

THE LESSON EXPLAINED

By Rev. J. M. Duncan, D.D.

Time and Place—Summer A.D. 29; Region of Tyre and Sidon and Decapolis.

Connecting Links—After the miraculous feeding of the 5,000 (see lesson for March 24, ch. 6:32-44), the multitudes were eager to make Jesus king. To prevent this, Jesus having sent the disciples back by boat to Capernaum, dismissed the people, and went into a mountain to spend the night in solitude. Early in the morning, he walked upon the sea to rejoin the disciples, who had been driven from their course by the wind and were unable to make the land. Having rescued Peter, who attempted to walk to him upon the water, they both entered the boat, and immediately came to the shore in the land of Gennesaret. Here the people, as soon as they knew of Jesus' arrival, brought to him their sick, who were healed if they even touched the hem of his garment. The multitudes whom he had fed on the eastern shore, now returning, sought him at Capernaum, whither he went. They asked how he had come over the sea, and in reply he uttered his discourse on the bread of life. Many of his disciples were so offended at his words that they forsook him. The Twelve continued with him, but he declared that one of them was a devil. (See Matt. 14:22-36; Mark 6:45-56; John 6:16-71.)

While Jesus was still in Capernaum, some of the scribes and Pharisees, who had come from Jerusalem, found fault with his disciples for eating with unwashed hands. This led to a discussion of Pharisaic traditions and a sharp rebuke of their hypocrisy. After this Jesus left Capernaum to go into the region of Tyre and Sidon, in order to find privacy for the instructing of the disciples. (See Matt. 15:1-20; Mark 7:1-23; John 7:1.)

I. Seeking Rest, 24.

V. 24. *From thence*; from Capernaum. *Went*; for seclusion and rest and to find an opportunity for further instructing the Twelve. This was not primarily a missionary journey. *Borders of Tyre and Sidon*; the western part of Phenicia, on the Mediterranean, noted for its antiquity, wealth and civilization. (See Geography Lesson.) *Into an house*; the house of a heathen stranger.

No man know it. He wishes to be private. *Hid.* Even here he could not escape notice. His fame had spread even into this Gentile country.

II. Finding Faith, 25-30.

V. 25. *For a certain woman*; Rev. Ver., "but straightway (not that she heard of Jesus' arrival as soon as it happened, but that when she had heard of it, she lost no time in coming to him) a woman."

V. 26. *Greek*; that is, a Gentile. *Syro-phenician*; belonging to the Phenicians of the Roman province of Syria, as distinct from the Phenicians of Carthage in Africa. The woman was a Gentile in religion, a Greek or Syrian in speech and a Phenician in race. A threefold barrier thus intervened between herself and Jesus. Matthew (see Matt. 15:22, Rev. Ver.) says "a Canaanitish woman," one of the doomed original race of Palestine that had been dispossessed by Israel.

V. 27. *The children first*; first Jews, then Gentiles. The word "first," implying that the Gentiles' turn would come later, contained a gleam of hope, which encouraged the woman to persist. This was also the principle of Paul's missionary activity, Rom. 1:16. *Meet*; right, seemly. *Dogs*. Dogs amongst the Jews were treated with much contempt and used as a symbol of pagan uncleanness. In modern Eastern cities they are still half wild, burrow in dust heaps, feed on offal and are a striking picture of filthy degradation. Among some Gentiles they occupied much the same position as among us to-day. Gentlemen in ancient Egypt had large greyhounds that lay under their chairs and accompanied them everywhere. Jesus uses the word with all the Jewish opprobrium, but the woman speaks from the standpoint of customs which made young dogs household pets. Jesus uses here, however, not the term for outcast street dogs, but for the little house-dogs that are under the family table. There is hope for the woman, for these dogs get their portion, though not the children's.

V. 28. *Answered.* She likely detected Jesus' tone of banter. *Yea, Lord* (Rev. Ver.); introducing very clever repartee. *Dogs... crumbs.* Dogs enjoy the morsels dropped by the children to their pets. The dogs are part