ)²⁰ (Matt 15:22)

The emphatic expression introduces the Canaanite woman. According to Spurgeon, the woman was a gentile of the worst sort, of a race long, long before condemned to die. According to Morris the word “behold” introduces the woman who was to be the significant figure in the story to be narrated.²¹ Morris says she was a

¹⁷ Graig A. Evans, *Matthew*, New Cambridge Bible Commentary (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 303.

¹⁸ Osborne and Arnold, *Matthew*, 597.

¹⁹ Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, Repr. (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1995), 590.

²⁰ Albert L. Lukaszewski et al., eds., *The Lexham Syntactic Greek New Testament: SBL Edition* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2011), Mt 15:22.

²¹ Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 565.

Canaanite and that was a race that went back to 3000 BC. This was a significant race in the history of Israel. Lenski talking about Matthew's use of the word "behold" when referring to the Canaanite woman pictures the case as remarkable. He asserts that it recalls the Old Testament account that the Jews had not completely exterminated the Canaanites as God had commanded. He goes on to say this woman descended from that old pagan race. The Jewish people on entering the promised land were instructed by God to terminate all the Canaanite tribes but which they did not do. The woman approaching Jesus belonged to that nation. This becomes the reason why Matthew as a Jew could be specific to call the woman a Canaanite.

A Woman (Matt 15:22)

In the words of Osborne and Arnold the women and Gentiles would not normally come to Jesus.²² These were not expected to be seen coming near to Jesus. In the words of Charles H. Talbert, the Canaanite woman was a determined, single parent, she went against cultural taboos and she freed Jesus from his sexism and racism. He claims she found Jesus in a bad mood and his compassion was down and she pulled him into an argument and she finally became a vehicle for the healing of her daughter.²³ This means racism was well-spoken among the Jews and Gentiles.

It was taboo for a Gentile to come closer to a Jew and worse a Gentile woman. According to Talbert Jesus was pushed by the woman to do something which was not in His mission. Anna Case-Winters says the gender and ethnicity of the Canaanite woman were a great hindrance. In those years Palestinian women were meant to be invisible. Jews with religious tasks were not supposed to be approached by a woman.

²² Osborne and Arnold, *Matthew*, 597.

²³ Charles H. Talbert, *Matthew*, Paideia - Commentaries on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010), 190.

Only prostitutes could force their way to anyone.²⁴ What this woman did was not common in those days. Case says women could sneak from behind not wanting to be seen, but the Canaanite woman came out open even shouting. He describes her as the first woman to speak openly in the gospels. By so doing she is found going against all the ideology of chosenness.²⁵ She ignored all the boundaries around her and approached Jesus to forward her request.

A Canaanite (Matt 15:22)

In the Gospel of Matthew, Evans notices a difference in the way Matthew addresses the woman as a Canaanite woman unlike what is in Mark where a Syrophenician woman is used. He says Matthew uses the word “Canaanite” so that he is consistent with the Jewish mission.²⁶ This suggests that when Matthew was writing he had in his mind a mission to the Jews not to the Gentiles. Evans says Matthew’s shift gives his version a Biblical taste that is accepted by his Jewish readers.²⁷ In the ears of the Jews when you mention a Canaanite you will be talking about a tribe that was supposed to be eliminated when the Israelites entered Canaan. Evans goes on to say the Canaanite woman in the area of Tyre and Sidon brought a solid biblical association. This is an individual who represents a people historically opposed towards Israel and evidently outside the agreement and with no anticipations

²⁴ Anna Case-Winters, *Matthew*, First edition., *Belief: A Theological Commentary on the Bible* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2015), 200,201.

²⁵ Case-Winters, *Matthew*, 201.

²⁶ Evans, *Matthew*, 302. There are so many verbal differences between the Matthean and Markan accounts of Jesus’ encounter with the woman from the region Tyre that some think Matthew may have had access to another version of the story. Again we see differences in Matthew’s narrative that are consistent with his interests in the Jewish mission.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 303. Matthew does this once again to give his version a biblical flavor that will be appreciated by his Jewish readers.

of the messianic blessings.²⁸ This means the woman named Canaanite should not expect any blessings from Jesus. She is of a cursed nation. Because of the biblical history between the Jews and the Canaanites, this woman was not supposed to come near to the Messiah.

According to Mounce, Canaanites were enemies of Israel. The Canaanites were not simple Gentiles but the worst of them all.²⁹ Osborne and Arnold state that the origin of the woman has negative implications.³⁰ The fact that she was of Canaanite origin she should not get any form of assistance from Jesus. Weber and Anders say Canaanites were the most idolatrous nation that Israel was instructed to terminate when they entered Canaan.³¹ Because the Israelites did not do what God had commanded them to do, the Canaanites became enemies of Israel. According to Frederick Dale Bruner, the adjective “Canaanite” means everything dangerous to the faith of Israel. This is the sole occurrence of the adjective in the New Testament.³² Being a Canaanite was not something good in the eyes of the Jews. Matthew writing to the Jewish readers was quick to mention that the woman was a Canaanite. This would specify what kind of a woman approached Jesus.

²⁸ Evans, *Matthew*, 303. Thus, a Canaanite woman in the region of Tyre and Sidon carries strong biblical associations. This is a person who represents a people historically antagonistic towards Israel and clearly outside the covenant and with no expectations of messianic blessings.

²⁹ Mounce, *Matthew*, 152. During the time of the judges the Canaanites were the major enemies of Israel. They were the heathen population of Palestine.

³⁰ Osborne and Arnold, *Matthew*, 597. Woman origin have negative implications.

³¹ *Holman New Testament Commentary*, 280.

³² Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew. A Commentary. Volume 2: The Churchbook. Matthew 13-28*, Rev. and exp. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 550.

Came Out of the Same Coast (Matt 15:22)

In the Gospel of Matthew, it is stated that the woman came out of the same coast. Commenting on the same issue Donald A. Hagner and Bruce Manning Metzger say Jesus did not enter these territories of Tyre and Sidon but the woman came unto the Jewish soil to make her request.³³ This is according to the Gospel of Matthew who was writing to the Jewish readers about the Canaanite woman. Hagner says, ἐξεληθοῦσα (coming out) has probably been chosen as a counterpart to the masculine equivalent, ἐξεληθὼν used of Jesus in verse 21. This makes it likely that we should read “coming out from that region with “from there” in verse 21 paralleling from that region here rather than a woman from that region, coming out. As Jesus arrives in the region, she appears to meet him.³⁴ Jesus here is coming out of the Jewish region and the woman is coming from the Tyre and Sidon region. This is where she comes from as a resident of that region. She came out of that region to meet Jesus.

Woman’s First Request (Matt 15:22)

Cried Unto Him (Matt 15:22)

In addressing the issue of the woman crying to Jesus Hagner points out that the woman continued crying through the use of the imperfect ἔκραζεν (was crying out).³⁵ This means the cry of a woman was not just a once-off thing but she continued to cry following after Jesus. Hendriksen says the woman cried constantly, or again

³³ Donald A. Hagner and Bruce Manning Metzger, *Matthew 14 - 28*, ed. David A. Hubbard and Glenn W. Barker, Nachdr., Word Biblical Commentary / [General Ed.: Bruce M. Metzger; David A. Hubbard; Glenn W. Barker. Old Testament Ed.: John D. W. Watts. New Testament Ed.: Ralph P. Martin] Vol. 33,B (Nashville: Nelson, 2008), 441.

³⁴ Hagner and Metzger, *Matthew 14 - 28*, 441.

³⁵ Hagner and Metzger, *Matthew 14 - 28*, 410. She continued crying out.

and again.³⁶ The crying repeatedly tells us that the woman continued to cry to Jesus. Commenting on the same issue Osborne and Arnold say the woman kept on crying. She could not accept a no as an answer to her plea.³⁷ This shows the persistence of the woman to what she was asking from Jesus. Bruner says the woman approached crying out. A notion of speaking too loud shouting in a big volume.³⁸ This is a continuous cry. It's not a once-off thing but it is something done repeatedly.

Have Mercy On Me (Matt 15:22)

The woman came to Jesus appealing for the mercies of Jesus upon her troubled daughter. Robertsons says the woman said have pity on me. She made her daughter's case her own.³⁹ This means she took the problem of the daughter as her own problem. This is why she could go and plead with Jesus on behalf of her daughter. Blomberg states that the woman repeated her pleas and also knelt down. This shows a great surrender to Jesus by a Canaanite woman. She showed great respect to Jesus. Range talking about the same issue says the woman used Christian language and worship to address Jesus.⁴⁰ She was a heathen woman but the language she used to address Jesus is that of a Christian. Weber and Anders buttress that the

³⁶ Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to Matthew*, 380. The woman cried out constantly or again and again.

³⁷ Osborne and Arnold, *Matthew*, 597. The woman kept on crying and she could not accept a no.

³⁸ Bruner, *Matthew. A Commentary. Volume 2*, 509. The woman approached crying out in a loud voice.

³⁹ Blomberg, *Matthew*, 441. The woman repeats her pleas and kneel down.

⁴⁰ Leander E. Keck, ed., *General Articles on the New Testament: The Gospel of Matthew ; the Gospel of Mark*, Nachdr., *The New Interpreter's Bible : General Articles & Introduction, Commentary, & Reflections for Each Book of the Bible, Including the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books; in Twelve Volumes / [Ed. Board: Leander E. Keck ...] 8* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2007), 336.

woman knelt sincerely compared to Israel's false, superficial worship.⁴¹ The way the Canaanite woman conducted herself before Jesus showed a lot of respect and great trust in Jesus although she was from a Gentile world. Compared with how the Israelites conducted themselves before Jesus it is found that the woman showed great faith which was supposed to be shown by those in the house of the Lord. The language used and her posture is that of respect and worship.

Lord, Son of David (Matt 15:22)

The Canaanite woman when she was addressing Jesus, called him Lord, Son of David. Hendriksen alludes that she called him Lord, Son of David.⁴² Addressing Jesus this way indicates that she understood who Jesus was. When you look at the Jewish people, they failed to understand that Jesus was the Son of David. But the Canaanite woman understood that Jesus was Lord. Osborne and Arnold commenting on the same issue say the woman's calling Jesus Lord, Son of David is startling.⁴³ It is startling because how can someone from a Gentile region, the worst of the Gentiles, a Canaanite call Jesus Lord, Son of David? We expect this from the house of Israel but unfortunately, Jesus was not recognized there. Bruner says calling Jesus "Lord, son of David" signifies that his Gentile universal title "Lord" and his Israel messianic title Son of David were used. By this, she confesses Jesus as a messiah which was not accepted by the people of God.⁴⁴ On the same note Michael J. Wilkins argues that by

⁴¹ *Holman New Testament Commentary*, 280. The woman knelt down sincerely compared to Israel's false superficial worship.

⁴² Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to Matthew*, 200. She called him Lord son of David.

⁴³ Osborne and Arnold, *Matthew*, 597. The woman calling Jesus Lord, Son of David is startling.

⁴⁴ Bruner, *Matthew. A Commentary. Volume 2*, 410.

calling Jesus, the Son of David she demonstrated familiarity with the Jewish messianic tradition.⁴⁵ In the same vein Brown also says the woman seemed to know more about Jesus.⁴⁶ Though she was a Gentile from a Canaanite tradition she understood that Jesus was the Messiah. She gave him all the required respect something which was not found in Israel or something which was not recognized by the Israelites.

My Daughter Is Irritated with a Devil (Matt 15:22)

The Canaanite woman took the problem of her daughter and made it her own. Robertson states that she said, “Have mercy on me”. This means she made her daughter’s case her own. Mounce says the woman kept on crying out at the top of her voice. Her daughter was harassed by the demons and was in a bad state.⁴⁷ It is usual that people care for their problems but here we see a woman taking the problem of a daughter and making it her own. Osborne and Arnold say the woman kept on crying for the healing of her daughter who was under the bondage of the devil. She could not accept a no as the answer to her problem. It seemed as if the problem belonged to her rather than to someone else.⁴⁸ Bruner argues that the woman made her daughter’s misery her own. She needed release as her daughter. That is a mother's longsuffering

⁴⁵ Michael J. Wilkins, *Matthew: From Biblical Text-- to Contemporary Life*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004), 240. She comes crying Lord son of David have mercy on me. By calling his Lord son of David she demonstrates familiarity with Jewish messianic tradition.

⁴⁶ Jeannine K. Brown, *Matthew*, Teach the Text Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2015), 179.

⁴⁷ Mounce, *Matthew*, 125. Crying at the top of her voice, she keeps calling out. Her daughter is harassed by demons and is in a terrible state.

⁴⁸ Grant R. Osborne “Revelation (Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament BECNT) (z-Lib.Org) (1) 598. The woman kept on crying.

prayer securing the cure of a daughter.⁴⁹ Wilkins says this woman knew of pagan deities around but she chose to come to Jesus for the healing of her daughter.⁵⁰ Jesus not being accepted by his people and being threatened with being killed finds people who need him in a Gentile land.

Jesus' First Response (Matt 15:23)

But He Answered Her, Not a Word (Matt 15:22)

When Jesus came into the boundaries of Tyre and Sidon he met with the Canaanite woman. The woman came to Jesus running seeking the healing of her daughter who was troubled by demons. When she came to Jesus, she addressed him as Lord, the son of David. After that, she requested him to heal her daughter from demon possession. In the gospel of Matthew, it is stated that Jesus answered her not a word. Different scholars are troubled by this kind of reaction. Scholars have different opinions and conclusions about this reaction. Turner says the treatment Jesus accorded to this woman was rather harsh. Harsh in silence. He goes on to say silence was a harder answer, for it is translated by fear into something worse than the hardest speech. This was a heavy discouragement.⁵¹ Mounce points out that there was strange silence on the part of Jesus. Jesus did not respond. The picture portrays Jesus walking in silence and the woman following with her frantic cries.⁵² This means Jesus was walking on his way while the woman was following behind crying without being given any answer.

⁴⁹ Bruner, *Matthew. A Commentary. Volume 2*, 442.

⁵⁰ Wilkins, *Matthew*, 510. The temple dedicated to Eshmun, a god of healing was located 3 miles northwest of Sidon. This woman was likely familiar with the pagan deity, but she comes to Jesus for the healing of her daughter.

⁵¹ Turner, *Matthew*, 386.

⁵² Mounce, *Matthew*, 152.

On the same note, Richard Thomas France further suggests that Jesus' undesirable arrogance is more emphatic and harsher. He says Jesus appears indifferent and rude in his refusal to act.⁵³ This means the Canaanite woman got unfair treatment from Jesus. The woman being a Gentile could not get good treatment from Jesus who was Jewish. Hendriksen says while the woman was crying out constantly, again and again, there was absolute silence on the part of Jesus.⁵⁴ The silence on the part of Jesus troubles scholars. The silence was unusual with Jesus. Jesus is known for being quick to assist people but with the Canaanite woman, there was a strange silence. Talbert observes that the woman was ignored by Jesus.⁵⁵ This means Jesus did not listen to the cry of this woman at this stage. This poses a problem for some scholars. They began to question the mission of Jesus if it involved the non-Jews. Osborne and Arnold argue that the silence of Jesus is understandable for the woman represents Gentiles to the Jews.⁵⁶

The silence here shows that the one making a request was a Gentile and the request was made to a Jew. So according to the Jews, there is nothing wrong with that. This is the right treatment for a Gentile before a Jew. According to Blomberg Jesus answered no word. Jesus surprisingly breaks his design of instantly responding to requests for curing. The silence of Jesus seems measured and dramatic.⁵⁷ The silence here being deliberate it means there is something in his mind. If he was not

⁵³ Richard Thomas France, *The Gospel According to Matthew: An Introduction and Commentary*, ed. Randolph Vincent Greenwood Tasker and Leon Morris (Leicester, Grand Rapids (Mich.): Inter-varsity Press ; W.B. Eerdmans, 1994), 588.

⁵⁴ Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to Matthew*, 560.

⁵⁵ Talbert, *Matthew*, 189. The woman was ignored by Jesus.

⁵⁶ Osborne and Arnold, *Matthew*, 598.

⁵⁷ Blomberg, *Matthew*, 484.

willing to grant the request to the woman it was going to be easy to say it out. But his silence signified something. According to Brown Jesus was known for responding to great faith but in this instance, he gave no response.

Other readers and commentators are prone to rescuing Jesus by attributing unselfish intentions to say he is trying the woman to pull out her faith. Brown goes on to say provision of the motives of the characters is needed. This is so because the story reads as if Jesus hesitated to grant healing to a gentile. From the text brown says there is no particular clue for doing so.⁵⁸ In the narrative analysis characterization tries to answer the problem. When motives are looked into one will discover a different conclusion. Weber and Anders advocate that Jesus ignored the woman, walking along the road without answering a single word.⁵⁹ This means that Jesus kept on walking while the Canaanite woman followed him crying about her daughter who was demon-possessed.

Bruner says Jesus did not answer a word. What is positive is that he did not send her away. He says silence is sometimes encouraging. The request of the woman was not pronounced as impossible. Bruner further describes the silence of Jesus as full of mystery. Jesus could have said something here but it was not going to help the woman.⁶⁰ Without Jesus saying a word to the Canaanite woman it is a positive note that she did not send her away. This leaves room for further interaction with him. As

⁵⁸ Brown, *Matthew*, 179. Jesus responds to great faith. Jesus gives no response to her. Commentators and other readers are prone to rescue Jesus by attributing altruistic intentions e.g. he is testing the woman to draw out her faith. Unless we provide motives for the characters, the story reads as if Jesus expresses hesitation in granting healing to a gentile. The text gives no particular clues for doing so.

⁵⁹ *Holman New Testament Commentary*, 280.

⁶⁰ Bruner, *Matthew. A Commentary. Volume 2*, 442. Jesus did not say a word. At least Jesus did not send the woman away. Sometimes silence can be encouraging. Jesus could have said something here but what he could have said was not going to help a woman.

Bruner noted silence leaves hope and is encouraging. One can still wait for something better than to be dismissed right away.

The Disciples Request (Matt 15:23)

Send Her Away (Matt 15:23)

The continuous appeal by the Canaanite woman while Jesus could not answer her a word caused the disciples to react and request Jesus to send her away. Turner says the disciples' request comes after Jesus first ignored the woman.⁶¹ At this time the disciples decided to request Jesus to send the woman away. Turner goes on to allude that the word ἠρώτων used there denotes respectful asking. He says one after another, the disciples come up to Jesus and join in this request. Danker says the verb ἠρώτων means to ask for something or make a request.⁶² The disciples requested Jesus to send the woman away. Turner also says Ἀπόλυσον the verb for dismiss used there, leaves it to Jesus whether to dismiss her by granting or denying her request.⁶³ To the disciples what was important was to have the woman dismissed whether by granting or by refusing to grant. The woman was very persistent about her request and the request was continuous to the extent that the disciples could request Jesus to drive her away.

According to Mounce, the disciples came to urge Jesus to send her away without granting her request.⁶⁴ The disciples appear to be annoyed by the continuous appeal by the Canaanite woman. Mounce points out that the disciples required Jesus

⁶¹ Turner, *Matthew*, 386. The disciples request comes after Jesus first ignored the woman. His response to the request seems to be directed to the woman.

⁶² Bauer, BAGD, s.v. "stauros." 348.

⁶³ Turner, *Matthew*, 386.

⁶⁴ Mounce, *Matthew*, 152.

to dismiss the Canaanite woman without granting her request. Hagner and Metzger say as the woman continued to cry out the disciples repeatedly asked Jesus to send her away.⁶⁵ The picture portrayed is that of the disciples coming one by one to request Jesus to send the woman away. It appears that it was not just an event but it was something which took some process. This is justified by the fact that the disciples were coming one by one to put forward the request to Jesus. The fact that the woman annoyed the disciples means that she had repeated again and again to put forward the request. Hendriksen says the disciples came and kept urging Jesus to send the Canaanite woman away. He says the disciples were saying Jesus must grant her request and send her away. He goes on to asserts that this is not supported by any solid argument. Hendriksen advocates that Jesus did not only remain quiet in the request of the Canaanite woman neither did he listen to the urgent request of his disciples. Hendriksen goes on to say the request of the disciples was not worth any answer.⁶⁶

The coming of the disciples in succession means they wanted Jesus to send away the woman. To achieve his mission Jesus did not answer the woman and also the disciples' request was not granted. He just remained neutral. Jesus knew that there was going to be an invasion of the Gentiles into the kingdom of heaven but it was something to come shortly. His mission at that time was especially meant for the House of Israel. So, he did not chase away the woman nor did he answer to the request of the disciples. Talbert says the story of this woman evoked multiple

⁶⁵ Hagner and Metzger, *Matthew 14 - 28*, 443.

⁶⁶ Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to Matthew*, 410. There was absolute silence in his part. Disciples came and kept on urging him, send her away. Disciples were saying grant her request and send her away but is supported by any solid argument. Jesus did not only remain adamant in the request of this woman neither did he heed the urgent request of his disciples. The request of the disciples is not worth any answer.

interpretations from scholars. He mentions that the disciples said Jesus must send her away because she was crying after them.⁶⁷ The several interpretations of this story by scholars pose some challenges.

According to Osborne and Arnold the silence of the Jews was understandable because this woman represented Gentiles to the Jews. The disciples' request being in the imperfect and the woman keeping up crying and not accepting a no as the answer which is what Jesus required, the disciples requested Jesus to set her free. This means to heal her so that he will go or make her go away.⁶⁸ The disciples were not worried about the healing of the woman's daughter but they just sought the woman to be sent away from them. If the sending away would require granting what the woman wanted or required let it be so. What was important to them was to see the woman being sent away.

The woman who was said to be representing Gentiles to the Jews her being sent away means the whole Gentile world would have been sent away. This is exactly what the disciples wanted about the Gentiles but Jesus did not respond to the urgent request of the disciples. Commenting on the same note Brown argues that Jesus did not answer the request of the disciples to the woman but he directed the reply to the disciples to say he is not sent but only to the bewildered sheep of Israel. This shows that Jesus did not intend to send the woman away while showing that his God-given mission at that time was directed to the lost house of Israel.⁶⁹ This means Jesus was

⁶⁷ Talbert, *Matthew*, 189.

⁶⁸ Osborne and Arnold, *Matthew*, 588. Silence of the Jews is understandable for the woman represent Gentiles to the Jews. The woman kept on crying she could not accept a no, the response Jesus looked for. Set her free, heal her so that she will go. Make her go away.

⁶⁹ Brown, *Matthew*, 179. Jesus makes the statement not to the woman but to the disciples' request. This may indicate that Jesus is not willing to send the woman away, while also affirming that her request sits outside the scope of his God given mission at present. As such his comments invite further conversation.

not telling the woman that he is sent only to the household of Israel but this is directed to his disciples. Brown goes on to suggest that by these statements Jesus was provoking a further discussion.⁷⁰ This leaves a positive note to the woman and the Gentile world on the mission of Jesus.

The disciples wanted to exclude the Gentiles from the mission of Jesus but some level of hope is shown by the silence of Jesus from sending the woman away. France says the twelve strong men would have managed to drive the woman away but they went to Jesus with the mind that he could answer to her request and grant her what she wanted. This means they had confidence that Jesus could do it.⁷¹ So the disciples took their time to request Jesus to send the woman away.

She Cries after Us (Matt 15:23)

The continuous crying by the Canaanite woman did not sound well to the disciples. As she continued crying following behind Jesus the disciples were annoyed. Mounce says the disciples complained that the woman cried after them. He says the disciples did not like this public attention done by the Canaanite woman. To them, it was a strange woman crying after them.⁷² In this retirement the disciples did not want to be known in the areas of Tyre and Sidon. The crying of the Canaanite woman was drawing public attention. They wanted Jesus to get rid of the woman either by granting the request or by just sending her away. Hendriksen says the disciples considered the Canaanite woman as an intolerable nuisance.⁷³ This is why they

⁷⁰ Brown, *Matthew*, 189.

⁷¹ France, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 593.

⁷² Mounce, *Matthew*, 153.

⁷³ Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to Matthew*, 410. The man considered her as an intolerable nuisance.

pleaded with Jesus to send the woman away. When this woman was crying the disciples felt that she was making a lot of noise. So, they requested Jesus to drive her away.

Jesus' Second Answer (Matt 15:24)

I Am Not Sent but to the Lost Sheep (Matt 15:24)

Following the sequence of events in this narrative we realize that Jesus first ignores the request of the woman. The woman continues to launch her request to the extent that the disciples make an appeal that Jesus drives the woman away. Turner says the response of Jesus after the request by the disciples was directed to woman, to say I am sent but to the lost sheep of Israel.⁷⁴ According to Turner, the request was made by the disciples. Jesus did not direct the answer to the disciples as per request but he directed the answer to the woman. Turner says Jesus denies to the woman that his mission concerns her.⁷⁵ Asked by disciples but He directs the reply to the one who did not ask. This sounds as if he wants to see how the gentile woman would respond. Was she going to turn away and go? Is she going to persist or will he turn away and go? Case points out that Jesus had well-defined boundaries on the parameters of his mission.⁷⁶ At this point He says it open to the woman that He came to serve the house of Israel first.

Robert H. Gundry says at this juncture the woman's faith was faced with the silence he got from Jesus, annoyed disciples, and also Jesus's limited mission only

⁷⁴ Turner, *Matthew*, 387.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Case-Winters, *Matthew*, 201.

focusing to the house of Israel.⁷⁷ With all these obstacles before the Gentile woman she needed to show her level of persistence. James D. G. Dunn and J. W. Rogerson argues that in this text, Jesus who is known for his universal mercy shows some reluctant response which is contradictory to his usual nature.⁷⁸ This means it was not like Jesus to show such reluctance. He must be probing something.

Commenting on the same issue France proposes that at this time Jesus had moved to the gentile region. Geographically he was not in Galilee but right into the gentile region. It cannot be said his retreat was interrupted by the woman.⁷⁹ He came out of the Galilean region and entered the Gentile region. Commenting on this issue Bruner brings a question to say Jesus by saying he was not sent but to the lost house of Israel, who was he talking to. The word of God does not say who he is talking to. One can almost say He was talking to himself. The statement does not answer the plea of the woman or the request which came from the disciples.

In the Jewish territory, Jesus came to the rescue of the Centurion's request who also was a Gentile. But in the Gentile territory, Jesus is hesitant to heal the Canaanite woman's daughter. It was likely God's plan for Jesus to be in this Gentile region so that through the Gentile woman the mission of Jesus can be turned to the Gentile direction.⁸⁰ It was not an accident for Jesus to take this direction of the worst Gentiles. God has a purpose for his people including the Gentiles.

⁷⁷ Robert H. Gundry, *Commentary on the New Testament: Verse-by-Verse Explanations with a Literal Translation* (Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson Publishers, 2010), 69.

⁷⁸ James D. G. Dunn and J. W. Rogerson, eds., *Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2003), 1036.

⁷⁹ France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 595.

⁸⁰ Bruner, *Matthew. A Commentary. Volume 2*, 99,100.

The Third Request of the Woman (Matt 15:25)

The Woman Knelt before Jesus (Matt 15:25)

Ignoring what had transpired between Jesus, the woman, and the disciples and how Jesus had spoken out to say he is sent only to Israel the woman came and knelt worshipping Jesus. The Greek word used is προσεκύνει. Gundry alludes that the woman was continuously bowing down worshipping Jesus.⁸¹ A Gentile woman doing what those in God's house were not willing to do. Hendriksen says the woman was worshipping even prostrating herself at the feet of Jesus time and again pleading with Jesus so that Jesus could attend to her request.⁸² Jesus who was refused by the Jews, Bruner says the Gentile woman moved steadily from recognizing Jesus as the Son of David and to a point of worshipping Jesus as God.

Bruner further suggests that what gave strength to the woman was the fact that Jesus came to her territory, he did not refuse her request outright, and also that she was not chased away following the request by the disciples.⁸³ With these facts the woman gained strength to even move on and plead for her daughter. She seemed to understand Jesus even better. She called him the Son of David and also started to worship him as God. Weber says the woman took the right direction to worship Jesus and it means she recognized that she needed a Saviour.⁸⁴ As she needed a Saviour she

⁸¹ Gundry, *Commentary on the New Testament*, 69.

⁸² Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to Matthew*, 623.

⁸³ Bruner, *Matthew. A Commentary. Volume 2*, 100.

⁸⁴Weber and Anders, *Holman New Testament Commentary: NIV Based. Vol. 1: Matthew / Author: Stuart K. Weber, Nachdr.* (Nashville TN: Holman Reference, 2007), 1:231.

recognized that Jesus was the Saviour she needed and she could fall and worship him at the same time making her request.

France says the woman who was shouting from afar now comes closer to Jesus with a more personal approach. She rose to a higher level by combining προσεκύνει and Κύριε.⁸⁵ The combination of the two spells out that Jesus here was recognized as the Messiah. Her faith was not brought down but she still pushed on without doubting that she would get the assistance she needed.

Lord, Help Me (Matt 15:25)

Without being deterred the woman says Lord, help me. The Greek words used are Κύριε,βοήθει μοι. Commenting on these words Hagner and Metzger say the verb used is only found here in the whole of the New Testament and the request is a continuation of the request she started in verse 22 where she said Lord have mercy on me. This time she used the βοήθει which is idiomatic Greek.⁸⁶ Gundry in agreement with this says the woman showed to be a worshiper of Jesus by her continual bowing down before the Lord.⁸⁷ Jesus had implied in his second response that his mission is in the house of Israel. Will he uphold his mission and leave the woman in her dilemma or he will choose to include in his mission to serve the Canaanite woman? In the eyes of God, human beings are very important. Bruner says if Jesus heals the woman's daughter he has opened floodgates for Gentiles to invade his mission.⁸⁸

Jesus' Third Response (Matt 15:26)

⁸⁵ France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 594.

⁸⁶ Hagner and Metzger, *Matthew 14 - 28*, 442.

⁸⁷ Robert H. Gundry, *Commentary on the New Testament: Verse-by-Verse Explanations with a Literal Translation* (Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson Publishers, 2010), 69.

⁸⁸ Bruner, *Matthew. A Commentary. Volume 2*, 101.

Looking at the flow of the discussion, first, the reply from Jesus was silence, the second one Jesus it's like he talked to himself that he is sent only to the lost house of Israel. Ringe says this is the first time in verse 26 that Jesus talks directly to the woman to say it is not good to take children's food and give it to dogs.⁸⁹ Jesus says he will not take children's food and give it to dogs. The woman did not ask for food and who are children and who are not children? Bruner points out that children are the house of Israel. He goes on to say those from the Gentile world were not yet children of the family.⁹⁰ This means the woman belonged to a group that was outside the family of God. In the words of Hendriksen, it is not proper to give what belongs to Israel who are the children, and cast it to those who do not belong to Israel.⁹¹

According to Hagner and Metzger, the children are those who belong to the kingdom and they are the ones who are worthy to receive the bread.⁹² In this case the sons of the kingdom are the children of Israel. Outside that realm are dogs. Gundry agrees with Hagner by saying children are Jews who were said to be the lost house of Israel.⁹³ These are the ones who were worthy to receive bread.

Bread (Matt 15:26)

The bread belongs to the children, it cannot be cast on dogs. Gundry talking about bread referred to here says it stands for all the benefits of the messianic ministry.⁹⁴ Everything that comes from the ministry of the Messiah is bread for

⁸⁹ Keck, *General Articles on the New Testament*, 336.

⁹⁰ Bruner, *Matthew. A Commentary. Volume 2*, 102.

⁹¹ Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to Matthew*, 622.

⁹² Hagner and Metzger, *Matthew 14 - 28*, 442.

⁹³ Gundry, *Commentary on the New Testament*, 69.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

children. This may include the gospel preached, the ministry of healing, and the kingdom itself. All these are bread that cannot be cast to dogs. Hendriksen talks of bread as a blessing from God.⁹⁵ Children only will receive blessings from the messianic mission. In the words of Bruner bread represent mission.⁹⁶ Everything about the mission belongs to the children. Mission broad as it is and with all its benefits only belonged to the children.

Cast (Matt 15:26)

The word cast is used to refer to giving food to the dogs. The Greek word used is βαλεῖν. Bauer states that βαλεῖν means “to cause to move from one location to another through use of forceful motion”, meaning to throw.⁹⁷ Throwing is not a humble way of giving. Food is not supposed to be thrown to someone but it must be given in a good way. To the dogs, food is not given politely but it is thrown. The picture painted here is that food is humbly given to children but when it comes to dogs food is thrown.

Dogs (Matt 15:26)

About dogs, France says Jesus added insult to injury. He goes on to say he added more pain from what was spoken in verse 24 to say he is sent only to the house of Israel.⁹⁸ The Greek word used in this passage is κυναρίους. Danker further says the term refers to little dogs or house dogs in contrast to the dogs of the street or farm

⁹⁵ Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to Matthew*, 623.

⁹⁶ Bruner, *Matthew. A Commentary. Volume 2*, 101.

⁹⁷ Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, (BAGD), 143.

⁹⁸ France, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 594.

dogs which are called κύων in Greek. These eat the scraps from their masters.⁹⁹ This means more pain is added to the Canaanite woman. France goes on to suggest that the use of a dog as an unclean animal to refer to another tribe was demeaning and very offensive to the Gentiles.¹⁰⁰ He says the claim that the word used was for a house puppy can only a bit reduce the problem to those cultures that love puppies. The puppies are not clean also like the bigger dogs.¹⁰¹ According to him the problem remains for he argues that a dog is a dog whether small or big. Gundry says the word used here refers to little house puppies.

The Jews used to call Gentiles as dogs but the word here used by Jesus is for little house puppies. It doesn't refer to those dogs found on the streets which are scavengers. He argues that these scavenger dogs were not kept in the homes at that time in the Middle East.¹⁰² This means even though Jews used to call Gentiles as dogs Jesus did not use the same word which was used by the Jews. Gundry goes on to say it was not good for Jesus to take children's food and give it to the puppies.¹⁰³ Referring to dogs Weber and Anders say they were wild, filthy, dangerous animals that were found on the streets. He says this was the attitude of Jewish people toward Gentiles. He specifies that Jesus did not use the derogative term but he used the term referring to house puppies.¹⁰⁴

⁹⁹ Bauer, BAGD, s.v. "stauros." 509.

¹⁰⁰ France, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 594.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 595.

¹⁰² Gundry, *Commentary on the New Testament*, 69.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ Weber and Anders, *Holman New Testament Commentary*, 1:231.

The Woman's Fourth Request (Matt 15:27)

Yes, it is Lord (Matt 15:27)

In response to what Jesus said, the woman said “Yes Lord”. Gundry says the woman recognized the Lordship of Jesus for the third time. In the “yes” part, the woman accepts that the mission of Jesus was limited to the Jews at that time.¹⁰⁵ This means the woman understood the limits of Jesus and also she did not claim the healing of her daughter as her right but she made a request to the Lord. Even under such conditions she still understood and recognized the Lordship of Jesus.

Bruner supports that the woman and her daughter agreed to be little dogs in the house. By saying “Oh yes” the woman was agreeing in part that food belongs to children only but then she turns the tables towards her¹⁰⁶ The woman didn't mind being called a dog as long as she would get what she wanted. Hendriksen agrees with Bruner that the woman was humble enough to accept being compared to a house dog.¹⁰⁷ He goes on to say the woman was proactive in turning what appeared to be a disadvantage into something positive. He also says the woman never complained but she persevered in her request.¹⁰⁸ What seemed to be a reproach to her, turned out to be positive.

Hendriksen asserts that the woman did not only accept to be called a dog but she even celebrated about it. She knew that good masters would not leave their pets to

¹⁰⁵ Gundry, *Commentary on the New Testament*, 69.

¹⁰⁶ Bruner, *Matthew. A Commentary. Volume 2*, 102.

¹⁰⁷ Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to Matthew*, 624.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 624, 625.

die of hunger.¹⁰⁹ With humility and perseverance the woman moved forward with her request. She doesn't look at the negatives but she moves on with hope. He goes on to say her faith in Jesus whom she has called Lord and Messiah and this faith was God-given could not be shaken. She did like Jacob who said, "I will not let you go except you bless me".¹¹⁰ Being a Gentile of Canaanite origin it is surprising how she recognized that Jesus was Lord and also Son of David and these are Messianic titles. This kind of faith is God-given. Many lived with Jesus but could not recognize that she was a Messiah.

The Canaanite woman got hold of faith and could not be deterred from what she was asking. In the words of Ringe, the woman did not expect the dogs to eat later but the dogs must receive crumbs as the masters are eating.¹¹¹ The faith of the woman did not tell her that dogs must wait and eat later when children are full but it told her that as children eat the dogs also must be picking the crumbs under the table. This means the healing of her daughter need not wait for some time in the future which was not known but the daughter must benefit right away together with the children.

Gundry says the healing of the daughter the woman understood it as just a small thing which is like a small crumb falling from the table of the masters accidentally not a full bread given to the dogs. She says this does not take much from the table of children.¹¹² Matthew Henry agrees with Gundry to say the crumb is small and he goes on to say that the crumb is from the same precious bread.¹¹³ The faith of

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to Matthew*, 625.

¹¹¹ Keck, *General Articles on the New Testament*, 336.

¹¹² Gundry, *Commentary on the New Testament*, 69.

¹¹³ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible* (Hendrickson Publ, 2006), 179.

the woman says the healing of her daughter did not demand much from Jesus and the table of children but very little even to the size of a crumb. What is important is that it must come from the same bread which is precious.

The humility of the woman allows her to agree that the children meaning Israelites are masters and the Gentiles are dogs. Gundry says the word κυρίων translated for master is the same word for Lord. This means Jesus is the owner of the table.¹¹⁴ This means as Jesus feeds children from His table Gentiles also can benefit from what is falling from the master's table.

Jesus' Fourth Response (Matt 15:28)

Then Jesus (Matt 15:28)

The use of the Greek word τότε according to Bruner marks the turning point of the narrative. At this point, the build-up of the story is now relieved. He says the name of Jesus was mentioned at the beginning of the story, in the middle the personal pronoun ὁ δὲ was used but at the turn of the story the name of Jesus comes out.¹¹⁵ He says in the first two responses of Jesus it is not specified to whom he was responding but in the final response it is specified that Jesus responded to the woman.¹¹⁶ This means the final response is here attributed to the name of Jesus.

Great Faith (Matt 15:28)

The Canaanite woman showed great faith in Jesus. Case explains that the woman showed faith which Jesus did not find in his hometown, among religious

¹¹⁴ Gundry, *Commentary on the New Testament*, 69.

¹¹⁵ Bruner, *Matthew. A Commentary. Volume 2*, 103.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

leaders, or in many people even among his disciples who were always with him.¹¹⁷ A Gentile woman of the worst tribe comes out with great faith in Jesus. Case goes on to say he called Jesus with Christological names like Lord and Son of David, she kneeled before Jesus showing an attitude of reverent faith. She accepted the priority given to the house of Israel but as a Gentile, she claimed a portion of blessings.¹¹⁸ Gundry buttresses that the woman's great faith is contrasted with the little faith of Peter and other disciples, Matthew 14:21, 16:8, and also the lack of faith of the followers of Jesus, Matthew 13:58.¹¹⁹

Alluding to the same point Hagner and Metzger say the use of the address Ἰσραήλ γύναι portrays the level by which Jesus was touched by the faith he found in the Gentile woman.¹²⁰ He exclaimed at such faith to see down in the coasts of Tyre and Sidon that they are people of such faith.

The Reward of the Canaanite Woman (Matt 15:28)

After a long struggle, the woman finally got a reward. Jesus said to the woman, “Be it to you as you want” Gundry says Jesus did not need to go where the daughter was.¹²¹ From a distance Jesus commanded that the will of the woman be done because of her faith. Hagner and Metzger commenting on the same issue say as

¹¹⁷ Case-Winters, *Matthew*, 202.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Gundry, *Commentary on the New Testament*, 69.

¹²⁰ Hagner and Metzger, *Matthew 14 - 28*, 442.

¹²¹ Gundry, *Commentary on the New Testament*, 70.

the woman sought for the will of Jesus, the Father and the Son answered to the will of the woman who showed faith.¹²² To everyone who seeks God by faith God answers.

The Daughter Healed (Matt 15:28)

Answering to the faith of the woman the daughter was healed with immediate effect. Bruner says a third party was rewarded from an encounter between two people. He says when people bring someone to Jesus with faith Jesus will answer to that faith. It can take a test of faith for some time, but when faith prevails a reward will come.¹²³ Even at this level the faith of the woman did not go down. Bruner points out that she still believed the words of Jesus that her daughter was healed. She did not even want to see Jesus going to where the daughter was but she took Jesus at his word.¹²⁴ Henry says when Jesus spoke it was done.¹²⁵

Summary

In summary, the way the Jewish people treated Jesus in their territory forced him to retreat and find refuge in the Gentile territories which are Tyre and Sidon. According to scholars, this was not a planned retreat but it was caused by the Jews' response to the mission of Jesus. As some say he was symbolically rejecting the Jews by leaving the Jewish territory both geographically and ideologically.

The areas that he went to were Tyre and Sidon which were known to be the worst in heathenism. These Canaanite people stood against Israel when he occupied Canaan. The cities were far from the Jewish territory but Jesus went there all the way.

¹²² Hagner and Metzger, *Matthew 14 - 28*, 105.

¹²³ Bruner, *Matthew. A Commentary. Volume 2*, 105.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 106.

¹²⁵ Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*, 179.

In that territory, Jesus was approached by a Canaanite woman requesting the deliverance of her daughter who was possessed by demons.

The woman crossed cultural and religious boundaries that existed at that time and she spoke openly to Jesus who came to her territory. The woman did not cross to the Jewish territory but it was Jesus who came to their area. Showing all respect to Jesus she did not get a response and she was not chased away. Some described it as the most severe kind of response but the woman persevered with her request. The fact that she was not chased away becomes a positive response. Using characterization the narrative analysis aims at clarifying these responses. Some scholars go to the extent of even saying Jesus was indifferent and rude to this woman and that He unfairly treated her because she was not a Jew but a Gentile.

The request that came from the disciples was that of chasing the woman away. In response, Jesus did not direct the response to the woman or the disciples. It is like Jesus was speaking to himself to say he was not sent but to the lost sheep of Israel. The woman was not told to go away which was also positive.

Even being called a dog not fit to eat children's food the woman still persevered to say even dogs can receive crumbs from the masters' table. Finally, the faith of the woman was honored the daughter was healed.

CHAPTER 3

NARRATIVE ANALYSIS OF MATTHEW 15:21-28

Biblical and Narrative Analysis

Biblical and Narrative analysis are two distinct but related approaches used to study and interpret the texts, particularly in the context of religious or literary studies. Walter C. Kaiser says Biblical analysis involves the examination and interpretation of the texts found in the Bible.¹ Danna Nolan Fewell points out that literary analysis is a form of biblical exegesis that focuses on the literary aspects, such as genre, style, and structure to uncover the intended meaning and message.² At the same time, theological interpretation covers the religious and theological themes within the text, considering its spiritual and doctrinal implications.

James L. Ruseguie alludes that narrative analysis studies stories and narratives across various genres, of course, it is not limited to religious texts alone.³ It involves structural analysis which examines the organization and structure of a narrative including elements like plot, characters, setting, and narrative voice. Semiotic focuses on signs and symbols within the narrative while cultural and social analysis considers the cultural and social context in which the narrative is produced.⁴ Frank Hasel alludes that a detailed and thorough analysis of the form, rhythm,

¹ Walter C. Kaiser and Moisés Silva, *An Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics: The Search for Meaning*, Rev. and expanded ed. (Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan, 2007), 18.

² Danna Nolan Fewell, *The Oxford Handbook of Biblical Narrative*, Oxford Handbooks Series (New York): Oxford University Press, 2019), 3.

³ James L. Ruseguie, *Narrative Criticism of the New Testament: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Academic, 2005), 19.

⁴ Ibid.

structure, genre, and narrative elements can highlight the skill, elegance, and artistry present in the biblical text. Seventh-Day Adventists place significant emphasis on the literary, rhetorical, and narrative aspects of the biblical text in its complete canonical form. Concentrating on the biblical text in this manner is constructive practice. These elements deserve consideration and can be effectively explored to enhance our comprehension of Scripture, provided that we approach them with appropriate assumptions and defer to the authoritative nature of the biblical text.⁵ In this study, the narrative approach is a hermeneutical approach that subscribes to the inspiration and authority of the bible in its complete canonical form.

The study uses narrative analysis since this passage is a narrative but it does not subscribe to narrative criticism which is one of the approaches that came as an attempt to shift away from the historical criticism methods. Even though narrative criticism focuses on the final form of Scripture as opposed to historical-critical methods, its presupposition is challenging. Narrative criticism does not aim to challenge the truthfulness of biblical accounts or investigate the historical events that may have influenced the stories. The significance of a text is determined by the world of the text which it constructs, rather than its historical accuracy. “events” in this context refer to the occurrences within a narrative. Therefore, literature seeks to immerse the reader in an experience rather than focusing on conveying authoritative concepts indicating that the text is more about enacting an experience than presenting prescriptive truths.⁶ Narrative analysis in the context of this study, believes in the

⁵ Frank Hasel, "Recent Trends in Methods of Biblical Interpretation," in *Biblical Hermeneutics: An Adventist Approach*, Biblical Research Institute Studies in Hermeneutics volume 3, ed. Frank Hasel (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institut, 2020), 435.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 437, 438.

historicity and divine inspiration of the Bible and uses narrative devices to draw out meaning from scripture.

Narrative Analysis, its Significance, and Key Elements

The narrative analysis looks at how Biblical literature functions as literature. Thus the what of the text is its content, and the how, is its rhetoric and structure which is being analyzed as a complete whole.⁷ A text is considered at its wholeness without breaking it into small components but taking it as a whole. Fewell alludes that narratives now claim a crucial recognition not only in literal studies but also in philosophy, linguistics, and many other disciplines. Narratives are everywhere.⁸ He goes on to say Biblical studies have also given much attention to narrative and it is growing fast.⁹ He goes on to assert that narrative literature has literary characteristics like characters, rhetoric, style, syntax, plot, and imagery.¹⁰ This means the text is considered as a whole using all the devices.

Narrative analysis in Biblical studies involves examining the structure, content, and context of biblical narratives to gain a deeper understanding of the text. The elements include plot structure, characters, setting, point of view, themes and motives, rhetorical devices, intertextuality, structural analysis, and contextual analysis.

⁷ James L. Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism of the New Testament: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 18,19.

⁸ Fewell, *The Oxford Handbook of Biblical Narrative*, 3.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism of the New Testament*, 20.

Overview of Biblical Narratives in the Gospels

The gospels in the New Testament contain the central narratives about the life, teachings, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. There are four gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John each presenting a unique perspective on the events surrounding Jesus' life. In the overview of the gospels, Matthew begins with the genealogy of Jesus, Mark starts with the ministry of John the Baptist. Luke gives a detailed account of the birth of John the Baptist and Jesus. John begins with theology presenting Jesus as the eternal Word of God. Matthew touches more on the teachings of Jesus including the sermon on the Mount and climaxes with events leading to the crucifixion, death, burial, and resurrection. Mark focuses on the parables and finally the passion narrative. Luke focuses on parables, compassion, and a journey to Jerusalem while John includes signs and miracles, farewell discourse, and resurrection. Fewell says Jesus in Matthew is distinguished from other children condemned to infanticide by oppressive regimes.¹¹ He is the center of the gospel narratives. When we study gospel narratives we study Jesus.

Historical Context

The Author

The first gospel among the four is unanimously attributed to Matthew the Disciple. The internal evidence shows that the book was written by a Jew who was converted to Christianity. In this instance, Matthew fits well.¹² The fact that Matthew was a publican before he came to Christianity means he knew how to keep written records which qualified him to compose a historical narrative. The way Matthew

¹¹ Fewell, *The Oxford Handbook of Biblical Narrative*, 6.

¹² *The Vision Study Bible*, King James Version. (Seoul, Korea: Everlasting Gospel Publishing Association, 2013), 1.

referred to himself at the feast in Matthew 9:10 is similar to the way John, Mark, and Luke referred to themselves and this testifies to the fact that Matthew the disciple was the author of the first Gospel.¹³ Osborne and Arnold allude that the church fathers like Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Eusebius, and Origen all agree that apostle Matthew wrote the first Gospel.¹⁴ Morris suggests that the person who wrote the gospel did not see it necessary to explain the Jewish customs which means he was a Jew.¹⁵ He was a Jew writing to other Jews so there was no need to explain other issues of Jewish customs. Matthew 15:21-28 was written in this context.

The Recipients

Matthew's recipients are believed to be the Jewish community who were connected to the synagogue. According to Turner, Gundry and Stanton believed that the recipients of Matthew were the Jewish people.¹⁶ Ulrich Luz and Helmut Koester say the recipient of Matthew knew the history of Israel, a Christian, familiar with Jewish customs.¹⁷ This means the recipients of the Gospel of Matthew were Jewish Christians. Osborne and Arnold buttress that Matthew wrote a Jewish gospel.¹⁸ The initial audience was the Jews though the Gospel according to Blomberg was going to spread even to Gentiles and to everyone else.¹⁹

¹³ *The Vision Study Bible*, King James Version. (Seoul, Korea: Everlasting Gospel Publishing Association, 2013), 1.

¹⁴ Osborne and Arnold, *Matthew*, 33.

¹⁵ Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 2.

¹⁶ Turner, *Matthew*, 14.

¹⁷ Ulrich Luz and Helmut Koester, *Matthew: A Commentary*, V. 2- : Hermeneia--a Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1989), 16.

¹⁸ Osborne and Arnold, *Matthew*, 31.

¹⁹ Blomberg, *Matthew*, 7.

Relationship with Readers

According to Luz and Koester, Jesus is for the believing community and is described as the son of David. He comes not as a stranger but as the Lord.²⁰

Hendriksen says when Matthew wrote the gospel he was well aware that the Messiah according to prophecy stands related to the entire world. He mentions people like Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and wise men from the East.²¹ Hendriksen goes on to talk about the Centurion, the Canaanite woman, and many who will come from all over to sit with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in heaven.²²

Circumstances at the Writing of the Book

The Purpose of the Gospel

According to Hendriksen the purpose of the gospel was to win Jews for Christ and put emphasis that Jesus was the long-awaited Messiah²³ Osborne and Arnold say there are many purposes for Matthew though the main ones were to tell the story of Jesus and also that it is apologetic and evangelistic.²⁴

The Theme of the Book

The theme of the book according to Hendriksen is on the life of Jesus who came to give his life for many and to seek and save that which was lost.²⁵ This means

²⁰ Luz and Koester, *Matthew*, 17.

²¹ Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to Matthew*, 91.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*, 97.

²⁴ Osborne and Arnold, *Matthew*, 31.

²⁵ Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to Matthew*, 99.

the theme is on the incarnation, exemplary life, public ministry, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ.²⁶

The Pericope of Matthew 15:21-28

The pericope of Matthew 15:21-28 begins with Matthew 15:21 where we see Jesus withdrawing from the Jewish area and coming to the areas of Tyre and Sidon.²⁷ The pericope ends with verse 28 where the request of the woman is granted. Matthew 15:29 talks about Jesus moving on from there and Osborne and Arnold say verses 29-31 fit well with verses 32-39 where there are mountain scenes.²⁸ The immediate context is in Matthew 15:1-20 where Jesus addressed the Pharisees and the Scribes who came from Jerusalem over tradition and ceremonial defilement. There was contention with the Pharisees and Scribes which caused Jesus to leave the Jewish territory and proceed to the Gentile area.

Inclusion in Matthew 15:21-28

Inclusions are words, phrases or concepts that bracket narratives. They mark beginnings and endings of stories. At the same time they give a hint about the ideology of the narrator.²⁹ There is an inclusion in the story of the Canaanite woman. In Matthew 15:21 the story begins with “Then Jesus” when he came into the region of Tyre and Sidon v.21 and in 15:28 the story ends with “Then Jesus” when he now healed the daughter of the Canaanite woman. The story is about Jesus as the round character. At first, it says “then Jesus” departed to Tyre and Sidon, and at the end

²⁶ *The Vision Study Bible*, 1.

²⁷ Osborne and Arnold, *Matthew*, 597.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 600.

²⁹ James L. Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism of the New Testament: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 57,58.

“then Jesus” answered the woman’s request. This introduces the pericope as to where it started and also where it ended. Circumstances take place within the pericope which was a dialogue between Jesus and a Canaanite woman and it resulted in the healing of the woman’s daughter. It marks well where the pericope begins and where it ends. The other inclusion is about the woman in verse 22 which says “Behold the woman” At the end, it says “O woman”. This tells that the woman is an important character in the pericope. She plays a key role in the understanding of this passage. The other inclusion begins with γυνή (woman) v.22 and ends with θυγάτηρ (daughter) v.28. The woman approached Jesus and finally, the demon-possessed daughter was healed. Both are women. The mother was concerned about the condition of her daughter up to the point of seeking Jesus for assistance and her request was granted leading to the healing of the daughter.

Chiastic Structure in Matthew 15:21-28

In a chiasma as rhetoric, there is a crossover pattern of words, phrases, clauses, or ideas repeated in reverse order. These keep the reader’s or hearer’s attention focused on the main concept.³⁰

Have mercy on me Lord, son of David
 He answered her, not a word
 Send her away for she crieth after us
 I am not sent but to the lost sheep of Israel
 Came and worshiped “Lord help me”
 It is not good to cast children's food on dogs
 Dogs eat crumbs falling from masters’ table
 Be it unto thee even as thou wilt

³⁰ Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism of the New Testament*, 59.

The chiasmic structure shows the flow of the passage from the beginning to the end. It starts with the woman crying to Jesus for the healing of her daughter. It further reveals all the conversations that took place between Jesus and the woman. How she was first refused, how the disciples requested her dismissal, and finally how her faith was praised by Jesus resulting in the healing of the daughter.

The Genre

According to Osborne and Arnold, “Matthew is a gospel, but as a genre, a gospel refers to the theological biography of the life of Christ”.³¹ In its composition the gospel has stories from the Old Testament. It has history and non-historical sections. He goes on to say, it has Greco-Roman, Jewish, and Hellenistic biographies.³² Matthew 15:21-28 is a narrative and a miracle story which is to be interpreted using narrative devices.

Literary Context

In the literary context of Matthew 15:21-28, there are several connections between this story and what comes after. According to Osborne and Arnold, we can go back to the miracle genre. He says this goes once more to the area of discipleship, as a gentile woman became an example to the disciples of understanding and faith. Being a Gentile it relates to the issue of blind guides and that of the Gentile mission in Matthew.³³ The text is Matthew 1:5-6 where we find Ruth from outside the house of Israel coming into the genealogy of Jesus. Matthew 2:1-12 where the wise men from the east came to see the baby who was born. Matthew 4:14-16,25 says those who sat

³¹ Osborne and Arnold, *Matthew*, 30.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Ibid.*, 594.

in darkness saw the light. In Matthew 8:10-12 Jesus found faith from the Centurion which is not found in Israel. In the literary context Osborne and Arnold talk about rejection, suffering, and glory from Matthew 13:54-18:35, Jesus' deeds Matthew 13:54—17:27, rejection and discipleship 13:54-16:20, Jesus and tradition 15:1-20, further healing 15:21-31, the faith of the Canaanite woman 15:21-28, summary of healings 15:29-31 and the feeding of the 4000, 15:32-39.³⁴ The story of the Canaanite woman comes in this context. Jesus here is seen reaching out to the Gentiles.

Historical and Cultural Context of Matthew 15:21-28

The encounter between Jesus and the Canaanite woman is significant in the context of the ethnic and cultural dynamics of the time. The Canaanites were traditionally seen as the enemies of the Israelites in the Old Testament, and there was a historical enmity between the two groups. The fact that Jesus engages with this woman, despite her ethnicity, challenges the prevailing cultural norms of the time. The fact that Jesus engages in dialogue with a woman, a non-Jewish woman, also challenges prevailing cultural attitudes towards women in ancient Jewish society. Jesus' willingness to interact with women and treat them with dignity and respect was quite radical for the time.

Literal Analysis of the Structure, Plot, and Characters

Structure of Matthew 15:21-28

In a series of healing miracles, Matthew 15:21-28 is also found. It can be defined as a missional and discipleship story as well. The story involves two dialogue sequences verses 21-24, and 25-28 crowned by the healing of the daughter of a

³⁴ Osborne and Arnold, *Matthew*, 594.

Canaanite woman.³⁵ Verse 21 shows the withdrawal of Jesus from leaders of the Jews to Gentile woman. V. 22 gives the healing story. There is another inclusion of verse 22, woman, and verse 28 daughter. The story begins with the woman coming with her request for the healing of her daughter and at the end of the dialogue the daughter is healed of demon possession. The story is in dialogue verses 23-24. In verse 25 Jesus answers categorically. In verse 26 Jesus raises a new challenge which the woman answers in verse 27 resulting to the healing of the daughter in verse 28.³⁶

Repetitions

Repetitions help to identify the structure of the passage or the theme of the story. There are several repetitions in Matthew 15:21-28. These are repetitions of words and phrases. The first repetition is in the names of Jesus. These are: ὁ Ἰησοῦς, Κύριε, υἱὸς Δαυεὶδ, κυρίων. The name of Jesus is repeated also in the use of personal pronouns. He becomes the main character of the story. γυνή (woman) is also repeated in this narrative. θυγάτηρ (daughter) as a passive character is also repeated as one of the characters. On verbal repetitions ἀπεκρίθη, ἀποκριθεὶς. Jesus was always answering first in silence and finally by granting the request. ὁ δὲ ἀποκριθεὶς εἶπεν also repeated in this passage. This shows that there was communication in the narrative, the characters were giving out their opinions. The other repeated verb is λέγουσα (saying). This means there was confrontation between the characters and there was communication. The continual repetition of the request by the woman to say Ἐλέησόν με (have mercy to me), βοήθει μοι (help me) identifies the theme of the

³⁵ Osborne and Arnold, *Matthew*, 596.

³⁶ Ulrich Luz and Helmut Koester, *Matthew: A Commentary*, V. 2- : Hermeneia--a Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1989), 336.

passage as the power of Jesus in healing all sicknesses. Three times Jesus did not grant the request of the woman until he granted it in the fourth session.

Antithesis

According to Random House, antithesis means opposition, contrast, the placing of a sentence or one of its parts against another which it is opposed to form a balanced contrast of ideas.³⁷ In Matthew 15:21-28 the antithesis lies in the contrast between the woman's faith and persistence and the initial response of Jesus and his disciples. The Canaanite woman despite being from a region considered outside of Jewish territory and having a daughter possessed by a demon the woman approaches Jesus with faith, addressing him as Lord, Son of David verse 22. Initially, Jesus doesn't respond to the woman's plea. Disciples urge him to send her away but Jesus says he was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel verse 24. This indicates Jesus' focus on his ministry to the Jews and the perceived boundaries of his mission. Despite Jesus' seemingly dismissive response, the woman persists, kneeling before him and pleading, "Lord help me" verse 25.³⁸ Her persistence demonstrates her unwavering faith and desperation for her daughter's healing. Jesus acknowledges the woman's faith and demonstrates that his ministry extends beyond the boundaries initially perceived.

Hyperbole

When Jesus spoke of giving the children's bread to the dogs, he used hyperbolic language to emphasize the priority of his mission to the Israelites. This

³⁷ Random House (Firm), ed., *Random House Webster's College Dictionary: With CD-ROM*, Rev. and updated ed. (New York: Random House Reference, 2005), 57.

³⁸ Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 404.

exaggerated statement serves to highlight the perceived exclusivity of Jesus' ministry at that moment.

Paradox

A paradox is a figure of speech that seems absurd or contradictory yet upon closer reflection is true. It demands attention and causes us to slow down and think.³⁹ Matthew 15:21-28 contains a paradox or a seeming contradiction. The paradox lies in Jesus' initial response seeming to contradict his later actions and teachings about inclusivity and his universal message. Why would Jesus initially reject the woman based on her ethnicity, only to later commend her for faith and grant her request? Some would say he tested the faith of the woman, some would say he was teaching his disciples that faith can be found outside Israel. At first glance, the pericope presents a paradox but on deeper examination, it reveals themes of faith, perseverance, cultural context, and the inclusivity of Jesus' message.

Parallelism

Parallelism uses language in its customary way but departs from standard usage by placing words, phrases, concepts, and syntax in a parallel arrangement.⁴⁰ It involves the repetitions or juxtaposition of similar grammatical structures, phrases or phrases to create emphasis or clarity. In the passage, it is seen the repetitions of the woman's appeals such as Lord, Son of David have mercy on me, v. 22 and "Lord help me" v. 25. The parallel responses of Jesus are his emphasis on his mission to the lost sheep of Israel v. 24 and the metaphorical distinction between the children and the dogs v. 26. This emphasizes the interaction between Jesus and the Canaanite woman.

³⁹ Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism of the New Testament*, 62.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 61.

Themes

Luz and Koester talking about the theme of Matthew 15:21-28 say “the power of God’s love bursts the borders of Israel”⁴¹ This means everyone has a part in God’s kingdom. Osborne and Arnold say the coming in of the Gentiles does not replace the Jewish mission but these must go together.⁴²

Another theme is true faith as seen in the Canaanite woman. Osborne and Arnold assert that the faith of the woman was seen in her humility and absolute dependence on Jesus Christ. All true followers of Christ will take this attitude.⁴³ The other theme is in the power of Jesus to heal all manner of sickness as the Canaanite woman’s daughter was healed. They go on to say the delivery of the daughter from demon possession is a healing miracle done in a Gentile territory.⁴⁴

Two-Step Progression

A two-step progression is employed in this passage for emphasis. The use of ἐξελθὼν (after he left) and ἀνεχώρησεν (he withdrew) is employed for emphasis in verse 21. This stresses the coming out and the withdrawal of Jesus from the Jewish territory ideologically and geographically. The woman is mentioned (ἰδοὺ γυνή) and further specified that she is Canaanite (Χανααναία). This is a two-step progression to specify which woman came to Jesus. The narrator chose to be specific since there was history between Jews and Canaanites. The woman also used Κύριε υἱὸς Δαυεὶδ (Lord, son of David) in v.22 just for emphasis purposes to say who is this Lord, He is the

⁴¹ Luz and Koester, *Matthew*, 341.

⁴² Osborne and Arnold, *Matthew*, 603.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

Son of David. This was appealing to the Messianic title of Jesus and calling him to assist as Lord of everyone. Jesus also used the two-step progression in v. 24 πρόβατα τὰ ἀπολωλότα οἴκου Ἰσραὴλ to emphasize to whom his mission is pointed. To say the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Israel is the sheep and she is also the lost one.

Synecdoche

This pericope uses synecdoche where the Jews are called the children while the Gentiles are called the dogs in verse 26. This clarifies the state of Israel at that time and how the Gentiles were viewed. On the same note, the gospel is referred to as the bread and crumbs in verse 26,27. The bread is something special for someone to live. It is something you cannot live without. This means one cannot live without Jesus the bread. In a synecdoche the whole stand for a part or a part for the whole.

Understatement (Meiosis)

An understatement was used by Jesus when he said I am not sent but only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. He is not sent but he is sent to the house of Israel. He also used a diminutive when he used the word κυναρίοις referring to the Gentiles as small house pets. He also used hyperbole in verse 26 to illustrate the gospel with children's bread cast to the dogs. The point is understood without taking it literally that is what he tried to put across.

Metaphors

In this pericope, metaphors are used. The metaphor of sound appears here when the woman is found crying after the disciples and Jesus. The cry tells what the woman feels about the challenge faced by her daughter. In sounding the cry high she expected to be heard and her problem attended to. As Morris noted that woman

(ἔκραζεν) shouted.⁴⁵ This means the woman was not speaking ordinarily, but at the top of her voice to make known the challenge she had for her daughter. The sound tells of the magnitude of the problem. The other metaphor in this narrative is bread referring to the gospel or the benefits of the gospel v.26. This is to say he could not take the benefits of the gospel which belongs to Israel and throw it to the dogs which were Gentiles v.26. Crumbs also refer to the gospel which the woman claims for the healing of her daughter as long as it comes from the main loaf of bread. This shows how she trusted in what Jesus could offer. She knew that it was enough to bring healing to the daughter. The bread is something of high value and it is equated to the gospel while crumbs are those small pieces of the gospel that the woman was saying it was enough to satisfy her needs. This means the healing of her daughter doesn't take much from the food of children.

The other metaphor is the sheep which refers to the children of Israel, while dogs refer to the Gentiles. In this case, children, and lost sheep, refer to the house of Israel. These metaphors help one to understand the passage differently for example Israelites are called children, and they are also called sheep v. 24. A sheep is an animal with admirable characteristics the same applies to children. The Gentiles are likened to dogs in the Jewish mind. Of note is that Jesus did not use κύων the term referring to scavenger dogs as Jews used to say but he used κυναρίοις referring to little house pets.

Setting

Following a confrontation between Jesus and Pharisees and scribes in Matthew 15:1-20, Jesus withdrew and went outside Jewish territory to the coasts of

⁴⁵ Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 401.

Tyre and Sidon. The primary setting is temporal when Jesus left the Jewish territory. Scholars have mentioned that he left the area geographically and ideologically. Meaning to say having clashed with Jewish leaders Jesus decided to go and take refuge away from the Jewish territory. When he withdrew the setting became spatial according to Osborne and Arnold.⁴⁶ Jesus arrived in the region v.21. In the region He comes across a woman with a social problem. Her daughter was affected by demon possession.

The geographical setting in v.21 is the region of Tyre and Sidon. In this region lived the Canaanites who were enemies of Israel. This is the region where Jesus met the Canaanite woman.⁴⁷ The Gentiles lived in this area. Matthew mentions the woman as a Canaanite to emphasize the relationship between the Jews and the Canaanites. The daughter of the woman had a demon possession. The mother approached Jesus coming out of that region and asked him to heal her daughter. The encounter of Jesus with this woman outside the typical Jewish territory where he conducted his ministry among the Jewish population demonstrates his willingness to extend his ministry beyond the boundaries of Israel.

The social settings are the areas of Tyre and Sidon which were predominantly Gentile territories. Jesus and his disciples moved beyond Jewish regions. Cultural settings involve the interaction between a woman from a Canaanite background with cultural distinctions and these were outsiders to the Jewish community. Religiously Jesus and his disciples were of Jewish faith while the woman was a Canaanite. This was an encounter between two religious contexts. In the political setting, the area was under the Romans at that time.

⁴⁶ Osborne and Arnold, *Matthew*, 595.

⁴⁷ France, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 591, 592.

In summary, the pericope presents themes of cultural and religious boundaries that are being challenged. The pericope serves as a good example of transcending social, cultural, religious, and political boundaries through faith and compassion.

Props

Props include bread(ἄρτον), crumbs (ψιγίων), hands, dog (κυναρίοις), and the table (τραπέζης). These add to the development of the themes in the passage. Jesus said the children's bread could not be taken by hands and thrown to dogs. The woman said the dogs can also pick up the crumbs that fall from the master's table.

Characterization

Characters are persons in a narrative.⁴⁸ They reveal themselves in their speech in what they say and how they say it and also in their actions, gesture, or posture.⁴⁹ Characters are also known by what others say about them. Or what the narrator says about them. They are further known by the environment or setting in which they work and play. Position in the society also describe a character.⁵⁰ The following characters are found in this pericope:

Jesus

In Matthew 15:21-28 Jesus is the main character of the narrative. He is the leading speaker throughout the passage. He is interrupted by the Canaanite woman who is repeatedly asking for the healing of her daughter. He is also confronted by the disciples taking turns requesting him to send the woman away. Jesus comes out as a

⁴⁸ Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism of the New Testament*, 121.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 122.

round character and he has many dimensions, He surprises the reader especially when he cannot answer a word to the woman (v.23). Jesus is well labeled as a round character. In this pericope, Jesus is referred to three times as Lord, once as the son of David, and two times as Jesus in the opening v.21 and in the closing v.28 which marks an inclusion. He is rightly addressed as Lord and Son of David for an appeal to his Messianic titles. The narrator is silent on why Jesus chose to be silent in the first request by the woman. He also surprised the disciples when he did not answer their appeal of sending the woman away (v.23). Instead of siding with his disciples and chasing the woman away Jesus surprised his disciples by not taking their advice. He further surprised the woman by telling her that children's food cannot be cast to dogs (v. 26).

The final surprise was that of healing the woman's daughter from a distance (28). Jesus was known as a compassionate and merciful teacher in the gospels who was always ready to assist. But in this case, he initially chose to ignore the woman (v.23) but finally acknowledged the faith of the woman. He used this opportunity to make the woman highlight her strong faith. Characters being identified by what they say we see Jesus not answering a word and not showing frustration facially thus leaving room for the Canaanite woman to further her request. Jesus is further presented by showing and by telling. In v. 21 Jesus went into the region. In v. 22 he answered not a word. In v. 24 He answered. In v. 26 He answered. And in v. 28 "then Jesus answered". In the statement where he said, "I am not sent but only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" sounds as if it was not directed to either the disciples or the woman but Jesus appears to be talking to himself. It also leaves a positive light on the woman. Had Jesus intended to chase the woman away the woman could have read it at his face.

In summary, Jesus is presented as a round character who surprises the readers on many levels in this passage. He is presented as a Lord who can heal even from a distance and as a loving savior who has no ethnical boundaries. He acted as Lord over every situation.

The Woman

According to Resseguie the Canaanite woman being a minor character, is surprising in that she could not take a no for an answer. She has traits of perseverance, faith, and also humor. This makes her a round character.⁵¹ The woman also shows a foil character. When her faith as a Gentile is contrasted with that of the disciples she demonstrates great faith.⁵² The woman signified persistence and humility (v.27). Despite Jesus' initial silence, a plea by disciples to send her away and also the posture of reverence in which she showed and how she addressed Jesus show that she was a humble character. The fact that she was called a dog demonstrated humility and persistence on her part and also that she had unwavering faith that Jesus could heal her daughter. The Canaanite woman can also be called a marginalized character because of her status as a woman in the first century in Palestine, and also the fact that she was a Gentile woman but approaching a Jewish man

Disciples

Disciples signified a round character with complex and conflicting traits.⁵³ These traits are seen in their request that the woman should be sent away because she cried after them. Instead of requesting that the daughter be healed, they looked at a

⁵¹ Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism of the New Testament*, 123, 124.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 124.

⁵³ Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism of the New Testament*, 123.

Gentile woman who was not a Jew and concluded that she should not cry after them. They showed a limited understanding of the mission of Jesus. The disciples appears once in this pericope. The author did not show us that they talked to the woman but he showed us that they made their request to Jesus.

The Daughter

The daughter was a marginalized character because she was shamed by demon possession and also the fact that she was a daughter thus being a woman who was among the marginalized at that time.⁵⁴ With all the barriers her mother was undeterred in approaching Jesus and forwarding the request not accepting a no as an answer for she wanted to see her daughter healed. The author did not tell us where the daughter was. We are left guessing that maybe she was left home. She never spoke in the passage. The mother is the one speaking about her.

Movement

The concept of movement is important in the understanding of this pericope. There is some movement happening. Jesus moves away from the Jewish territory and comes into the region of Tyre and Sidon v. 21. The woman comes out of the same coast to meet him v. 22. Morris says Sidon was twenty five miles north of Tyre which is the same distance from Jesus' Galilean haunts. He says the round journey could have taken months suggested by sitting on the green grass (14:19) and on the ground (15:35) which is the difference between spring and late summer.⁵⁵ This suggest that a long distance was covered by foot. Morris points out that the imperfect tense used

⁵⁴ Ibid., 137, 138.

⁵⁵ Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 401.

(ἔκραζεν) suggests that she kept shouting.⁵⁶ Morris says since she had been shouting which indicates distance and urgency.⁵⁷ This means she was following behind Jesus. There was movement from one point to the next. The movement was directionally since at the beginning of the next pericope Jesus was found near the sea of Galilee v.29. In the conversation at first Jesus did not answer a word, in the second response it's like he directed the conversation to himself.

In the third response Jesus addressed the woman direct to say it is not good to take children's food and cast it to dogs. In the fourth response, Jesus addressed the woman direct and said O woman your faith is great. Morris confirms that "O" is not common in this gospel. It is used twice and here it is when Jesus directly addressed the woman and granted her request.⁵⁸

Point of View

Point of view is about how the story gets told. What characters do, rhetoric, and the setting are presented from the narrator's perspective. In Matthew 15:21-28 the narrator is outside the story. According to J. P. Fokkeman and Ineke Smit the narrator is third-person limited.⁵⁹ He does not know the thoughts, actions, and feelings of the characters involved. The writer of Matthew 15:21-28 does not know the feelings and thoughts of the woman crying for the healing of her daughter. He also did not know the thoughts of the disciples who were saying the woman must be sent away for she crieth after them. He presents the account without expressing personal opinions or

⁵⁶ Ibid., 402.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 404.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 405.

⁵⁹ J. P. Fokkeman and Ineke Smit, *Reading Biblical Narrative: An Introductory Guide* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 70.

biases. He is not a character in the story. He calls the characters by their names. He moves from character to character, and event to event. Russeguie points out that the third-person limited narrator refers to characters by names or by “he”, “she”, or “they”. He goes on to say Gospel writers are third-person limited or omniscient narrators for they roam from character to character and event to event. The point of view is ideological.⁶⁰ The point of view adopted for the narrative being ideological, Jesus is called Lord by a Canaanite woman. The woman realized the Lordship of Jesus and also that he is Lord to everyone. She exhibited faith in Jesus. Here we see Jesus changing the point of view. Jesus’ final response of saying “O woman” indicates considerable emotion by Jesus according to Warren Carter.⁶¹ Russeguie says at first, he did not answer a word, but finally, he applauded the woman’s faith and granted her request.⁶²

Plot

Plot determines the structure, unity, and direction of a narrative. At the beginning of the plot, we see Jesus coming into the region v.21 and meeting a woman. The woman approached Jesus because her daughter was heavily affected by demons v.22. The woman faced a conflict of demon possession in the home and she was forced to seek Jesus. When she approached Jesus she was faced with suspense. She asked Jesus to heal her daughter but Jesus did not answer her a word. When she continued to ask, Jesus said he was sent but only to the house of Israel v.24. Coming near and worshipping, Jesus said he can not give children’s food to dogs v.26. Through

⁶⁰ Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism of the New Testament*, 168.

⁶¹ Warren Carter, *Matthew and the Margins: A Sociopolitical and Religious Reading*, The Bible & Liberation Series (Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis Books, 2000), 412.

⁶² Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism of the New Testament*, 180, 181.

humility and perseverance v.27 her suspense was released when Jesus granted her request v.28. The surprising part occurs when we follow the events of the story finally seeing the daughter healed from a distance. The woman faced a dilemma in this pericope which was rejection and the indifference of Jesus but she solved it through her persistence and faith.

Plot Pattern

The story of the Canaanite woman is a U-shaped plot. The story begins with Jesus coming into the region of Tyre and Sidon. The woman approaches Jesus on behalf of her daughter thus the falling pattern. Jesus answers no word, the disciples make an appeal that Jesus sends away the woman, the problem is intensified by Jesus telling the woman that he cannot give children's food to dogs, thus calling Gentiles as dogs. The rising pattern begins when the woman agrees that even the dogs pick crumbs falling from the masters' tables. The resolution finally arrives when the faith of the woman is recognized and the request is granted.

Verb Usages in the Pericope

The use of verbs in the pericope in narrative studies has usually been limited to discussions on the temporal development of the pericope. They have not been treated independently. It has recently been given a contextual approach, allowing for both temporal and aspect nature in tense, giving reason to re-evaluate the viewpoint.

In the pericope, the first verb is about Jesus leaving (ἐξελθὼν) this is in the aorist participle. Thus Jesus came out of the Jewish territory. In coming out he withdrew (ἀνεχώρησεν).⁶³ This is an aorist in the indicative mood referring to Jesus who withdrew to take refuge in the Gentile territory of Tyre and Sidon. On coming

⁶³ Hagner and Metzger, *Matthew 14 - 28*, 440.

into this region he is approached by a woman who came out (ἐξελθοῦσα) of that region.⁶⁴ Coming out of that region the woman was crying out (ἔκραζεν). Gundry says the woman started yelling out.⁶⁵ The word is in the imperfect to show that it was continuous. The woman was yelling out saying (λέγουσα). The verb is a present active participle. She was saying (Ἐλέησόν) “Have mercy” which is an imperative signifying a command to Jesus. Morris says she was claiming a reward for merit.⁶⁶ Her problem was with her daughter who was demon-possessed (δαιμονίζεται). The verb is in the present indicative middle or passive deponent to say the daughter was demon-possessed. In response, Jesus answered (ἀπεκρίθη) not a word. The aorist indicative middle deponent.

Gundry says Jesus not answering a word assisted the woman to play up her faith.⁶⁷ Disciples came near (προσελθόντες) second aorist participle. Realizing the situation the disciples came near to Jesus to make a request. Having come near they kept on asking (ἠρώτουν).⁶⁸ The verb is in the imperfect to mean they kept on asking and saying send her away (Ἀπόλυσον). The verb is in the imperative which is a command. Morris asserts that they wanted to get rid of the woman.⁶⁹ The woman cried out from behind (κράζει ὀπίσθεν). She was following behind. Answering Jesus said (Οὐκ ἀπεστάλην) second aorist passive meaning he is sent but only to Israel. But he is sent by God to focus on the lost house of Israel (ἀπολωλότα) at that

⁶⁴ Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 401.

⁶⁵ Gundry, *Commentary on the New Testament*, 69.

⁶⁶ Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 402.

⁶⁷ Gundry, *Commentary on the New Testament*, 69.

⁶⁸ Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 402.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 403.

time. She came worshiping (ἐλθοῦσα προσεκύνει). Morris says she knelt showing bodily expression.⁷⁰ The verb is imperfect to indicate a continuous worship saying help me (βοήθει). The present imperative claims the help of the Lord. Jesus said it is not good to take (λαβεῖν). This is an infinitive aorist. To take the food and cast (βαλεῖν) to the dogs. The woman said the dogs eat (ἐσθίει) the crumbs that fall (πιπτόντων) from their masters' table. Then Jesus said O woman let it happen (γενηθήτω) as you wish. The verb is in the aorist imperative passive deponent. Jesus commanded healing as per the wish (θέλεις) of the mother and the daughter was healed (ιάθη). The verb is aorist indicative passive, to say the daughter was healed as Jesus commanded.

In summary, the aorist usually dominates the narrative account but here we saw the present and imperfect tenses at play. The range of tense usages stretched from the aorist, to imperfect and to the present. The aorist indicatives introduced the speeches. The imperatives featured to introduce the commands. The aorist indicates that Jesus is authoritative what he said came to fruition. The present imperatives introduced the request of the woman. The aorist was employed here to describe the authoritative actions of Jesus like his withdrawal from the Jewish territory, his response to the woman, and his action of healing the daughter.

The Readers of Matthew 15:21-28 and Their Expectations

The pericope evokes various reader expectations. These include compassion and healing where readers expect Jesus to respond with compassion and heal the woman's daughter following his reputation of miracles and help to those who are

⁷⁰ Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 404.

needy. The initial response of Jesus may raise expectations regarding his attitude towards non-Jews. Readers may also expect the importance of persistence in prayer and faith in seeking help from Jesus. Readers after the healing of the daughter will expect inclusion and universality of salvation. These expectations may vary due to theological backgrounds, cultural context, and personal spiritual journey.

While the expectations of the woman were initially frustrated by Jesus' response, ultimately they were fulfilled as to her desires. Having read the pericope through, the new point of view developed is the recognition of faith beyond ethnic or religious boundaries. Jesus assisted his disciples who thought that the mission of Jesus was solely for the Jews in appreciating the Gentile mission.

Stage Preparation

Stage preparation in a narrative refers to the process of setting the scene or establishing the setting before the main action of the story takes place. It involves providing the reader or audience with essential information about the physical environment, the time, and the characters involved. It helps to immerse the audience in the world of the story and provide context for the events that will unfold.

In Matthew 15:21-28 there is an account of Jesus encountering the Canaanite woman who approaches him seeking healing for her daughter who was demon-possessed. In setting the stage the narrative unfolds in the region of Tyre and Sidon described as non-responsive cities according to Carter ⁷¹, and these were Gentile territories as Gundry also noted.⁷² This is significant because it sets the context for the encounter between Jesus, a Jewish teacher, and a Gentile woman. The primary

⁷¹ Carter, *Matthew and the Margins*, 408.

⁷² Gundry, *Commentary on the New Testament*, 69.

characters introduced are Jesus and the Canaanite woman. Jesus in characterization is introduced as a teacher and compassionate healer. He is the prominent character in the pericope, while the woman is depicted as a desperate mother seeking help for her afflicted daughter.

The conflict begins when the woman requests help from Jesus for the healing of her daughter. Carter says the woman came out of her region as much as Jesus came out of the Jewish territory.⁷³ Despite her earnest pleas Jesus ignores her, which may seem surprising given his reputation for compassion and healing. The woman was persistent and she had faith. She acknowledged Jesus as the Son of David and further expressed her belief that Jesus was able to heal her daughter. The dialogue between him and the Canaanite woman warrants close investigation because it has to do with missional implications in the contemporary Christian mission. Describing the relationship between the Tyrians and Israel Josephus says these were bitterest enemies.⁷⁴ The encounter of Jesus with the woman was set to define the Gentile mission.

The requests of the woman versus the response of Jesus are critical in addressing the narrative in contemporary Christian mission. Carter says the woman expected the same treatment that was given to Jewish women who benefited from the healings of Jesus.⁷⁵ Jesus tested the faith of the woman by telling her that he could not take children's food and cast it on the dogs. The resolution comes when the woman's faith and humility prove to be unwavering. She cleverly accepted the words of Jesus and trusted that even the crumbs from the table of God's blessings were sufficient for

⁷³ Carter, *Matthew and the Margins*, 408.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

her needs. Finally, Jesus acknowledged the woman's great faith and granted her request by healing her daughter from that very hour. The resolution highlights the transformative power of faith and the inclusivity of Jesus' ministry, going beyond ethnic boundaries. God's grace is available to all who believe regardless of their background.

A Discourse of Disclosure

In a narrative theory, the discourse of disclosure refers to the way the information is revealed or unveiled throughout the story. It encompasses the techniques and strategies used by the author to disclose or reveal information to the audience or reader. This includes elements like narrative structure, point of view, pacing, dialogue, description, and plot twists.

The discourse of disclosure shapes the narrative experience for the audience. It can create suspense, tension, surprise, or dramatic irony by strategically revealing information at specific points in the story. Authors may choose to reveal information gradually, building anticipation, or employ sudden revelations to subvert expectations and create dramatic impact.

In Matthew 15:21-28 the discourse of disclosure revolves around key several themes which are ethnic and cultural boundaries. The encounter raises questions about ethnic and cultural boundaries. Jesus initially seems to prioritize his ministry towards the Israelites but the woman persists and challenges this boundary. This becomes a moment of revelation about the inclusive nature of Jesus' mission.

The woman's faith and persistence are central to the passage. Carter indicates that it is not clear how the woman heard of Jesus.⁷⁶ Despite being initially ignored and

⁷⁶ Carter, *Matthew and the Margins*, 409.

faced with dismissal for Carter says there was no instant help, she continued to pursue Jesus for help.⁷⁷ This reveals the depth of her faith and understanding of Jesus's power. Humility and acceptance come out when Jesus says children's food cannot be given to the dogs which might seem very harsh it serves to test the woman's faith and humility.⁷⁸ She responded with humility, acknowledging her place, yet expressing her faith in Jesus's ability to help even beyond the boundaries she is placed in. Carter said the mission of Jesus' mission upheld Israel's temporal priority.⁷⁹

Ultimately the narrative reveals the inclusivity of God's kingdom for the woman challenged the ideology of chosenness which restricted the mission of Jesus and his disciples to Israel.⁸⁰ While at first, Jesus focused on the Jewish people, this encounter shows that his grace and power are available to all who approach him in faith, regardless of ethnic or cultural background. Carter argues that even Jesus' comment maintained the status quo of ethnic, cultural, religious, gender, and political division but the woman in her response moved beyond all these barriers and sought God's promises to bless all nations of the earth Genesis 12:1-13.⁸¹

In summary, the discourse of disclosure in Matthew 15:21-28 highlights themes of faith, persistence, humility, and the inclusive nature of God's Kingdom. It serves as a powerful demonstration of Jesus's willingness to extend his grace and mercy to all who come to him in faith.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 404.

⁷⁹ Carter, *Matthew and the Margins*, 410.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid., 411.

CHAPTER 4

MISSIONAL IMPLICATIONS OF MATTHEW 15:21-28 TO THE CONTEMPORARY CHRISTIAN MISSION

Matthew 15:21-28 explores themes of faith, humility, and inclusivity of God's kingdom. In this section, the research will explore the inclusivity of God's kingdom, outreach, the breaking of cultural barriers, persistent faith, a humble and teachable spirit, the transformative power of faith, recognition of faith beyond boundaries, and demonstration of compassion and mercy. As Luz and Koester put it Jesus did not confine God within the borders of Israel.¹ He went off the Jewish territory even to the Gentile region of Tyre and Sidon. Thus, there are some implications for the mission of the Seventh-Day Adventist church in Zimbabwe. These are discussed in the following sections.

The Inclusivity of God's Kingdom

Some people may think that the mission of Jesus was selective by looking at the way he related to the Canaanite woman. But could be observed that Jesus was not selective. Leon Morris alludes that he went into a foreign and heathen territory.² It was not a mistake for Jesus to find himself in this foreign territory. Luz and Koester allude that the going out of Jesus to the Gentile region was a signal for the church that lives among the Gentiles with the task of proclaiming the gospel of Jesus to them.³ As mentioned earlier because of the opposition he encountered with the Pharisees he

¹ Luz and Koester, *Matthew*, 341.

² Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, Repr. (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1995), 401.

³ Luz and Koester, *Matthew*, 341.

withdrew geographically and ideologically to a Gentile area. As Luz and Koester assert the power of God's love bursts the borders of Israel.⁴ In his love God is not selective. In the book of Matthew, it is mentioned that the Gentile wise men from the east came and celebrated the birth of the Messiah and gave gifts to him (2:1-12). In his wisdom God allowed the Gentile to be in the genealogy of the Messiah. These are Rachab and Ruth (vv.5-6). Matthew 4:14-16,25 talks about people who sat in darkness and saw great light including the Gentiles who lived beyond Jordan. All these had a share in the mission of Jesus and the same applies to everyone who believes even today.

Jesus marveled when he saw the faith of the Centurion and said he had never seen such faith even in Israel. He went on to say many shall come from east and west and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven (8:10-12). This means God's mission is not limited to a particular tribe or nation; all are welcome. If Jesus had nothing to do with the Canaanite woman he was going to dismiss her right away. By keeping silent to the woman he invited for more interaction with her. The silence was a positive answer rather than a negative one.

Seeing that the mission of Jesus initially targeted the house of Israel. This encounter of Jesus with the Canaanite woman shows that the mission of Jesus extends beyond ethnic boundaries. The church today must embrace a mindset of total outreach, recognizing that the message of Jesus is for all people regardless of their background or ethnicity. This challenges the contemporary Christian church to engage in outreach to diverse communities actively, breaking down barriers and welcoming all into the kingdom of God. As the SDA church today engages in mission it needs to

⁴ Luz and Koester, *Matthew*, 341.

target even those ethnic groups who seem to be left behind. Like in my country, Zimbabwe, the Khoi Sen community has been left behind for all the years, fortunately, the church has managed to establish the first church there. The Khoi Sen community for many years used to be nomadic. For many years this community could not mix well with other communities. They used to live in the bush and their way of life was that of hunting and even today some of them still maintain this lifestyle.

The shortage of schools and health facilities is a big challenge in the Khoi Sen communities. The few residents who have realized the importance of education access schools far from their homes because there are no schools nearby. This affects a lot the development of those communities. The church has done very little so far to curb the situation in these communities. There is a marked shortage of food, clothing, clean water, and sanitation in these communities. The level of literacy is very low. People of those communities can not read or write. This poses serious missional challenges for the SDA Churches to reach out to these communities. To maintain the inclusivity of God's kingdom the SDA Church needs to come out with deliberate actions that will assist penetrate and reach out to these communities.

The Breaking of Cultural Barriers

The cultural barriers were common in Palestine during the first century. Gentiles and women were not allowed to approach a Jewish man. Luz and Koester say this story is a salvation history of the church that lives among the Gentiles. Jesus moved out of the boundaries of Israel. The woman broke the cultural boundaries and approached Jesus without considering that culture does not allow women or Gentiles to come closer to Jesus.⁵ Jesus, a Jew engages positively with a Gentile woman. Some

⁵ Luz and Koester, *Matthew*, 341.

churches today in the SDA church still have a problem accepting the Department of Women's Ministries. They still have a problem with women preaching in the church. This means they are still upholding gender and cultural barriers. Carter says in performing the miracle, Jesus overcame all the ethnic, cultural, political, gender, and religious barriers.⁶ This has implications for the missional approach, encouraging believers to break down cultural barriers in their outreach efforts. Those churches that restrict women in worship should understand that everyone has a room in Jesus whether male or female. This emphasizes the importance of embracing diversity and reaching out to those outside one's immediate community, culture, or gender. There is no more Jew or Gentile, male or female.

There is another challenge in Zimbabwe in that the Matebeleland Region does not see it necessary to have Shona speaking churches in their region. They even have a problem of establishing Shona speaking sabbath school classes. The same apply to the Mashonaland side. There are no Ndebele speaking churches there. All these things are done on tribal grounds. Such tribal issues are a big challenge to the mission of the church. Of late the first Shona speaking church that was established in Matebeleland Region was closed by leadership citing that all the Shona speaking people will withdraw from their churches to join this new church. All this is on cultural and tribal grounds. There are barriers that have missional implications. People want to here the gospel in their own languages. The Pestecostal churches that we are competing with have no such problems. So the SDA Church in Zimbabwe loses many people to these Pestecostal churches which have no such boundaries.

⁶ Carter, *Matthew and the Margins*, 412.

In verse 21 the salvation history scope is revealed.⁷ Jesus leaves the Jewish community and comes straight to the Gentiles of the worst sort the Canaanites who were enemies of Israel. In that region, he talks to a woman and heals her daughter. He found faith that could not be compared to even his disciples who were with him every day. Luz and Koester say the disciples tried to frighten the woman away.⁸ They were upholding the Jewish custom that the Gentiles should not come near to Jesus. Jesus did not respond to the plea of the disciples. Instead of sending the woman away, he simply said I am not sent but only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. The disciples were the ones who made a request but on responding Jesus did not address the woman or the disciples but it is as if he was speaking to himself. The woman remained with a chance to go forward with her request.

Persistent Faith

The ethnic, cultural, religious, economic, political, and gender barriers stood against the woman but she persisted in her faith.⁹ Disciples taking turns to request Jesus to divorce or dismiss the woman she did not despair. Being taken as marginal she continued to cry and this qualifies her as a round character.¹⁰ Kneeling before Jesus with submissiveness she stood against the ideology of chosenness. Even being told that children's food cannot be thrown to dogs she admitted in humility and said dogs pick crumbs that fall from the table of their masters.¹¹ Even though the faith of

⁷ Luz and Koester, *Matthew*, 338.

⁸ Luz and Koester, *Matthew*, 339.

⁹ Carter, *Matthew and the Margins*, 409.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 410.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 411.

the woman was stretched to an extreme end she still recognized that Jesus is Lord and he can heal her daughter.

Carter says the woman understood and maintained the status quo of ethnic, cultural, religious, gender, and political division but she went beyond all the barriers and upheld the faithfulness of God to the blessing of all nations Gen. 12:1-3.¹² Having passed the test Jesus said “O woman your faith is great. Let it be done to you as you want it to be”. Jesus found faith in a Gentile region and this means everyone through his or her faith is acceptable to God without any barrier. The passage encourages contemporary Christians to persevere in their prayers and faith even in the face of challenges and apparent setbacks. They should trust in God’s goodness and persistently seek His intervention in all circumstances.

A Humble and Teachable Spirit

Jesus’ response to the woman also highlights the importance of humility and teachability in mission work. He recognizes and commends her faith demonstrating that God’s kingdom is not exclusive but embraces all who approach God with humble and genuine faith. As stated before the wisemen from the east were Gentiles, the Centurion was also Gentile and the Canaanite woman was also Gentile but in humility, they approached Jesus genuinely and they were accepted. In the interaction of Jesus with the woman every step was a learning curve and she learned that the mission of Jesus covers everyone by faith. The contemporary Christian church is called to humble itself before God, recognizing His sovereignty and submitting to His will. This narrative reminds Christians that true faith involves humility and

¹² Carter, *Matthew and the Margins*, 411.

recognition of God's authority over all aspects of life. As Jesus taught his disciples, this humility includes acceptance of the excluded and a mission to such people.

The Transformative Power of Faith

The Canaanite woman's faith transforms the situation. Her trust in Jesus results in the healing of her daughter. This underscores the transformative power of faith in the missional context. Thus, another implication is that believers are encouraged to rely on faith as a powerful force for change in their mission, trusting that God can bring about transformation in the lives of individuals and communities even among those who may be considered excluded.

Recognition of Faith Beyond Boundaries

Jesus commends the Canaanite woman for her faith, highlighting the fact that faith transcends ethnic or religious boundaries. In the contemporary context, this challenges the church to recognize and affirm the faith of individuals from diverse backgrounds, even those who may seem outside the traditional boundaries of the Christian community. The church must be open to acknowledging and celebrating expressions of faith wherever they are found.

Demonstration of Compassion and Mercy

Ultimately, Jesus demonstrates compassion and mercy by healing the Canaanite woman's daughter. This serves as a model for the contemporary church to embody compassion and mercy in its mission and ministry. The church is called to be a source of healing and restoration, reaching out to those in need with love and compassion, just as Jesus did to the woman and her daughter.

Summary

In summary, the missional implications of Matthew 15:21-28 for the contemporary Christian church underscores the importance of inclusivity, persistence in prayer and faith, humility, recognition of God's sovereignty, affirmation of faith beyond boundaries, and demonstration of compassion and mercy in mission and ministry. This suggests that everyone has a place in the ministry of Jesus without considering social status, political, cultural, or ethnic background. The challenges highlighted in the context of Zimbabwe are hindrance to the mission of the church. The acceptance of the Canaanite woman is there to represent all the Gentile world before the plan of salvation. After resurrection in Matthew 28:18-20, the command says the gospel must be preached to all the world. Persistence and faith are essential in the Christian walk. Christians are to approach God by faith with perseverance. Humility is also essential and the sovereignty of God must be recognized when one is to approach God.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The chapter will cover the summary of the chapters. It will also cover the recommendations. The study has narratively examined Matthew 15:21-28. It also looked at the missional implications of the narrative in contemporary Christian missions. The results of the analysis illustrate that the pericope is a tightly woven narrative unit with serious missional implications. It presents a conflict between Jesus, his disciples, and the Canaanite woman. In 15:21 Jesus withdraws from the Jewish territory after he conflicts with Pharisees and scribes and he sought refuge in the Gentile Region of Tyre and Sidon. In verse 22 the woman from the region approaches Jesus crying for the healing of her daughter who was demon-possessed. She calls Jesus by his messianic name (Lord, Son of David). Jesus did not answer a word. This is where other scholars conclude that this was the most harsh treatment Jesus gave to the Gentile woman.

What comes out in the narrative is that if Jesus wanted to dismiss the woman he would have done it right away. Analyzing the silence, it comes out that Jesus was simply giving the woman a chance to show her faith. This was a positive response which might seem very negative to some on a surface reading. But when you do a close reading you discover that the move was positive only giving a chance to the woman to show her faith. The woman continued to cry for help. The use of the imperfect verb here indicates that the woman cried continuously.

The disciples came seeking the dismissal of the woman. The use of the imperfect also indicates that the disciples took turns to appeal to Jesus for the dismissal of the woman. In response, Jesus said He was not sent but only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel verse 24. The response does not come out clearly who Jesus was talking to. Was he talking to the disciples or the woman or He was talking to himself? Some scholars say he talked to himself. If He wanted to chase the woman away he would have done so. The reply may seem exclusive but the fact that He did not chase the woman away shows that the reply is still positive. There is still more room for the woman to show her faith and persistence.

In verse 25, the woman came closer to Jesus and worshiped him saying “Lord help me.” In response, Jesus said it is not good to take children’s food and cast it on the dogs. Here Jesus used a term referring to house puppies though some scholars say a dog is a dog whether small or big. The fact is that he did not use the term which referred to scavenger dogs who roamed by the streets at that time as Jewish people used to call Gentiles. The woman in her humility agrees and says “Yes Lord” even the dogs pick crumbs that fall from the master's table verse 27. She took advantage of the term used by Jesus and used it to her benefit to say even little dogs eat from the tables of the masters.

With this faith and perseverance, Jesus said to the woman, “O woman your faith is great.” He granted the request of the woman. The daughter was healed at that same hour verse 28. The faith of the woman was proved, and finally the response came out positive. The daughter was healed.

The rhetoric figures were also used to analyze the narrative. These are plot, geographic space, props, characterization, and movement. In addition to that verbal usage was also considered and it was discovered that the passage used aorist to

declare the authoritative actions of Jesus and also the imperative present tenses showing the authority of Jesus to command healing even from a distance. Chapter 4 considered the missional implications where it was discovered that by the miracle healing of the daughter Jesus overcame ethnic, cultural, gender, religious, and political barriers. The mission of Jesus covers everyone without consideration of any background. Everyone is free to approach Jesus by faith. With this, it is appropriate to make the following recommendations.

Recommendations

The SDA church, in my context, needs to admit that the mission of Jesus included the Gentiles so the church must have no boundary of any nature in reaching out to the communities and neighbors. In the Khoi Sen community, the SDA church in Zimbabwe needs to have a deliberate program of establishing schools, and health centers and build churches there. The church also needs to impart life skills to these communities. There is a need for food, clothing distribution, and general life skills. Where equipment is required the church needs to provide it. Through Jesus' method, the Khoi Sen people will gain confidence in the church and then the church will bid them to follow.

Furthermore, it is needful that the Christian church realizes that Jesus broke the cultural, social, political, religious, and gender barriers by crossing Jewish boundaries and going to areas of Tyre and Sidon the worst enemies of the Jews, and healing the Canaanite woman's daughter who was demon-possessed. The SDA Church in Zimbabwe should emulate this example and allow Shona-speaking churches to be established in Matebeleland and the Ndebele churches to be established in Mashonaland so that the Ndebele people who live in Mashonaland would hear the gospel in their language and the Shona people who lives in

Matabeleland be afforded a chance to hear the gospel in their language. Sabbath school classes for different language groups should be established so that people will learn using their languages.

Significantly, the church should realize how it should relate to those outside it in our contemporary Christian ministry. Jesus gave a good example of how he crossed over to the land of the Gentiles and provided healing there. In our contemporary Christian ministry, the church should be inclusive and reach out to all people without boundaries. Therefore, an intentional approach to mission to the excluded should be developed in my context to reach out to such people. Further, mission policies and attitudes that suggest exclusion should also be examined and discontinued to achieve inclusion of those who appear excluded.

For further study, there is a need to look at the following:

1. What was the general Palestinian understanding of demon possession in the first century?
2. How did the Canaanite woman get to know about Jesus the Lord and the Son of David?
3. What impact did the healing of the daughter of the Canaanite woman by Jesus make in the region of Tyre and Sidon?

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