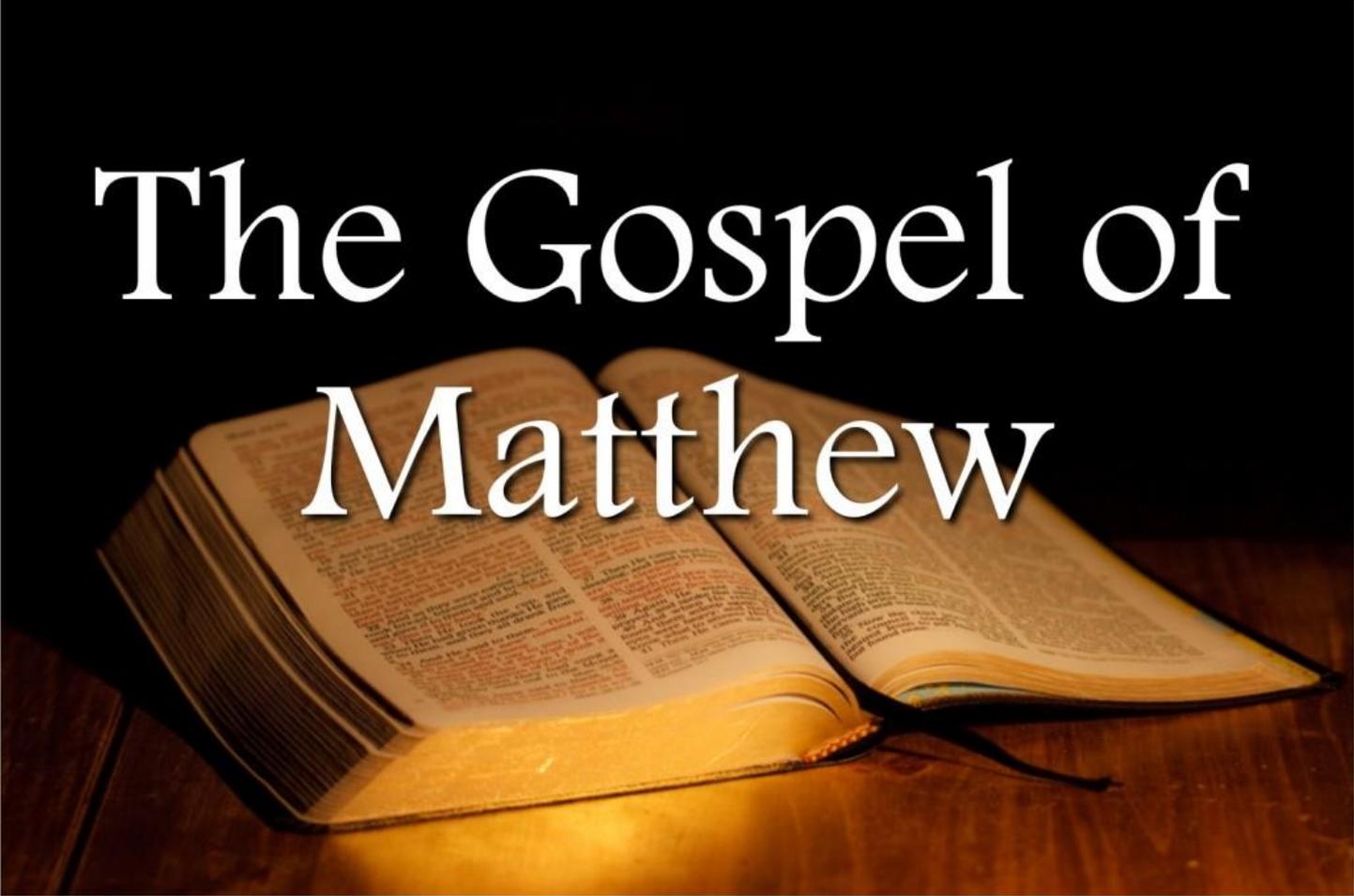


The Book of Matthew

An open Bible is shown from a high angle, resting on a wooden surface. The pages are illuminated from below, creating a warm, golden glow. The text on the pages is visible but slightly blurred. Overlaid on the Bible is the title 'The Gospel of Matthew' in a large, white, serif font.

The Gospel of Matthew

2022 – Part 5

5 more studies in Matthew's Gospel

Brief Outline of Matthew's Gospel

- 1:1 – 4:16 Introducing Jesus
4:17 – 16:20 Public ministry in and around Galilee
16:21 – 18:35 Private ministry in Galilee; preparing the disciples
19:1 – 25:46 Ministry in Judea
26:1 – 28:20 The death and resurrection of Jesus

Please Note the following:

1. It is helpful, but not mandatory, to prepare your answers before meeting with your group.
2. It is not necessary to look up all the Bible cross references listed in a particular question; your Growth Group Leader will summarize these Bible cross references for you.
3. Just a reminder that sometimes in our Growth Groups, people feel comfortable sharing very personal and sensitive things about their lives. This information **MUST BE CONFIDENTIAL and NEVER LEAVE THE GROUP.**

Study 1 – Taking Sin Seriously – Matthew 14:1-13

(Sermon on 29-May-22)

Before we begin: Do some research on the Herod Dynasty. (See Appendix 1). Who is Herod the Great? Who is Herod the Tetrarch? Who is Philip?

Herod the Great – the Roman client (puppet) king of Judea. Known for his colossal building projects and renovation of the Second Temple in Jerusalem. He ruled from 37BC to 4BC. He is the King Herod mentioned in Luke and Matthew at the time of Jesus' birth.

Herod rose to power largely because of his father (Antipater the Idumean) who had good relations with the Roman general and dictator Julius Caesar who entrusted Antipater with the public affairs of Judea.

Upon Herod the Great's death, the Romans divided his kingdom among his 3 sons: Archelaus, Herod Antipas, Philip; and his sister Salome I.

Archelaus – a son of Herod the Great.

Herod the Tetrarch (aka Herod Antipas) – mentioned in Matthew 14 - was a son of Herod the Great. His title meant that he ruled over a fourth part of the Kingdom.

Philip – is one of Herod the Great's sons. He ruled territories to the north and east of the Jordan. He is mentioned in Matthew 14 and Luke 3.

Herod Agrippa – is a grandson of Herod the Great. He is the Herod that imprisoned Peter and killed James (Acts 12).

Herod Agrippa II – is son of Agrippa I. He was the Herod who tried the Apostle Paul (Acts 25-26)

Read Matthew 14:1-2

1. What has Herod the Tetrarch heard about Jesus in verse 1? (cf. Matthew 13:58). How does Herod's reaction compare to the reaction of the people of Nazareth (Matthew 13:57)?

He heard the reports about Jesus (mighty works/miracles).

He accepts these works/miracles at face value and was fearful (v2), whereas the people of Nazareth were offended (literally scandalized!).

2. What does Herod fear in verse 2? How does he come to that conclusion?

He thinks John the Baptist has risen from the dead (as Herod has had John killed) and he fears John has come back from the dead and he's the one performing these mighty works/miracles. Herod's come to this conclusion because he acknowledges that John is a man of God and is feeling guilty for taking John's life, knowing this was totally wrong; he jumped to the conclusion that John had come back to haunt him, so to speak.

3. **Ponder:** It is clear from verse 2 that Herod's **conscience** was troubling him. What is our conscience?

*The Greek word used in the Bible is **syneidēsis**. It means - the soul as distinguishing between what is morally good and bad, prompting to do the former and shun the latter, commending one, condemning the other.*

The source of the Greek word: literally means "to see in one's mind with one-self" – so we could say it means "to see or be aware of what is going on inside yourself"

Dictionary definition: *a person's moral sense of right and wrong, viewed as acting as a guide to one's behaviour.*

Read Matthew 14:3-13

4. What sin did John confront Herod with in verse 4? How do we know this is a sin? (cf. Exodus 20:14; Leviticus 18:16; 20:21)

Herod had eloped with Herodias, the wife of his brother, Philip; divorcing his own wife and sending her back to her father, the King of Petra.

Exodus 20:14 – You shall not commit adultery.

Leviticus 18:16 – You shall not uncover the nakedness of your brother's wife; it is your brother's nakedness.

Leviticus 20:21 - If a man takes his brother's wife, it is an unclean thing. He has uncovered his brother's nakedness. They shall be childless.

Note: The Greek tense of the verb "said" in verse 4 suggests John continually "said" this to Herod.

5. What did Herod do to John in verse 3? Why?

Herod had arrested John and bound him and put him in prison because John had rebuked Herod because of his marriage to Herodias, his brother's wife, and because of all the other evil things he had done (Luke 3:19-20). John knew that the sin of the ruler would only pollute the land and make it easier for others to sin; so, John called Herod to repent. John should be commended for his courage in calling out sin and denouncing it. Israel was God's covenant nation, and the sins of the rulers (even though they were unbelievers) would bring God's chastening.

6. What did Herod really want to do with John in verse 5? Why?

Herod had really wanted to kill Herod because of John continually pricking his conscience. Also, Herod was influenced by his wife, Herodias', who had a grudge against John (Mark 6:19)

7. What was Herod afraid of, in verse 5?

John was very popular with the people and they considered him a prophet. If Herod were to kill John, there would be a public backlash, which he feared.

8. Who is Herodias?

Herodias is daughter of Aristobulus (half-brother to Herod the Tetrarch) and Aristobulus' cousin Bernice. Herodias was wife to Philip originally; but Herod the Tetrarch eloped with her and divorced his wife. Because their union was sinful, John had called out this sin several times; which did not go down well with either Herod or Herodias. See appendix 1.

9. What plan does Herodias hatch? Why? (Mark 6:17-29)

Because John had challenged Herod and Herodias about their relationship; Herodias hatched a plan whereby she had her teenage daughter perform a lascivious dance at Herod's birthday feast. Herodias knew her husband would succumb to her daughter's charms and make some rash promise to her. She also knew that Herod would want to "save face" before his friends and officials. The plot worked.

10. What dilemma does Herod have in verse 9 and what is he forced to do?

Herod had foolishly (v7) promised an oath to Herodias' daughter that he would give her whatever she asked. Herodias daughter (v8) asked for John the Baptist's head on a platter. Herod did not want to "lose face" in front of his guests and break his oath; so, he has to go along with her request and so John is beheaded.

11. What happens to John in verses 10 & 11?

John is beheaded and his head is brought to the young girl on a platter; she in turn carried it to her mother, Herodias.

12. What do John's disciples do? Why?

John's disciples came and took his body and buried; then they went and told Jesus about John's death. Why? Because John's disciples recognized that Jesus as the One that John was ushering in as the Messiah.

"It is not said by the Evangelist that they buried John, but 'they took up his body, and buried it,' not him. The real John no man could bury, and Herod soon found that, being dead, he yet spoke." (Spurgeon)

13. What is Jesus' response in verse 13? Why?

When Jesus heard what had happened, he withdrew to a solitary place. Firstly, to grieve John's death and secondly, He cautiously withdrew knowing that His association with John put Him in danger from Herod. Jesus lived a divine timetable and He understood His Father's timing; Jesus also not want to deliberately provoke trouble with Herod. Because Herod's agents were all around, Jesus had to exercise wisdom and caution.

Read Malachi 3:1-5

14. How does this passage relate to Matthew 14:1-13?

- *The messenger referred to in Malachi 3:1 is John the Baptist, preparing the way for Jesus and calling people to repent of their sins*
- *Malachi 3:1 also says it is the Lord Himself who will come. Which we see in Jesus. And of course, He comes to His temple in several ways: Presented as a baby; aged 12; and when He clears out the temple. In fact, Jesus IS the temple.*
- *Malachi 3:2-5 describe the second messenger – which is Jesus. He is described as a launderer, refiner and purifier. All methods of cleaning away the “dirt of sin”*
- *And Jesus will also come in judgment (v5)*
- *This passage from Malachi 3:1-5 relates to Matthew 14:1-13 in the following ways:*
 - *Both messengers from Malachi are on view*
 - *Both messengers fulfil their roles described in Malachi; John prepares the way for Jesus by calling people to repent (e.g., Herod and Herodias); and Jesus will be the one to take away the sin of all who believe in Him*
 - *God takes sin seriously in Malachi – and that’s what John does too – even it costs his life!*

15. Ponder: How does the death of John point to the death of Jesus later?

John is a forerunner to Jesus – not only in preparing the way – but also in the fact that just as John was “got rid of”; Jesus will also be “got rid of”.

John took sin seriously and died standing up for the truth in God’s Word.

Jesus took sin seriously – He never sinned – He was/is perfect – and He died for sin to be forgiven.

John ministry & death is a type/foreshadowing of Jesus’ ministry and death.

16. Ponder: What does God think of sin? (Psalm 5:4-5; Isaiah 6:3; 59:2; Habakkuk 1:13; Romans 3:23; 6:23; Revelation 4:8)

For you are not a God who is pleased with wickedness; with you, evil people are not welcome. The arrogant cannot stand in your presence. You hate all who do wrong; (Psalm 5:4-5)

And they were calling to one another: “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.” (Isaiah 6:3)

But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear. (Isaiah 59:2)

Your eyes are too pure to look on evil; you cannot tolerate wrongdoing. Why then do you tolerate the treacherous? Why are you silent while the wicked swallow up those more righteous than themselves? (Hab 1:13)

for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23)

For the wages of sin is death... (Romans 6:23)

Each of the four living creatures had six wings and was covered with eyes all around, even under its wings. Day and night they never stop saying: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty,' who was, and is, and is to come." (Rev 4:8)

17.Reflection: John took sin seriously. What happens when we don't take sin seriously? What does John & Jesus want? (cf. Matthew 3:2; 4:17)

If we don't take sin seriously; the wages of sin are death – and eternal separation from God (aka Hell).

Matthew 3:2 (John says) - Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.

Matthew 4:17 (Jesus says) - Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.

18.What is the answer to our sin? (cf. 1 John 1:9)

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

What's the **BIG IDEA** of **Matthew 14:1-13**?

Take sin seriously.



Give a **light globe** moment you experienced in this passage?

God in His sovereignty over all things; used the Herodian dynasty and some of its members in the life and ministry of Jesus and some of the Apostles.



How does this passage **apply to your life**?

- a. Follow/obey the commandments. Take sin seriously and repent*
- b. The danger of making oaths.*
- c. Sincerely examine our consciences – search our hearts for sin and repent of it*
- d. Be bold enough like John to stand up and call out sinful behaviour*
- e. Are we pleasing people ahead of God – Herod tried to please the people – tried to please Herodias – and of course pleased himself by helping himself to his brother's wife? At no time did he fear the Lord, like he feared the people and the Herodias*
- f. Thank God that Jesus came and did what we can't do – and removed our punishment for our sins!*
- g. Compare the Herodian Kingdom with Jesus' Kingdom of Heaven!*

Share the verse that had a special meaning to you in this study?

***Malachi 3:2** - But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner's fire or a launderer's soap.*

Finish in prayer: Ask God to search our hearts and see if there is any offensive way in us and lead us in the way everlasting (Psalm 139:24). Thank Jesus that He has washed away our sins (1 Corinthians 6:11; Hebrews 10:22; Revelation 7:14)

Study 2 – The Compassion of Jesus – Matthew 14:14-21

(Sermon on 05-June-22)

See parallel passages in Mark 6:32-44, Luke 9:10-17 and John 6:1-13

Before we begin: Why did Jesus withdraw in Matthew 14:13? (cf. 14:2, 12)

Jesus withdrew because Herod had heard about His miraculous powers (14:2) although wrongly attributing them to a “risen” John the Baptist. Jesus also withdrew to a solitary place, when He heard what had happened to John. Firstly, to grieve John’s death and secondly, He cautiously withdrew knowing that His association with John put Him in danger from Herod. Jesus lived a divine timetable and He understood His Father’s perfect timing; Jesus also did not want to deliberately provoke trouble from Herod.

From Luke 9:10 we see that Jesus is in Bethsaida and therefore no longer in Galilee and no longer under the jurisdiction of Herod the Tetrarch.

Read Matthew 14:13-21

1. Why did the crowds follow Jesus in verse 13?

To the crowd, Jesus was popular, both for His miraculous powers and healing; and His incredible teaching (with authority). They couldn’t get enough of Him!

2. What did Jesus do in verse 14 and why?

Even though Jesus needed a rest and had withdrawn; He still healed the sick because He had compassion on them. From the passage we can deduce that Jesus healed people right up until it was getting dark (late). In Mark’s account – Mark 6:34 – Jesus says the people were like sheep without a shepherd.

3. What do the disciples want Jesus to do in verse 15?

Because it was getting late; the disciples wanted Jesus to send the crowd away so that they could buy food in the villages. The disciples knew they couldn’t feed all these people. This was a compassionate act by the disciples knowing that it was late and the people would be hungry. Yet, the disciples didn’t fully comprehend what Jesus could do.

4. What does Jesus mean by “**they do not need to go away**” in verse 16? How can that phrase apply to us?

He means they do not need to leave because He will provide all that is needed! Charles Spurgeon used the words, “they do not need to go away” (they need not depart in the KJV) as the basis of a sermon. The theme of his sermon was that if there was no need for these mostly casual hearers of Jesus to depart, there is even less reason for the follower of Jesus to go away from continual communion and fellowship with Jesus! Circumstances in our lives do not need to make us “go away” from Jesus. We don’t have things too hard or too easy that we don’t ever need Jesus! There is nothing in Jesus that would make us want to “go away” from Him!

*There is nothing in the future that will make us want to “go way” from Jesus!
As Jesus says in John 15:5: “Apart from me, you can do nothing”*

5. What does Jesus say the disciples must do in verse 16? Should they be surprised by this?
(John 2:1-11)

Jesus tells the disciples “You give them something to eat”.

They should not be surprised by this; they’ve witnessed many miracles by Jesus and by now they should realize that nothing is impossible for the Son of Man. In John 2:1-11 – some of the disciples were with Jesus at the wedding feast at Cana and they witnessed Him change water into wine!

Jesus was calling His disciples into action and to have faith in Him.

Remember Mary’s attitude at Cana “do whatever He (Jesus) tells you” – that’s the attitude that the disciples and us need to develop – “leave it to Jesus, He can do anything”.

6. What problem is there in verse 17? Why is that not a problem for Jesus?

They only have five loaves and two fish (from a little boy as John 6:9 says) to feed the crowd with. This is not a problem to Jesus because He can do anything!

7. What does Jesus do in verses 18 to 19? Is this surprising?

He used what was brought to Him (five loaves and two fish) and commanded the crowd to sit down on the grass to be fed. It gives the impression that they were about to have a feast or banquet.

“What a feast this was! Christ for the Master of the feast; apostles for butlers; thousands for numbers; and miracles for supplies!” (Spurgeon)

Note: Jesus gave thanks BEFORE He did anything. He is not necessarily “saying grace” or “blessing the food”; but acknowledging the complete sufficiency of His Father to meet the people’s need in an impossible situation. Jesus had complete confidence in the Father’s provision. Jesus did not work independently from the Father, He worked in complete dependence on His Father!

Jesus also gave thanks at Lazarus’ grave before raising Him (John 11:41) and at the feeding of four thousand before feeding them (Matthew 15:36) and even at His last Supper (1 Cor 11:23-24) not to give thanks for His betrayal or the food but to give thanks for His Father’s ability to accomplish all that Jesus had been sent into the world to do (His death for the forgiveness of sins and His resurrection for eternal life).

8. How well fed was everyone? What is leftover?

Everyone was well fed and satisfied. The disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces of leftovers! Presumably each disciple had a basket!

Jesus always gives in ADBUNDANCE (Ephesians 3:20 – Immeasurably more than we ask!). As Jesus says in John 10:10 – I have come that they may have life and have it to the full!

9. How many people were fed?

Five thousand men, not including women and children. So perhaps as many as 10,000 – 15,000 people all up.

Read Exodus 16:1-36

10. How does this passage relate to Matthew 14:13-21?

The Israelites were in the wilderness just like the people were in a solitary place in Matthew 14. Just like in Matthew, the people were fed miraculously. God provided bread (manna) each day for the people to be fed.

Everything in the Old Testament points to Jesus. This miraculous feeding points to the miraculous feeding of the five thousand by Jesus. But remember Jesus is the “one greater” (Matthew 12:6, 41, 42).

Read 2 Kings 4:42-44

11. How does this passage relate to Matthew 14:13-21?

A man from Baal Shalishah brought 20 barley loaves which Elisha the Prophet used to feed 100 men; and there were again leftovers. Again, this miraculous feeding points to the miraculous feeding of the five thousand by Jesus. But remember Jesus is the “one greater” (Matthew 12:6, 41, 42).

Read Matthew 26:17-30

12. How does this passage relate to Matthew 14:13-21?

Here we have another “feeding” but it is also a spiritual feeding – the bread Jesus gives the disciples points to His body to be broken on the cross; the wine He gives the disciples points to His blood poured out for the forgiveness of sins. This Last Supper was/is to be repeated by us as we join together to remember Jesus’ once and for all sacrifice for sins and the offer of forgiveness of our sins.

It’s no coincidence that the words used in the feeding of the five thousand: “take”, “give thanks”, “break” and “give” are the same words used in the accounts of the Lord’s Supper in the New Testament.

Ponder: How can we see this feeding in a **spiritual** sense? (cf. John 6:35, 51, 58; Matthew 6:11)

In John’s Gospel, after Jesus feeds the five thousand, He declares that “He is the Bread of Life”. This is a spiritual statement. He ties together the feeding of the Israelites in the wilderness with manna and this feeding of the five thousand and He’s saying that He is the spiritual bread of life leading to eternal life.

John 6:35 – “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty”.

John 6:51 - “I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.”

John 6:58 – “This is the bread that came down from heaven. Your ancestors ate manna and died, but whoever feeds on this bread will live forever.”

When Jesus teaches the Lord’s prayer and says we are to ask God for our daily bread – we’re praying not only for our physical nourishment – but our spiritual nourishment. Jesus is the word of God made flesh – if we feed of His Word daily – we get spiritually nourished.

Matthew 6:11 - Give us today our daily bread.

What’s the **BIG IDEA** of **Matthew 14:14-21**?

- a. *The compassion of Jesus*
- b. *Jesus is the bread of life (physical and spiritual)*



Give a **light globe** moment you experienced in this passage?

- a. *By Jesus telling His disciples to “give them something to eat” and by them collecting up the leftovers; they would remember and learn from this occasion.*
- b. *The feeding of the five thousand can look back to the Passover meal, the manna in the wilderness; and also look forward to feeding of the four thousand, the Last Supper, the meal at Emmaus, the meal with the disciples after Jesus’ resurrection and ultimately look forward to the Messianic Banquet and dining with the Lord (Isaiah 25:6; Matthew 8:11-22; 22:1-6; 25:1-10; Luke 14:15; John 7:37-38; Revelation 3:20; 7:16-17; 19:7-9)*



How does this passage **apply to your life**?

- a. *Jesus shows compassion and provides our physical and spiritual needs.*
- b. *Jesus showed compassion to the sick and the hungry. Do we have compassion on people like Jesus does? We must never seem too busy to help people or even seem to find them a trouble and a nuisance [as long as it is a genuine need].*
- c. *We should not send people away from Jesus!*
- d. *Jesus worked through the hands of His disciples and He does the same today!*
- e. *Like Jesus we can thank God for His complete sufficiency to meet our needs even in what seem impossible situations. Can we have complete confidence in the Father’s provision?*
- f. *We must feed of Jesus’ Word – our spiritual bread – that helps us grow spiritually and that leads to eternal life.*
- g. *The disciples when they saw it was late and the people were hungry; understandably thought in human terms and decided to quit. Even when Jesus told them to feed the people, they again looked at their own human resources and did not look to the Lord to*

provide. I wonder if we do that? We put limitations on what God can do because of our humanness!

h. Jesus shows us that God can provide out of resources that we cannot see or perceive in any way. God often provides in ways that are unexpected.

i. In this miracles Jesus teaches:

i. Start with what we have

ii. Give what we have to Jesus

iii. Obey what Jesus commands

iv. Observe the results

Little is much, in the hands of Jesus!

j. People can waste their time on “what is not bread” (Isaiah 55:2)

Share the verse that had a special meaning to you in this study?

V14 - When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick.

*V16 - Jesus replied, “**They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat.**”*

Finish in prayer: Thanking God for His Son, Jesus, the bread of life, who gives us spiritual food which leads to eternal life.

Study 3– Jesus walks on the water – Matthew 14:22-36*(Sermon on 12-June-22)***See parallel passages in Mark 6:45-51 and John 6:16-21****Context:** What was Jesus trying to do? (Matthew 14:13). Why wasn't that possible? (Matthew 14:15-21)*He was trying to withdraw privately to a solitary place by boat.**It wasn't possible because a large crowd followed Him around the lake by foot and met Him when he landed on shore. And because He had compassion on them, he healed the sick for most of the day and then performed the miraculous feeding of five thousand; and thus, was unable to get away by Himself.***Read Matthew 14:22-24**

1. What is Jesus trying to do in verses 22 & 23? Why? (cf. John 6:15)

*Jesus needed time out, He dismissed the crowd and sent the disciples off by boat and He went up the mountainside by Himself to pray.**According to John's version of the feeding of the five thousand; Jesus knew the people intended to make Him King by force. This was a) not the sort of King He was/is and b) this was not the divine plan or God's will; Jesus is a servant King, who come to lay down His life for His subjects; and c) it was important for Jesus to remove the disciples from this plan of the people; because like the people, the disciples were still thinking "earthly" rather than "heavenly"*

2. What did Jesus tell the disciples to do?

He told His disciples to go ahead of Him by boat to the other side of the lake, whilst He had time for Himself up the mountain, praying.

3. What happened on the lake in verse 24?

*A wind came up on the lake and the waves began to buffet the disciples' boat.***Read Matthew 14:25-36**

4. What miraculous thing does Jesus do?

Jesus from His vantage point saw the disciples were in distress and He walked on the lake.

5. How do the disciples react?

They thought Jesus was a ghost! They didn't recognize Jesus because they weren't looking for Him!

6. How does Jesus respond?

Realizing that the disciples would be afraid and according to Mark, He saw them straining at the oars because the wind was against them. He came walking on the lake and He says "take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid."

7. What does Peter attempt to do? How do you explain his successful attempt at walking on water? How do you explain why Peter's walking on water fails?

Peter asks Jesus: "Lord, if it is you; tell me to come to you on the water". Jesus says "come". Whilst Peter kept His eyes fixed on Jesus (and not fixed on the wind) he was able to walk on the water. As soon as He took His eyes off Jesus, he sank.

8. What's ironic about Peter's words in verse 30?

Peter says "Lord, save me!" Ironically, that's what Jesus does (through the cross) for everyone who has faith in Him!

9. How does Jesus explain Peter's failure in verse 31? What question does Jesus ask?

Jesus says Peter has 'little faith'. He asked Peter why did he doubted?

10. What happened when Jesus and Peter climbed into the boat?

The wind immediately died down.

11. What reaction do those in the boat have in verse 33?

They came and worshipped Jesus and they declared that Jesus "truly is the Son of God"

12. **Ponder:** What can we learn from Peter here?

Peter had remarkable faith. He was a seasoned fisherman who knew that Lake Galilee was notorious for these sudden winds/storms; yet He stepped out in faith. At the same, Peter, doubted when He got afraid; we need to not doubt Jesus and keep our eyes fixed on Him!

"You do believe, and if you believe, why doubt? If faith, why little faith? If you doubt, why believe? And if you believe, why doubt?" (Spurgeon)

Peter was also obedient. He asked Jesus to tell him to come and when Jesus did; He obeyed.

13. **Ponder:** What does the event on the lake prove about Jesus?

He has control over nature. He is the Son of God and can do anything that God can do. Nothing is impossible for Him.

14. **Ponder:** Did Jesus deliberately direct the disciples into the storm? If so, why?

We can certainly say that Jesus knew what would happen; He knew the wind would come up; He knew He could walk on water; He knew Peter would try to; and He knew Peter would be afraid. Jesus perhaps allowed this to happen; to a) test their faith in Him; b) to glorify God and show His divine powers.

In Mark's version of this story, when Jesus climbed in the boat; it says the disciples were completely amazed for they had not understood about the loaves; their hearts were hardened. What they had failed to learn in the feeding of the thousand was that when faced with what

seemed an impossible situation, they didn't learn what Jesus did when He gave thanks to His Father and acknowledged His dependence on the Father. Now Jesus puts them in a boat knowing they will encounter a storm, giving them another opportunity to learn what to do when in another situation that was out of their death; but they hadn't learned from the loaves' incident! They needed to have utter dependence on God in the storm!

The disciples were obedient. Jesus sent them into the boat and they obeyed Him and then they were tested on the lake. Compare this with Jonah in the storm; he was tested because of his disobedience in running away from what God had commanded him to do. So, it seems, we can be tested when disobedient, so we learn to obey; and we can be tested when obedient to learn perseverance and to strengthen our faith.

15.Ponder: What comfort can we gain from this event in the storm?

Nothing is impossible for Jesus and He is always with us in all events in our lives.

16.Ponder: What are the disciples and us meant to learn about Jesus from this event on the lake and the feeding of the 5000 earlier? (Matthew 14:33)

Jesus is the Son of God; in fact, He is God!

17. Where is Gennesaret? See map on appendix 2.

It is on the North-west shore of Lake Galilee. It is also back in Herod the Tetrarch's territory.

18. What happened at Gennesaret? Why?

Jesus healed all the sick people there because as before in verse 14, He had compassion on the people and because the people brought their sick to Him and begged Him, believing Jesus could heal them, if they just touched the hem of His garment (like the woman with the bleed in Matthew 9:20).

19. Ponder: What might be lacking in the 5000 who followed Him (Matthew 14:13) and lacking in the people of Gennesaret who begged to be healed (Matthew 14:35b-36).

Both the 5000 who were fed and the people begging for healing in Gennesaret believed Jesus could heal them and do miracles but do they really know who Jesus is?

Nevertheless, COMPARE: the faith of the people of Gennesaret who believed even just touching the hem of Jesus' cloak would be enough to heal them, with the faith of the disciples caught in the storm and it doesn't even cross their mind, that they could call on Jesus to help!

Optional question: Read Psalm 107:28-32

20. How does this Old Testament passage relate to Matthew 14:22-36?

In this Psalm the people cry out to God in their distress; and God stilled the storm to a whisper and the waves of the sea were hushed. In the same way, as Jesus came walking on the water and save Peter, then climbed into the boat; the storm stopped.

The people were thankful for the Lord's unfailing love; and it's clear Peter and the disciples would also have been thankful. Mark's Gospel says they were amazed.

We see the power of God in the Psalm; and according to John's Gospel, when Jesus climbed onto the boat, not only did the wind stop, but immediately, they reached the shore, when they had been 3-4 miles out!

What's the **BIG IDEA** of **Matthew 14:22-36**?

Keep our eyes fixed on Jesus at all times!



Give a **light globe** moment you experienced in this passage?

They were safer in the storm in God's will than on land with the crowds out of God's will (John 6:14-15). If Jesus and the disciples had remained with the crowd; the disciples may well have gone along with the crowds' idea to make Jesus king by force; because the disciples did not fully understand Jesus and His mission.



How does this passage **apply to your life**?

- a. If Jesus the Son of God needs quiet times of prayer and reflection; how much more do we? How's are quiet times alone with God?*
- b. Jesus knows all our distresses and troubles and He is praying for us (Romans 8:34).*
- c. With Jesus with us, we do not need to be afraid!*
- d. Jesus tells us to "come" to Him -and put our faith in Him*
- e. We need to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus all the time; and especially through the storms of life! And trust Him in ALL things. It's important we learn to keep our eyes on Jesus rather than any threatening situations around us.*
- f. We need to have utter dependence on God.*
- g. We must not doubt Jesus in anything. Doubt leads to lack of faith and unbelief.*
- h. Nothing is impossible for Jesus.*
- i. Worship Jesus because He is truly the Son of God and bow down at His feet as the King of Kings! Give Him thanks and praise because He is our Lord and Saviour!*
- j. Experiences like what happened to Peter, help us grow in our faith.*
- k. Faith like the people of Gennesaret, that knows a touch of Jesus' hem, is enough to be healed; is great faith indeed!*

Share the verse that had a special meaning to you in this study?

V29 - "Come," he said.

Finish in prayer: Give thanks to Jesus, the Son of God, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the World.

Study 4– Jesus breaks with tradition – Matthew 15:1-20

(Sermon on 19-June-22)

See parallel passages in Mark 7:1-23

Before we begin: What things do we do today out of tradition?

Christmas celebrations (Carols, services, gifts; family meal); Easter celebrations (services, easter eggs; Easter Show); New Year’s Eve; Religious “feast” days; Religious “seasons” (Lent, Advent); Australia Day; Anzac Day; Summer holidays; family holidays; Valentine’s Day; saying grace before meals; Sunday roast; Boxing Day and News Year’s Day test matches; Schoolies; Melbourne Cup; BBQs; Birthdays; Queen’s Birthday; Father’s Day; Mother’s Day; Remembrance Day (poppies); various Wedding traditions etc.

Read Matthew 15:1-11

1. What problem do the Pharisees¹ and teachers of the law come to Jesus with in verses 1 & 2? (cf. Mark 7:1-4)

They say that Jesus’ disciples are breaking the tradition of the elders in that they don’t wash their hands before they eat. According to Mark’s version of the same story, this washing of the hands was a ceremonial one, where not only are hands washed but also cups, pitchers and kettles (Mark 7:3-4). We are NOT talking about hygiene here, but rigid, extensive rituals of washing before meals (in some cases even between courses of a meal).

The hand washing described here was purely ceremonial. It wasn’t enough to properly clean your hands if they were very dirty. You would have to first wash your hands to make them clean, and then perform the ritual to make them spiritually clean. They even had an accompanying prayer to be said during the ritual washing: “Blessed be Thou, O Lord, King of the universe, who sanctified us by the laws and commanded us to wash the hands.” (Cited in Lane).

The Old Testament law made no such rules about ceremonial washing, except for the priests going about their duties (see Exodus 30:17-21). The Pharisaic tradition had extended this principle to daily life, and Jesus, was expected to enforce this ritual purity with His disciples.

The Pharisees because of the oral law (tradition) believed that if a person didn’t do this ceremonial washing then they were unclean, and then if they touched food or another person or thing; they made them unclean also!

2. Where did these **traditions** come from anyway?

These traditions were handed down from the teachers of previous generations. These traditions were originally the “oral law” that (said the rabbis) Moses gave to the elders of Israel and they passed down to the nation. This oral law was finally written down and became

¹ See <https://www.gotquestions.org/Pharisees.html>

the Mishnah (date 190-200AD). Unfortunately, the oral law became more important and more authoritative than the original law of Moses.

3. Ponder: What's the motive of the Pharisees and teachers of the law?

Their motive was to catch Jesus out which is something they were always trying to do.

The Pharisees were jealous of Jesus' popularity; concerned that their status and position was under threat from Jesus; and threatened by Jesus' authoritative teaching.

4. What problem does Jesus counter with in verses 3 to 6? (cf. Exodus 20:12; 21:17; Leviticus 20:9; Deuteronomy 5:16)

It's great the way Jesus answers their question with His own question.

Jesus counters their accusation by asking why they break God's commandments for the sake of their tradition.

He quotes from:

Exodus 20:12 – "Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you.

Exodus 21:17 - "Anyone who curses their father or mother is to be put to death"

Leviticus 20:9 - "Anyone who curses their father or mother is to be put to death. Because they have cursed their father or mother, their blood will be on their own head.

Deuteronomy 5:16 - "Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you.

Jesus accuses the Pharisees and teachers of the law of not honouring their father and mother because they have a tradition (called Corban meaning "a gift to God" Mark 7:11). This tradition of Corban allowed a Jew who wanted to escape any financial responsibility to their parents, could declare their wealth/possessions to be Corban (a gift to God) and then they were free from other obligations such as caring for their parents. In keeping this tradition, the Jew was then disobeying the commandment to honour their father and mother; which Jesus says is in effect curses their father and mother. Yet at the same time, by practicing this corban tradition, the Jew "appeared" ultra-religious because they were saying their wealth which could have been used to help their parents was devoted to God.

Further to that by keeping their property from their parents' reach and nominally dedicating it to God; they were in practice retaining it for their own use!

Corban could also apply to a person's time; so if they said a certain amount of their time was devoted to God, then they also didn't have that time to care for their parents. A nice little loophole!

5. How far might the Pharisees and teachers of the law travelled to make their complaint?

The fact that they came all the way from Jerusalem to Galilee suggests that they had made a deliberate journey to check out Jesus' teaching, miracles and "behaviour". It is likely they had been sent by the Jewish council, the Sanhedrin as an official delegation. The distance from

Jerusalem to Gennesaret region is about 90 miles (145Km). But it's likely they would not have used a direct route but diverted around Samaria; so, the distance would be a lot longer.

6. In verse 7, Jesus calls the Pharisees and teachers of the law, **hypocrites**; what does hypocrite mean, and why does Jesus call them hypocrites?

Hypocrite means: a person who pretends to have virtues, moral or religious beliefs, principles, etc., that he or she does not actually possess, especially a person whose actions belie stated beliefs OR a person who feigns some desirable or publicly approved attitude, especially one whose private life, opinions, or statements belie his or her public statements.

Simply, someone who says one thing but does another.

Jesus called them hypocrites because they appeared to the public to be really holy and religious but they don't even keep God's commandments properly and they don't show love to their parents. They claimed to be righteous but not loving to their parents.

7. What Old Testament prophecy does Jesus quote in verse 8 & 9? What contrast is Jesus making here? (See **Isaiah 29:13**; cf. Colossians 2:20-22)

Jesus quotes from Isaiah 29:13 which reads: The Lord says: "These people come near to me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Their worship of me is based on merely human rules they have been taught".

Jesus is saying God wants more than lip service; God wants obedience! Between external appearance and internal heart-felt love for God.

Tradition is external while God's truth is internal.

Pride versus humility.

As Paul says in Colossians 2:20-22: Since you died with Christ to the elemental spiritual forces of this world, why, as though you still belonged to the world, do you submit to its rules: "Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!"? These rules, which have to do with things that are all destined to perish with use, are based on merely human commands and teachings.

Paul's contrast is the world's way or God's way!

God is interested in the internal and the real. We are far more interested in the merely external and image. One must take care that their relationship with God is not merely external and image.

8. In verses 10 and 11, Jesus speaks about religious externalism by using yet another parable; what does He mean in these verses?

Jesus uses a parable illustration of eating food. And note, He speaks to the crowd; it's a public rebuke of the Pharisees and teachers of the law.

He's saying the food you put in your mouth (even with ceremonially unclean hands) doesn't make you unclean and unfit to worship God. Rather it's the bad words that come out of your mouth that make you unclean and unfit to worship.

Jesus is saying sin comes from the heart, not from diet or washing. It's what comes out of our mouth that defiles us, not what goes in.

The Pharisees had clean hands but dirty hearts.

Jesus is not so concerned about dirty hands but requires a pure heart.

Read Matthew 15:12-20

9. What observation do the disciples make in verse 12? Why would that matter to the disciples?

The disciples tell Jesus that He has offended the Pharisees by teaching this parable that suggested that rules about washing and eating were not that important; especially compared to what is in people's hearts and what comes out of their mouths.

The disciples, like most Jews, saw the Pharisees as the religious leaders who ensured those religious rules and traditions were followed and they saw that the Pharisees themselves kept every letter of the law.

The disciples were also worried that by going against the Pharisees, this would bring trouble for them and for Jesus! It seems too, that the disciples were taken aback by how "hard" Jesus went at the Pharisees on this point. Clearly, Jesus is showing how important disregarding God's Word and commandments is to Him!

Jesus was not concerned about the Pharisees being offended. God's Word is offensive, especially to those who are not following it or don't agree with it!

10. What analogy does Jesus make in verse 13; what does He mean by this? (cf. Isaiah 60:21)
Jesus uses the analogy of a plant that was not planted by God; every plant not planted by God will be pulled up by the roots.

Jesus is saying that neither the Pharisees nor their teachings had been planted by God, and therefore ultimately would not last.

In comparison, Isaiah 60:21 is saying that what God has planted will flourish!

Yet this principle should make us examine ourselves to see if we imitate the Pharisees in making traditions commandments. "Here, then, we find the test of all human teaching however well-intentioned. If it be not based upon and rooted in the Word of God, or if it departs in any degree from the true intention of that Word, it is without pity to be rooted up. By this test we need ever to try our traditions, customs, habits, rules, regulations." (Morgan)

11. How does Jesus describe the Pharisees and teachers of the law in verse 14; what does He mean?

Jesus describes the Pharisees as people who are blind themselves and as they lead blind people; both will fall into the ditch.

It's worth noting regardless of the Pharisees, the people are also blind; and so they need a guide who is not blind; like Jesus and His disciples!

What Jesus means is even though the Pharisees and teachers of the law had scrolls and interpreted them in the synagogues, this does not mean that they really understood them. After all, the Pharisees (mostly) didn't follow Jesus; so, they didn't understand or follow scripture correctly (Carson). Therefore, they were blind leaders of the people and leading people away from God/Jesus and not towards God/Jesus.

12. Peter asks Jesus to explain the parable (from verses 10 & 11). How does Jesus explain the meaning of the parable, in verses 16 to 20?

Jesus explains that whatever food enters the mouth goes into the stomach and comes out as human waste. Food never touches our hearts. But what comes out of our mouths, begins in our hearts; and it's these things that defile a person. Of course, actions are included with these words; often actions speak louder than words.

Jesus boldly said that these evil things come from our innermost nature. They aren't accidents or mere "mistakes"; they reveal how corrupt we are in our fallen nature. "The heart is the source of man's true character, and therefore of his purity or impurity...it is not merely the seat of emotion, but the true person as he really is, not just as he appears outwardly.

'Murders' begin not with the dagger, but with the malice of the soul. 'Adulteries and fornications' are first gloated over in the heart before they are enacted by the body. The heart is the cage from whence these unclean birds fly forth." (Spurgeon)

Said plainly, many people who worry about external habits (what they eat and drink and other such things) should care more about what words come out of their mouth. They do more against God and His people by what they say than by what they eat or drink.

*In Mark's version of this passage there is the side issue that as a result of Jesus' teaching here Jesus was removing the laws around kosher food. As Mark 7:19 says: **For it doesn't go into their heart but into their stomach, and then out of the body.**" (In saying this, Jesus declared all foods clean). A lesson Jesus had to repeat to Peter in Acts 10.*

13. **Ponder:** What's the difference between the way the Pharisees and teachers of the law's worship God and the way Jesus intends it to be?

Unfortunately, the emphasis of the religious leaders in Jesus' day – and often in our own – is often only on these external things, not the internal things that make for true righteousness.

A question of "works" or "faith"

A question of "self-righteousness" or righteousness from God through Jesus.

A question of approved by themselves or approved by God.

Read Matthew 12:34; Luke 6:45 and James 3:1-12

14. How do these verses relate to what Jesus is talking about in Matthew 15:16-20?

Matthew 12:34 - You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of.

Luke 6:45 - A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of.

James 3:1-12:

- *Our tongues are like bits for horses – though small, they can turn the whole animal*
- *Our tongues are like rudders on ships – though small, they can turn the whole ship*
- *Our tongues can cause a forest fire!*
- *Our tongues can corrupt the whole of our body – and cause great hurt and damage*
- *The taming of our tongues is difficult – because the words have come from a corrupt heart, which needs to be addressed*
- *Our tongues can be hypocritically – praising God in one breath and cursing our brothers and sisters in the next!*
- *We need to address that hypocrisy!*

What's the **BIG IDEA** of **Matthew 15:1-20**?



God's Word is more important than tradition

OR

Internal – not External!

Give a **light globe** moment you experienced in this passage?

In verse 7 – when Jesus quotes from Isaiah – Jesus says Isaiah prophesied about YOU (meaning the Pharisees and teachers of the law)!



How does this passage **apply to your life**?

- a. *What traditions or man-made rules are we putting ahead of God's commandments? As we examine our traditions some may be based on Scripture (like Lord's Supper) and others might not.*
- b. *Are we honouring our parents?*
- c. *The Pharisees started with a passion for the Law and in their passion to preserve it; they built other rules (human) on to it; and also incorporated tradition. This at times, diluted God's Word, negated God's Word and usurped God's Word. Are we sticking to the Gospel or the Gospel PLUS something else?*
- d. *Is our relationship with God internal (of the heart) and genuine OR merely external and about image? Are we giving God our hearts or lip-service?*

- e. *God's Word, not human tradition is the basis for authentic worship.*
- f. *Are we coming to church to worship God and love each other OR are we coming to be religious and tick the box?*
- g. *God's Word is offensive, especially to those who are not following it or don't agree with it!*
- h. *Does what we say/do/think line up with scripture?*
- i. *Examine our hearts? What thoughts are festering which could materialize in bad words and bad actions. What harm have we already done, that we need to confess and repent and apologize for?*
- j. *Guard our tongues – self-control.*
- k. *Are we being hypocrites – with our words and behaviour?*

Share the verse that had a special meaning to you in this study?

V8 - *“These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.*

Finish in prayer: Ask God to help us discern between tradition and what God actually commands. Ask God to help us control our tongues (words matter!)

Study 5– Jesus withdraws to the Gentiles – Matthew 15:21-39

(Sermon on 26-June-22)

See parallel passages in Mark 7:24-30 and Mark 8:1-10

Read Matthew 15:21-28

1. Find **Tyre** and **Sidon** on the map in appendix 2. We are in Gentile territory in verse 21; why is that significant?

See red circles on map. Perhaps Jesus' mission is not just for Jews.

Tyre and Sidon are about 50 miles (80km) from Galilee where Jesus has just dealt with the Pharisees and teachers of the law.

2. What problem does the Canaanite woman come to Jesus with?

The woman's little daughter was demon-possessed (impure spirit Mark says) and she asks for mercy from Jesus for her daughter.

3. **Ponder:** What's significant in Matthew calling her a "**Canaanite**" woman (Syrophenician in Mark's Gospel)? What's significant in the fact that the woman refers to Jesus as the "Son of David"?

Note: Matthew uses the old term 'Canaanite' to describe the woman, whereas Mark uses the new term, Syrophenician. Canaanite reminds us that the Canaanites were the enemy of God's people. Here is a descendant of Israel's enemies coming to the Jewish Messiah for help!

Also, this Gentile (non-Jewish) woman uses a Messianic term "Son of David" to show that she knows who Jesus is (God's Messiah) even though many of Jesus' own countrymen didn't know who Jesus truly was/is.

Perhaps this woman knew that Jesus had healed Gentiles before (Matthew 4:24-25; 8:5-13). Yet what made this encounter unique is that Jesus did those previous miracles as Gentiles came to Him in Jewish territory. Here, Jesus came to Gentile territory and met this woman.

4. What do the disciples want Jesus to do in verse 23? Why?

Initially Jesus did not answer her immediately. His reticence was designed so that she would then give a more energetic and faith-filled plea.

But the disciples just want Jesus to send her away.

In the Greek – it has the meaning of "sending her away with what she wants/desires". So basically, the disciples just want Jesus to deal with it, so the woman stops crying out.

But Jesus has other ideas; He wants to see how strong her faith is.

5. What does Jesus' response mean in verse 24? (cf. Matthew 10:6, 23)

Jesus defined the focus of His mission to His irritated disciples and to the Gentile woman. He made it clear that He was not sent to Gentiles like her.

It is fair to ask whether Jesus meant the lost sheep among the house of Israel, or meant to say that Israel as a whole were lost sheep. Jesus' instructions to His disciples in Matthew 10:6 ("go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel") would seem to imply the latter.

6. **Ponder:** Is Jesus' response in verse 24 harsh towards the Canaanite woman, or is there more to it?

Jesus' reply might seem harsh but He is trying to draw persistent faith from the woman.

7. How does the woman respond in verse 25? Is that impressive?

She did not give up. She knelt down before Jesus and prayed "Lord, help me!

It is very impressive. A lesson we can learn.

The woman both worshipped Jesus and prayed.

Note: In my experience, women will fight and do anything for their children; there is an invisible umbilical cord attached!

*"She could not solve the problems of the destiny of her race, and of the Lord's commission; but she could pray...If, as a Shepherd, he may not gather her, yet, as Lord, he may help her."
(Spurgeon)*

"I urge you who seek the conversion of others to follow her example. Notice, she did not pray, 'Lord, help my daughter;' but, 'Lord, help me.'" (Spurgeon)

"I commend this prayer to you because it is such a handy prayer. You can use it when you are in a hurry, you can use it when you are in a fright, you can use it when you have not time to bow your knee. You can use it in the pulpit if you are going to preach, you can use it when you are opening your shop, you can use it when you are rising in the morning. It is such a handy prayer that I hardly know any position in which you could not pray it: 'Lord, help me.'" (Spurgeon)

8. Why does Jesus say in verse 26 *"It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to the dogs."*? Why dogs?

It may seem harsh to refer to the woman as a dog.

Jews had a traditional derogatory term for Gentiles which was "Gentile dogs".

As far as the Jews were concerned; Gentiles were "unclean".

But the Greek may be a bit softer as the word means little dogs.

The harsh word, dog, may contain a loophole. [Dogs] does not compare Gentiles to the dogs in the street, but to the household dogs belonging to the family, which have their portion though not the children's." (Bruce)

9. What impressive reply does the woman use in verse 27?

The woman is still not deterred; she had great faith. She admitted her low estate, and did not debate the issue when Jesus called her one of the little dogs. She did not demand to be seen as a child; but only to be blessed as a dog.

It was as if she said, "Jesus, I understand that the focus of Your ministry is to the Jews – that they have a special place in God's redemptive plan. Yet I also understand that Your ministry extends beyond the Jewish people, and I want to be part of that extended blessing."

Her response is especially meaningful in light of the increasing rejection of Jesus by the Jewish religious leaders. It was as if the woman said, "I'm not asking for the portion that belongs to the children, just the crumbs that they don't want." In the flow of Matthew's gospel, there was more and more that the Jewish religious establishment did not want to receive.

It's like she's saying to Jesus "I'm not going away until you bless/help me"

"Dear friend, possibly someone has whispered in your ear, 'Suppose you are not one of the elect.' Well, that was very much what our Lord's expression meant to her...Notice that this woman does not battle with that truth at all, she does not raise any question about it; she wisely waives it, and she just goes on praying, 'Lord, help me! Lord, have mercy upon me!' I invite you, dear friend, to do just the same." (Spurgeon)

We'd be happy with Jesus' crumbs any day, wouldn't we?

10. How does Jesus praise the woman in verse 28 and what is the result?

Finally, Jesus gives her encouraging words: "Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted". Then the woman's daughter was healed.

11. **Read Matthew 7:7-8** – how does that relate to the Canaanite woman's request. What can we learn from her?

⁷ "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. ⁸ For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened (Matthew 7:7-8).

It's like the Canaanite woman did ask, seek and knock – until Jesus opened to the door. She kept on asking and seeking and knocking and didn't give up!

1 Thessalonians 5:18 says: pray without ceasing.

Jesus told a parable in Luke 18 to show His disciples they should always pray and not give up. The parable was about a persistent widow who came to the judge of the village asking for justice; she didn't give up asking and eventually the judge relented.

Read Matthew 15:29-39

12. Who does Jesus heal?

Note: Jesus is still in Gentile territory. Mark's version says He went to the Decapolis. See red rectangle on the map!

Jesus healed the lame, the blind, the crippled, the mute and many others.

13. How do the people react to the healing in verse 31? Why is that impressive?

They praised for the God of Israel. It's impressive because they are not Jews; but Gentiles.

14. What compassion does Jesus show in verse 32? Why?

Jesus showed compassion on the multitude who had gathered because they had been with Him three days and now had nothing to eat; and He did not want to send them away hungry, in case they collapsed in weakness.

15. **What** question do the disciples ask? How does Jesus reply?

The disciples ask "where could we find enough bread in this remote place to feed such a crowd?"

It was not kosher for the Jewish disciples to feed Gentiles and share a meal with them (as per Acts 10:28).

Perhaps the disciples did not think Jesus would use the same miraculous powers as He did when feeding the 5000, because they were now in Gentile territory.

Jesus replies by asking them how many loaves they have?

16. In what ways is this feeding of 4000 different to the feeding of 5000?

Here are some of the differences:

- *Different numbers fed – 4000 and 5000*
- *The disciples alert Jesus to the problem in 5000 and Jesus alerts the disciples to the problem in 4000.*
- *Different provisions used – 5 loaves & 2 fish versus 7 loaves 7 a few fish*
- *Different locations: Galilee near Bethsaida and The Decapolis*
- *Different people: Jews and Gentiles*
- *Different number of leftovers – 12 baskets and 7 baskets*
- *Different waiting period: a day and three days*
- *Different time of year – spring (green grass) and summer season*
- *Jesus preached a sermon after 5000 but not 4000 – idea of manna in Old Testament would not have been understood by Gentiles*
- *Different response – tried to make Him King versus no particular response*

17. Is the feeding of 5000 in Jewish territory (Matthew 14:13-21) and the feeding of 4000 in Gentile territory (Matthew 15:29-39) meant to point to something? (cf. Matthew 8:10-12; Matthew 22:1-14; 25:1-13; 28:19 and Revelation 19:6-8).

In Matthew 8:10-12 – Jesus tells His followers of the great faith of the Gentile centurion and that many of the subjects of the Kingdom (Jews) will be left outside the feast because they don't have the faith of this Gentile centurion.

Matthew 22:1-14 – tells of a parable of a wedding feast where many who were invited (Jews) but they made excuses; so they would be excluded and others (Gentiles) would be invited.

Matthew 25:1-13 – tells of a parable of wise and foolish virgins. The wise were prepared for the bridegroom (Jesus) but the foolish were not prepared. Therefore, the foolish would not be allowed into the wedding feast.

Matthew 28:19 – Jesus' commission to His disciples, to make more disciples, is to ALL NATIONS, not just Israel.

Revelation 19:6-8 – All are invited to the wedding feast of the Lamb of God (that is Jesus the Bridegroom) who has made His Bride (His Church) clean and ready for the marriage.

The feeding of the 5000 and 4000 shows that Jesus is available to all who are prepared to put their faith in Him!

Read Genesis 12:1-3; 18:18; 22:18

18. What do these passages have to do with Matthew 15:21-39?

In Genesis 12:1-3 – God promises Abram (later to be called Abraham=father of all nations) that Abram will become a great nation; Abram's name will be great and Abram will be a blessing; and that God will bless those who bless Abram and his people; and God will curse all who curse Abram and his people. Significantly, God promises that ALL peoples of the Earth, will be blessed through Abram. And we know that one of Abram's descendants, Jesus, is a blessing to all peoples of the Earth; if they care to follow Jesus!

In Genesis 18:18 – That same promise is repeated that all nations will be blessed through Abraham.

In Genesis 22:18 – Then in Genesis 22 after Abraham was tested by God and was prepared to sacrifice his son, Isaac; God clarifies His promise further; and says in v18 – and through your offspring (that is Jesus) all nations on earth will be blessed because you (Abraham) have obeyed me.

These promises in Genesis find their fulfilment in Jesus as He blesses both Jews and Gentiles; and they show that God ALWAYS keeps His promises.

What's the **BIG IDEA** of **Matthew 15:21-39**?

JESUS IS AVAILABLE FOR ALL WHO COME TO HIM!



Give a **light globe** moment you experienced in this passage?

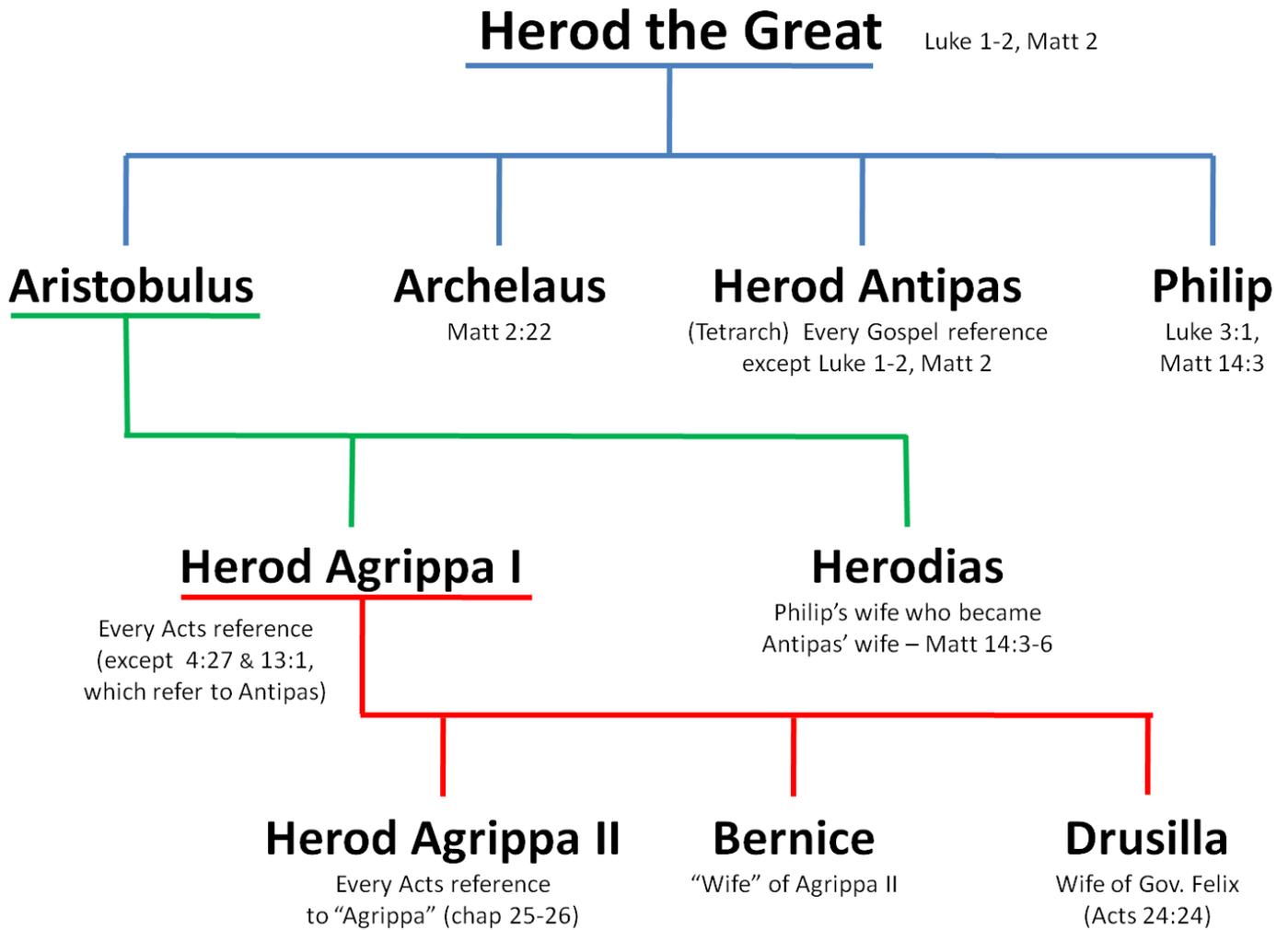
- ➔ How does this passage **apply to your life**?
- a. *God's plan is for salvation for Jews and non-Jews (Gentiles) like us.*
 - b. *We must come to Jesus for mercy because we are possessed by the disease of sin and need cleansing of it.*
 - c. *When we need Jesus' help, we need to be persistent. We are not to give up. As we learnt in the Sermon on the Mount: "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened" (Matthew 7:7-8). Jesus answers in His timing; not ours!*
 - d. *We need utter dependence on Jesus as the woman proved and as the food shortage of the feeding of 4000 proved.*
 - e. *We are to make disciples of Jesus from ALL NATIONS – All are invited. No one is to be written off!*
 - f. *The Jews had both prejudice and jealousy against the Gentiles; what prejudices and jealousy do we have that might get in the way of welcoming people to Jesus; no matter what we might think or judge them to be?*
 - g. *Compassion trumps "rules" – Jesus' mission to the Jews only was trumped by compassion for the Gentiles' needs. It's particularly important given the recent context about the tradition of washing hand. Is Jesus to follow the tradition of "hating" the Gentiles are is He to overrule that with compassion? Would we break COVID rules for compassion? Yes, of course!*
 - h. *God always keeps His promises (2 Cor 1:20)*
 - i. *Contrast the faith of the woman with the Pharisees and teachers of the law from last week; it is a warning for us that we can become too casual about the things of God and then become casual in our attitude. We need to remain fresh, new and real in our walk with God.*

Share the verse that had a special meaning to you in this study?

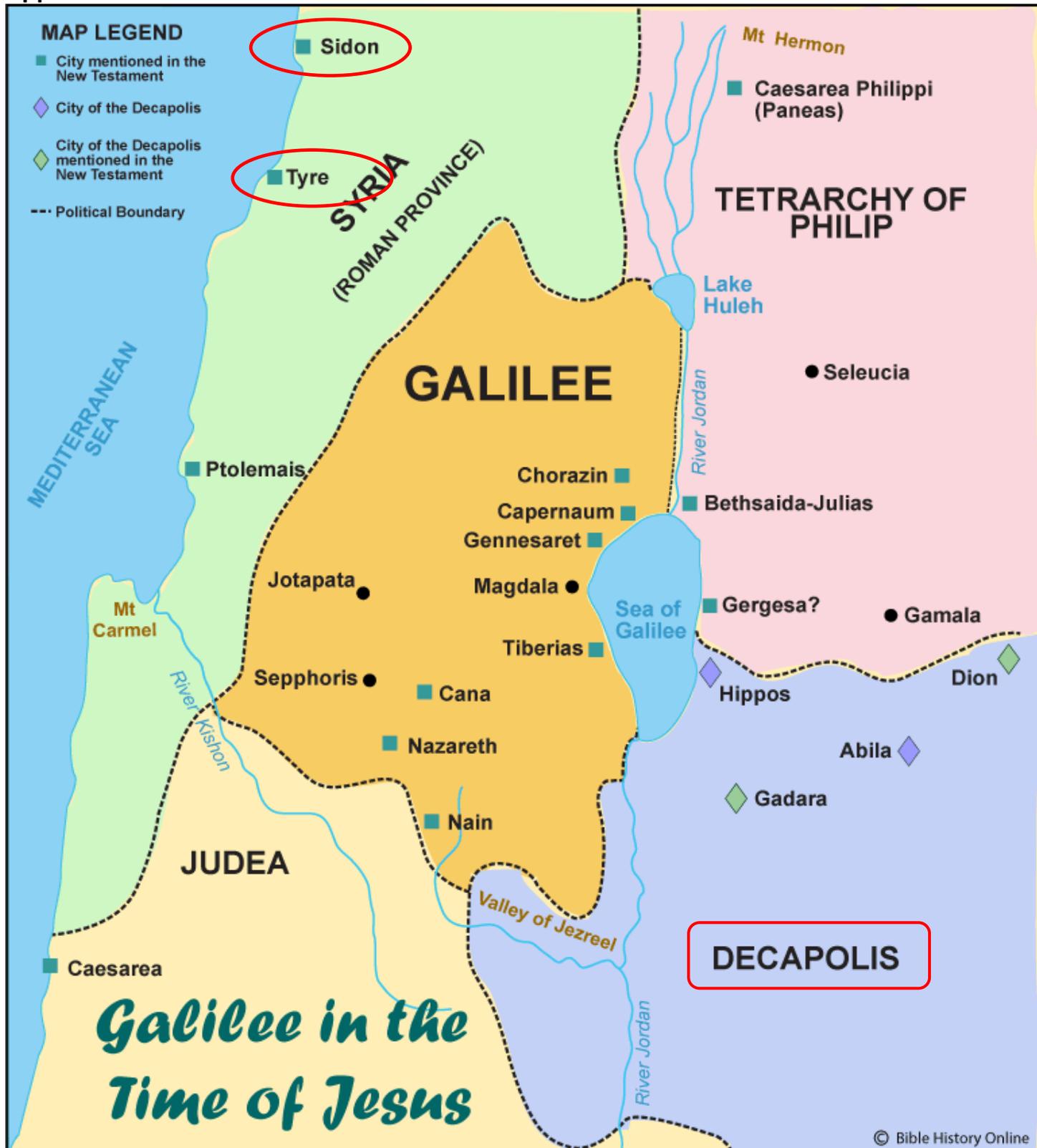
V28 - Then Jesus said to her, "Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted." And her daughter was healed at that moment.

Finish in prayer: Thanking God that He sent Jesus and that Jesus is available to all - Jews and Gentiles, slave and free, male and female (Galatians 3:28)

Appendix 1 – Herod Dynasty



Appendix 2



Studies prepared by Paul O'Rourke
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Resources:

The MacArthur Study Bible

New Bible Commentary (Carson, France, Moyter & Wenham)

Life Applications from Every Chapter of the Bible (G. Campbell Morgan)

The Message of Matthew (Michael Green)

Focus on the Bible: Matthew (Charles Price)

Matthew Volume 1 (Barclay)

Be Loyal Following the King of Kings NT Commentary on Matthew (Warren W. Wiersbe)

Notes/Prayer Points