

Mark 7:1-37, The Trip to Tyre and Sidon
24-37, The Trip and Miracles
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Overview

1. vv.1-23 have been the introductory segment of the third five-part trip episode; now we have the trip out, healing at the destination, trip back, and concluding miracle. (The first two centered around the Gadarene demoniac and the feeding of the 5000, respectively.)

2. Consider

- a) Who was on the trip?
- b) Where did the Lord go?
- c) What happened there?
- d) What happened on his return?

A. Who went on the trip?

Probably the Lord alone. These trips are unusual because they include no explicit teaching for the 12. Maybe they weren't with him!

1. Evidence for their absence:

- a) In fact, Mark doesn't mention the 12 at all on this trip (24 "he arose and went..."; 31 "he came").
- b) 8:1 lets us suspect they are absent, since immediately after this trip he once again calls them to him.
- c) A land trip, so no need of their maritime skills.

2. But why would he leave them at this point?

- a) A more forceful version of his withdrawal to pray?
- b) Could the sending of the 70 (Luke 10) fit in here? Probably not:
 - 1) That is AFTER the transfiguration; this is before.
 - 2) Those were "other seventy," a distinct group from the 12.
 - 3) But perhaps these were not the only times they went out on their own.
- c) Perhaps like the storm on the lake; he periodically withdraws from them to teach them what it is like to be without him.
- d) Most likely: he has work to do with believers in this area.
 - 1) Cf. 3:8; the people of Tyre and Sidon had previously come to him, and now he visits them.
 - 2) 24b, This is probably how he had a house to receive him.
 - 3) The Twelve may not yet be ready to visit a nonjewish area, and in particular to receive the Syrophenician woman. Cf. Peter's strictness in this regard (Acts 9:14, 28; Gal. 2:11ff).
 - 4) *Application*: not every believer is ready for every task. In

building disciples for the Lord Jesus, we need to stretch them, but at the same time not expect them to do more than their maturity permits.

3. How about Matt 15:23, where "his disciples" ask him to send the woman away? Probably the reference is to Sidonian disciples. Cf. Matt. 8:21 for this broader sense of "disciple," and Matt's use of "his twelve disciples" when he wishes to be specific (10:1; 11:1; 20:17).

B. 24a, 31, Where did he go?

Tyre and Sidon. Relation of Tyre & Sidon with Israel:

1. They were a threat to Israel:

- a) A Spiritual Threat

- 1) 2 Sam. 5:11, trade with David (and later Solomon, 2 Kings 5:1)--commercial interaction
- 2) Source of pollution during the kings: Solomon's wife (1 Kings 11:1,5); Jezebel wife of Ahab (1 Kings 16:31).

- b) A Military Threat: Psa 83:7, part of a large confederacy gathered against Israel. Exact time not known; perhaps Jehoshaphat, 2 Chron 20; or maybe a synthesis of all of Israel's enemies.

2. Israel's response to them: three references, successively less harsh.

- a) Ezek 26, God proclaims judgment by hand of Nebuchadnezzar; cf. Isa 23; Jer 25:15-22 (vision of the cup of the Lord's wrath); Ezek 28:1-9 (the "front" for Satan, the King of Tyre)
- b) Isa 60, Bringing tribute as subject (not named explicitly, but the prophet seems to be emphasizing the universality of the submission to the new king.) Better than judgment, but still a subordinate position.
- c) Joined to Zion by birth! Ps 87:4. An amazing Psalm, depicting gentiles as having citizenship in Zion on equal standing with Israelites!

C. 24b-30, What happened there?

A Miracle. The remote locations at which these miracles occur are almost a picture of the isolation, the "outside-ness," of those who benefit: a man "outside" of normal society; the multitudes "outside" the circle of the disciples; (here) a girl "outside" the pale of Judaism. (Makes the final journey, with the Pharisees in the "outside" position, all the more striking!!)

1. 24, the house. Throughout Mark, the place of instructing his disciples, and we suspect that here he is visiting some from Tyre and Sidon who had previously traveled to Galilee and there believed on him (cf. 3:8).

2. 25-26, the woman and her request.

- a) Immediately brings to mind 5:22-23 and 9:17, where also a parent comes to the Lord on behalf of an ill child.
 - 1) 9:17, the father brings his son. Recognizes his own lack of faith, 9:24.
 - 2) 5:22-23, seeks to bring the Lord home with him to do the healing.
 - 3) Here, the woman believes that the Lord can heal at a distance.
 - a> Compare John 4:46, where the nobleman wants the Lord to come, but the Lord heals at a distance.
 - b> The closest parallel to this woman's faith is the Centurion in Matt 8 and Luke 7, whose faith the Lord declares to be greater than any Israelite's.
- b) Like the Centurion in Matt 8 and Luke 7, this believer of excellent faith is a gentile, not (as was Jairus) a Hebrew of the Hebrews, the ruler of the synagogue. Here it is a Greek (cultural designation; one who speaks Greek rather than Hebrew), a Syrophenician (racial designation; rank Gentile).
- c) Thus the event is a direct antithesis to the attitude of the Pharisees in 7:1-23. Concerned with purity, they would never have had anything to do with such a woman, yet she proves more spiritual than they!

3. 27, his challenge: His ministry was "to the Jew first." He was the Jewish messiah, and they should hear first, the pattern followed in Acts.

4. 28, her response shows that she does not come demanding a right but pleading for mercy. An example for us in our attitude toward the Lord; we are beggars saved by his undeserved favor.

5. 29-30, the healing. Though she is a bit ahead of the overall timetable for the drawing of the Gentiles, "he that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out," and the Lord honors her faith.

D. 32-37, What happened on his return?

Healing the Deaf and Dumb.

- 1. The other trips also end with healings:
 - a) 5:25ff, woman with issue; dead daughter
 - b) 6:56, the sick in general; no details
 - c) 8:22, blind
- 2. Similarity of this healing and that in 8:22
 - a) The crowd brings the sick person to the Lord and asks him to touch or lay hands on him.
 - b) The Lord takes the sick person apart from the crowd for the healing.
 - c) The healing includes the use of spittle and direct touch to

- the affected organ.
- d) The healing is difficult for the Lord (7:34, the sigh; 8:24, incomplete results at first). "Groaned," used of our patient suffering under the conditions of this evil world, in Rom. 8:23; 2 Cor. 5:2. Heb. 13:17, opposite of joy.
 - e) The beneficiary is commanded not to tell anyone.
3. Significance of these two trips: these involve the Pharisees most directly. Note the progression in opposition through the trips:
 - a) 5:7, the demons (at destination)
 - b) 6:14ff, Herod (initial)
 - c) 7:1, the Pharisees (initial)
 - d) 8:11-12, the Pharisees (at destination)
 4. Cf. Isa 35:5,6, the four ailments to be healed by the Messiah: blind, deaf, lame, dumb
 - a) Blind: 8:22; 10:46ff (Bartimaeus)
 - b) Deaf and dumb: 7:32ff; 9:17-25 (child). "Ephphata" is from PTX, used in Isa 35:5 "unstopped"
 - c) Lame: cf. those in beds; 2:5; 6:55.
 - d) Conclude: these miracles are a continuous response to the Pharisees' request for a sign, and show the Lord to be the promised Messiah. Cf. the inquiry of John the Baptist in Matt 11:2-6.
 5. Why spittle?
 - a) Standard answer: it was regarded as curative in the first century, especially coming from a king or holy man. Perhaps; but the Holy Spirit has recorded no separate attestation of this concept for us in the scriptures.
 - b) What does spittle mean in the Bible? Nothing about healing. Rather,
 - 1) OT:
 - a> Conveys uncleanness (Lev. 15:8)
 - b> A sign of shame (Num 12:14; Deut 25:9; Job 30:10)
 - c> In particular, part of the shame cast on the Messiah (Isa 50:6).
 - 2) NT: 8 occurrences.
 - a> These three deal with healing.
 - b> All the rest deal with the Lord's humiliation during his passion.
 - c) Appears here, 8:23 (the healing at the end of the next trip), and John 9:6 (the healing of the man born blind). In all three cases, the healing is in the context of a controversy with the Jewish leaders, and thus Messianic meaning is possible. Does this provide us with leverage? Those who receive his healing touch must be willing to share the shame and abuse that he received, but that which is shameful applied to him becomes the means of blessing. Just as he bore the cross for us, and invites us to take up the cross and follow him.

6. 36-37, The Secret. Probably motivated by a desire to keep the crowds down. But these common people are so overwhelmed in their astonishment that they cannot help but praise him to others; contrast the ignorant opposition of the Jewish leaders.

Hymn: Jesus Doeth All Things Well.