

# The Gospel According To Mark

## Part Twelve

**Mark 7:24-30** [New King James] *“From there He arose and went to the region of Tyre and Sidon. And He entered a house and wanted no one to know it, but He could not be hidden. For a woman whose young daughter had an unclean spirit heard about Him, and she came and fell at His feet. The woman was a Greek, a Syro-Phoenician by birth, and she kept asking Him to cast the demon out of her daughter. But Jesus said to her, ‘Let the children be filled first, for it is not good to take the children’s bread and throw it to the little dogs.’ And she answered and said to Him, ‘Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs under the table eat from the children’s crumbs.’ Then He said to her, ‘For this saying go your way; the demon has gone out of your daughter.’ And when she had come to her house, she found the demon gone out, and her daughter lying on the bed.”*

When we look at this incident against the background, it becomes an extraordinary incident in the life of Jesus Christ.

**Tyre and Sidon were cities of Phoenicia which was part of Syria, a coastal strip between Galilee and the sea coast.**

**So Jesus Christ was in Gentile territory, and the Jews avoided contact with unclean Gentiles as they would avoid unclean foods, which was the subject of the previous recorded sayings of Jesus Christ.**

**This was forecasting the whole history of Christianity, the rejection of Jesus Christ as the Messiah by the Jews became the opportunity for the Gentiles.**

This story must be read with insight to understand what at first seems a very shocking reply by Jesus Christ to the woman’s request.

To a Greek the dog was a symbol of dishonour, equally it was a term of contempt to a Jew [**Matthew 7:6; Philippians 3:2; Revelation 22:15**].

The word dog was in fact used by Jews as a term of contempt for Gentiles.

The Greek word used was “*kuōn*” meaning a feral hound of the streets that had escaped from domestication.

This was not the word that Jesus Christ used, He used the Greek word “*kunariōn*” meaning a little domesticated puppy, this was not an insult.

Jesus Christ was taking the sting out of the use of the word dog, undoubtedly His tone of voice also made a difference.

In any case Jesus Christ did **not** close the door to the Gentile woman, first He said the children must be fed, but only first, there was food left for the household pets.

Israel had the first offer of the gospel message but only the first.

This woman was a Greek who were well known for the gift of repartee, and she must have seen that Jesus Christ was speaking with a smile on His face.

People in Jesus Christ’s day ate with their hands, and wiped them on chunks of bread which they then flung for the house dogs to eat.

Jesus Christ loved this woman's attitude, a faith that would **not** take no for an answer, who with the tragedy of an ill daughter at home was still able to answer with a smile.

**Her faith was tested and her faith was real, and her prayer was answered.**

Symbolically the woman stands for the Gentile world which so eagerly seized on the "bread from heaven" [John 6:31-35] Jesus Christ, which had been rejected, thrown away by the Jews.

This woman showed great humility, she accepted that the children had to be fed first, Jesus Christ's disciples, and that the pet dogs should **not** interrupt this family meal.

Using the same imagery as Jesus Christ, she accepted being called an interruption as long as her child received God's healing.

**This miracle also shows that Jesus Christ's power over demons was so great that He did not have to be physically present to free someone from the grip of demons, His power transcends any distance.**

**Mark 7:31-37** [New King James] *"Again, departing from the region of Tyre and Sidon, He came through the midst of the region of Decapolis to the Sea of Galilee. Then they brought to Him one who was deaf and had an impediment in his speech, and they begged Him to put His hand on him. And He took him aside from the multitude, and put His fingers in his ears, and He spat and touched his tongue. Then, looking up to heaven, He sighed, and said to him, 'Ephphatha,' that is, 'Be opened.' Immediately his ears were opened, and the impediment of his tongue was loosed, and he spoke plainly. Then He commanded them that they should tell no one; but the more He commanded them, the more widely they proclaimed it. And they were astonished beyond measure, saying, 'He has done all things well. He makes both the deaf to hear and the mute to speak.'"*

When we trace this journey on a map we see that Jesus Christ made an amazing journey, which was **not** direct.

First Jesus Christ went north then south back to the Sea of Galilee, a journey on foot that must have taken several months.

This could well be a planned time alone with His disciples before the final storm broke that ended in His crucifixion.

It is after this long lonely time together with Jesus Christ that there came the certainty in Peter's mind and heart who Jesus Christ was, the very Son of God, [Mark 8:27-29].

When Jesus arrived back in the region of Galilee the people brought Him a man who was deaf and had an impediment of speech, no doubt the two were linked, his inability to hear made his speech imperfect.

**This miracle beautifully shows Jesus' way of dealing with people.**

Jesus Christ took the man aside away from the crowd, all by himself.

**An example of tender consideration, for deaf people are always a little embarrassed in a crowd.**

**Jesus Christ then throughout the whole miracle acted out what He was doing in a way that the man could understand.**

Jesus Christ then asked the people **not** to talk about this healing because He did **not** want to be seen simply as a miracle worker, and overlook the real message that He brought.

We also can be so concerned about what Jesus Christ can do for us that we forget to listen to the message He brought from God the Father of salvation for all humanity through His life, teaching, death and resurrection.

**Mark 8:1-10** [New King James] *“In those days, the multitude being very great and having nothing to eat, Jesus called His disciples to Him and said to them, ‘I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now continued with Me three days and have nothing to eat. And if I send them away hungry to their own houses, they will faint on the way; for some of them have come from afar.’ Then His disciples answered Him, ‘How can one satisfy these people with bread here in the wilderness?’ He asked them, ‘How many loaves do you have?’ And they said, ‘Seven.’ So He commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground. And He took the seven loaves and gave thanks, broke them and gave them to His disciples to set before them; and they set them before the multitude. They also had a few small fish; and having blessed them, He said to set them also before them. So they ate and were filled, and they took up seven large baskets of leftover fragments. Now those who had eaten were about four thousand. And He sent them away, immediately got into the boat with His disciples, and came to the region of Dalmanutha.”*

This is a different miracle to the feeding of the 5,000 who were mostly Jews.

**This time Jesus Christ was ministering to a non-Jewish crowd in the Gentile region of Decapolis, for His actions and message were beginning to have an impact on a large number of Gentiles.**

**That Jesus Christ would compassionately minister to non-Jews was very reassuring to Mark’s primarily Roman audience.**

Could many of the Gentiles in this crowd be the result of the cured demoniac who wished to follow Jesus? But Jesus sent him back to his own people to tell them what great things Jesus had done for him, [Mark 5:1-20]. Here we have a glimpse of what the witness of one man can do for Jesus Christ.

Just as Jesus Christ was concerned about these people’s need for food, He is concerned for our daily needs, [Matthew 6:31-32].

**Mark 8:11-13** [New King James] *“Then the Pharisees came out and began to dispute with Him, seeking from Him a sign from heaven, testing Him. But He sighed deeply in His spirit, and said, ‘Why does this generation seek a sign? Assuredly, I say to you, no sign shall be given to this generation.’ And He left them, and getting into the boat again, departed to the other side.”*

The Pharisees had tried to explain away Jesus Christ’s previous miracles, but here they were demanding a sign from heaven that **only** God could do.

**Jesus Christ refused because He knew that not even such a miracle would convince them of what they had already decided not to believe.**

**Minds can become so hard that even the most convincing facts and demonstrations will not change them.**

**Mark 8:14-21** [New King James] *“Now the disciples had forgotten to take bread, and they did not have more than one loaf with them in the boat. Then He charged them, saying, ‘Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod.’ And they reasoned among themselves, saying, ‘It is because we have no bread.’ But Jesus, being aware of it, said to them, ‘Why do you reason because you have no bread? Do you not yet perceive nor understand? Is your heart still hardened? Having eyes, do you not see? And having ears, do you not hear? And do you not remember? When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of fragments did you take up?’ They said to Him, ‘Twelve.’ ‘Also, when I broke the seven for the four thousand, how many large baskets full of fragments did you take up?’ And they said, ‘Seven.’ So He said to them, ‘How is it you do not understand?’”*

**This passage of scripture sheds a very vivid light on the minds of the disciples.**

**Jesus was thinking of the demands of the Pharisees for a sign and Herod's terrified reaction to Himself, His disciples were thinking that they had forgotten to bring bread and would soon be hungry.**

What possible connection is there between the Pharisees and Herod?

The literal translation is *"beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod."*

To a Jew leaven was the symbol of evil, the natural evil of human nature, and the influence it can have on all that it comes in contact with.

Jesus Christ was saying be on your guard against going the same way that the Pharisees and Herod have already gone.

**How could the disciples personally experience so many of Jesus Christ's miracles and yet be so slow to comprehend who He was?**

The disciples and Christians today may be looking to Jesus Christ in terms of earthly power and glory as the Pharisees saw the coming of the Messiah and Herod's life was centred on.

Jesus Christ always looked on life as an opportunity to serve and help those in need.

**Matthew 20:25-28** [New King James] *"But Jesus called them to Himself and said, 'You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave, just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.'"*

**This is the attitude that every true disciple of Jesus Christ should have in every aspect of their lives.**

**Any authority given to Christians is only to enable them to serve other human beings in a greater capacity.**

**Mark 8:22-26** [New King James] *"Then He came to Bethsaida; and they brought a blind man to Him, and begged Him to touch him. So He took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the town. And when He had spit on his eyes and put His hands on him, He asked him if he saw anything. And he looked up and said, 'I see men like trees, walking.' Then He put His hands on his eyes again and made him look up. And he was restored and saw everyone clearly. Then He sent him away to his house, saying, 'Neither go into the town, nor tell anyone in the town.'"*

Blindness is still one of the great physical curses, greatly aggravated by the fact that people know nothing about hygiene and of cleanliness. It is still common in parts of the world to see a person with matter-encrusted eyes on which flies persistently settle and bring infection.

Only Mark tells of this miracle yet there are certain extremely important things to learn from it.

**Here again we see the unique consideration of Jesus Christ by taking the man out of the village that He might be alone with him.**

**If when he was healed and suddenly received his sight the dazzling movement and colours of a crowd would have left him completely bewildered.**

**Why did Jesus Christ touch this man twice before he could see things clearly?**

**This miracle was not so hard for Jesus Christ that He had to have a second try, but He chose to do it in stages, possibly to show the disciples that spiritual sight of the truth does not always come instantly but gradually.**

**John 16:13** [New King James] *“However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.”*

**The Holy Spirit will guide us into all truth as long as we are following His lead, [Galatians 5:25].**

Jesus Christ used methods that the man could understand, spittle has a healing power, our first instinct is to put a cut or burnt finger into our mouths to ease the pain.

Jesus Christ will not use words or methods which are far above the understanding of people of low intellect, remember the first apostles were accused of being *“uneducated”* but had a close relationship with Jesus Christ, [Acts 4:13].

It is true that sudden conversion is possible, but it is equally true that every day a person is re-converted in some aspect of their lives.

**John 17:3** [New King James] *“And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.”*

It would take more than eternity to know God the Father and Jesus Christ in the sense of how we understand the word *“know,”* but the Greek word used is *“ginōskō”* meaning to have an eternal intimate relationship with God.