Getting the Most out of the Bible: Bible Study Classroom experience.

As people come in music playing etc. Refreshments.
Equipment / resources – ipads, Bibles, notepads, pens.

Welcome.

Housekeeping. Wifi Code. Bibles. Phones. Ipads. Laptops.
It's OK to ask questions. Some questions I will answer, other questions I will point you in the direction of etc… If I feel we are going down rabbit holes with your questions or observations – then I may encourage us to keep on track – as we have a limited amount of time but please do write them down and we can pursue these questions next time.

Refreshments throughout the night – please help yourself.

Before we do anything let's pray.

Introduction: Why are we doing this?

The Bible is more than just a book—it's God's guide for life, offering wisdom, encouragement, and direction for every season we face. Through His Word, God speaks to us, shaping our hearts, renewing our minds, and guiding our steps. But let's be honest: reading the Bible can sometimes feel overwhelming. Where do we begin? How do we truly understand what it's saying? How can we dive deeper to uncover its treasures and apply them to our everyday lives?

My hope is that this study **begins** to equip us with practical tools to help you:

- Read the Bible with clarity and confidence.
- Discover its relevance and power for today's challenges.
- Apply its timeless truths to your personal journey.

I have a desire to teach the Bible but to also help people get the most out of it. Every time I get up to preach I feel I have a mandate to not only preach some nice thoughts and some nice points but to give those who are listening the fullest view of the Bible as possible. I am also aware that I am speaking to a wide audience of differing learning styles but everyone needs to grab something from the Bible. **My desire is that people get the most out of the Bible.**

My worry is that too many Christians don't read the Bible enough, they rely on Sunday sermons, Sunday slides… That is a sweeping statement but I have a feeling there is a lot of truth to it… The Bible is living, breathing, full of revelation. God speaks to us through the Bible.

I'm also guessing for many of us that reading the Bible presents challenges which can put us off?

Question: What are some of the challenges that you face? [Encourage feedback.]

We must Read the Bible. Love the Bible. Live the Bible.

Here are **20 reasons** why people should read and apply the Bible today:

Spiritual Growth & Relationship with God

1. **Know God Personally** – The Bible reveals who God is, His character, and His will for our lives (Jeremiah 9:23-24).
2. **Grow in Faith** – "Faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ" (Romans 10:17).
3. **Deepen Your Relationship with Jesus** – The Bible is centred on Christ and His redemptive work (John 5:39).
4. **Be Filled with the Holy Spirit** – The Word of God works alongside the Spirit to transform our lives (John 6:63).
5. **Develop Spiritual Maturity** – Reading and applying the Bible helps us become mature believers (Hebrews 5:12-14).

Guidance & Wisdom for Life

6. **Discover Your Purpose** – The Bible helps us understand God's plan for our lives (Ephesians 2:10).
7. **Receive Daily Direction** – "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Psalm 119:105).
8. **Make Wise Decisions** – The Bible provides wisdom for life's choices (Proverbs 3:5-6).
9. **Learn How to Live Righteously** – It teaches us how to live in alignment with God's will (2 Timothy 3:16-17).
10. **Avoid Destructive Paths** – The Bible warns against sin and its consequences (Psalm 119:9).

Strength, Peace & Encouragement

11. **Find Strength in Difficult Times** – God's Word sustains us in trials (Isaiah 41:10).
12. **Experience True Peace** – "Great peace have those who love your law" (Psalm 119:165).
13. **Receive Encouragement** – The Scriptures provide comfort and hope (Romans 15:4).
14. **Overcome Fear & Anxiety** – The Bible reassures us of God's presence and power (Philippians 4:6-7).
15. **Fight Spiritual Battles** – The Word is our weapon against the enemy (Ephesians 6:17).

Transforming Lives & Character Development

16. **Renew Your Mind** – God's Word changes the way we think (Romans 12:2).
17. **Develop Christlike Character** – The Bible shapes our attitudes and actions (Galatians 5:22-23).
18. **Inspire Generosity & Compassion** – It teaches us to love and serve others (Luke 6:38).
19. **Bring Healing & Restoration** – The Word of God brings emotional and spiritual healing (Psalm 107:20).
20. **Live with Eternal Perspective** – The Bible reminds us of our eternal hope in Christ (2 Corinthians 4:18).

We must all be students of the Bible.

[Watch JJohn and RT Kendall video].
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A1zvVVpL1j8 **[22mins38- 24:42]**

My intention tonight is not to give you an overview of the Bible – I have written a blog that you can follow up yourself to research that – **show blog on screen.** But my intention is to go a bit deeper and do some Bible study with you, get you researching, discussing etc…

To do that I thought I would revisit a sermon I gave last year – partly because I feel I only scratched the surface of the sermon and I reckon we can do some further study and explore some more bits and pieces… but I also want to show you my own research process and perhaps you can use some of these skills yourself when studying the Bible as well.

This evening I want to take us to the book of Matthew and to the story of the **Faith of the Gentile Woman.** This story is also found in Mark's

Gospel. **Matthew 15:21-28** and **Mark 7:24-30.** **This is an incredible story – we learn about Jesus.** We learn about Jews. We learn about relationship with the Gentiles and neighbouring countries. We learn about Jesus and women. We learn about social and cultural attitudes. We learn about Matthews Gospel. We can make connections to the Old Testament and we can also talk about the why Jesus did what he did in relation to the gospel. And there is so much we can apply. And we only have one and a half hours and so all we will do is make a start – but I hope you will get enthused enough to dig deeper into the Bible and get the most out of it.

This evening we are going to **Apply SOAP. Scripture / Observe / Application / Pray**

One thing I always do before I open my Bible is this **– I pray –** God speak to me, as I read your Word – speak to me – reveal something of yourself to me – show me how I can encourage others from your Word.

Can someone just pray for us before we start?

S – Scripture

[Have A3 printouts for each table of each of the stories available.]

[Get somebody to read out each account from both gospels.]

Matthew 15:21-28 The Faith of a Gentile Woman

21 Then Jesus left Galilee and went north to the region of Tyre and
Sidon. 22 A Gentile[a] woman who lived there came to him, pleading,
“Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David! For my daughter is
possessed by a demon that torments her severely.”
23 But Jesus gave her no reply, not even a word. Then his disciples urged
him to send her away. “Tell her to go away,” they said. “She is bothering
us with all her begging.”
24 Then Jesus said to the woman, “I was sent only to help God’s lost
sheep—the people of Israel.”
25 But she came and worshiped him, pleading again, “Lord, help me!”
26 Jesus responded, “It isn’t right to take food from the children and throw
it to the dogs.”
27 She replied, “That’s true, Lord, but even dogs are allowed to eat the
scraps that fall beneath their masters’ table.”

28 “Dear woman,” Jesus said to her, “your faith is great. Your request is granted.” And her daughter was instantly healed.

Mark 7:24-30 The Faith of a Gentile Woman

24 Then Jesus left Galilee and went north to the region of Tyre.[a] He didn’t want anyone to know which house he was staying in, but he couldn’t keep it a secret. 25 Right away a woman who had heard about him came and fell at his feet. Her little girl was possessed by an evil[b]spirit, 26 and she begged him to cast out the demon from her daughter.
Since she was a Gentile, born in Syrian Phoenicia, 27 Jesus told her, “First I should feed the children—my own family, the Jews.[c] It isn’t right to take food from the children and throw it to the dogs.”
28 She replied, “That’s true, Lord, but even the dogs under the table are allowed to eat the scraps from the children’s plates.”
29 “Good answer!” he said. “Now go home, for the demon has left your daughter.” 30 And when she arrived home, she found her little girl lying quietly in bed, and the demon was gone.

O – observe – what do you observe, what questions do you have?

Task 1:

We are going to focus on Matthew’s account of this story. So quickly re read the story and first of all – without doing any research – give me your straight observations or any questions you have about this text.

What jumps out at you?

Take feedback from the class. Use whiteboard.

Quickly talk about the importance of asking questions.

Why is it good to ask questions?

Why Good Students Ask Questions of a Text, Document, or Source
Asking questions isn’t just about finding answers—it’s about sharpening your mind, challenging assumptions, and uncovering deeper truths. A good question can change how you see a text, a topic, or even the world! Below are a number of reasons why good students should actively question the materials they study.

1. **To Deepen Understanding**
   - Helps clarify complex ideas and concepts.
   - Encourages engagement rather than passive reading.
2. **To Develop Critical Thinking**
   - Promotes analysis, evaluation, and deeper reflection.
   - Helps distinguish between fact, opinion, and bias.
3. **To Identify Bias & Perspective**
   - Uncovers the author's background, intent, and possible bias.
   - Reveals how culture, politics, or personal beliefs influence the text.
4. **To Connect with Historical or Literary Context**
   - Helps place the source within a broader historical or thematic framework.
   - Shows how events, movements, or ideologies influenced the writing.
5. **To Recognize Gaps or Silences**
   - Identifies what is missing or who is left out of the narrative.
   - Encourages questioning of dominant viewpoints.
6. **To Strengthen Argumentation Skills**
   - Helps students build logical, well-supported arguments.
   - Encourages the use of evidence to support claims.
7. **To Improve Research Skills**
   - Highlights areas needing further study or verification.
   - Encourages cross-referencing with other sources.
8. **To Challenge Assumptions**
   - Prevents accepting information at face value.
   - Encourages questioning of preconceived ideas.
9. **To Unpack Language & Meaning**
   - Examines word choice, tone, and rhetorical devices.
   - Helps interpret figurative language or technical terms.
10. **To Compare Different Sources**
    - Helps identify contradictions or differing perspectives.
    - Strengthens the ability to synthesize multiple viewpoints.
11. **To Engage with Ethical and Moral Questions**
    - Encourages discussion of values, justice, and truth.
    - Helps assess the ethical implications of a source.
12. **To Foster Intellectual Curiosity**
    - Encourages a mindset of lifelong learning.
    - Sparks new areas of interest for further study.
13. **To Make Texts Relevant to Today**
    - Draws connections between past events and current issues.
    - Helps apply lessons from history, literature, or philosophy to modern life.
14. **To Improve Writing & Communication**

- Helps students articulate thoughts clearly and persuasively.
- Encourages structured, logical reasoning in essays and discussions.

15. To Understand Cause & Effect

- Identifies the consequences of ideas, actions, and historical events.
- Helps trace the development of movements, laws, and ideologies.

16. To Develop Empathy

- Encourages seeing the world through different perspectives.
- Helps understand experiences of people from different times or cultures.

17. To Avoid Misinformation & Manipulation

- Develops skills to detect propaganda, fake news, or misleading statistics.
- Encourages cross-checking sources for accuracy.

18. To Cultivate a Love for Learning

- Makes reading and studying more interactive and meaningful.
- Transforms passive learning into an active discovery process.

19. To Recognize the Influence of Power & Authority

- Helps assess who controls narratives and why. Encourages questioning of dominant or official histories

Ask questions of the text… Question everything…

What / When / Why / Where / Who / How

Who wrote it? Why was it written? What was the emphasis?
Location – where… People – characters?

Task: Now we won't be able to answer all these questions tonight – but in groups / pairs – using your phones, ipads, Bibles etc, try and have a go at answering some of these questions.

1. Contextual Questions

- Where does this story take place? What is significant about **Tyre and Sidon**?
- What is the historical relationship between **Jews and Canaanites**?
- What previous encounters did Jesus have with Gentiles before this story?
- Why did Jesus go to a **Gentile region**? Was He retreating, ministering, or something else?
- How does this passage connect to the surrounding texts (before and after)?

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2. Cultural & Historical Questions

- Who were the **Canaanites**, and what was their religious background?
- Why is it significant that **Matthew calls her a "Canaanite"** (not just a Gentile or Syrophoenician like in Mark)?
- What gods did the Canaanites worship, and how did that influence their worldview?
- What did Jewish people in Jesus' time think about **Canaanites and Gentiles in general**?
- What would a Jewish **rabbi** normally do if approached by a Gentile woman?
- How would the **disciples** have viewed this woman's request?
- How does this story reflect the **role of women in ancient Near Eastern culture**?

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3. Theological Questions

- Why does Jesus initially **seem to reject her**?
- What does Jesus mean by, **"I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel"**?
- Is Jesus testing the woman, the disciples, or both?
- Why does Jesus compare the woman to **"dogs"**? Is this offensive, or is there a deeper meaning?
- How does the woman's **response** ("even the dogs eat the crumbs") reflect **faith and humility**?
- How does Jesus' healing of a **Gentile's daughter** fit into His broader **mission**?
- How does this passage contribute to the **expansion of the gospel to the Gentiles**?
- Is there a connection between this passage and the **Abrahamic covenant** (Genesis 12:3 – "all nations will be blessed")?
- How does this encounter prepare the way for the **Great Commission** (Matthew 28:19 – "Go and make disciples of all nations")?

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4. Literary & Structural Questions

- Why is this story placed **between** Jesus' debates with Pharisees (about purity) and the **feeding of the 4,000**?
- What is the **tone** of Jesus' words—harsh, teasing, testing, or something else?

- How does the **woman's persistence** contrast with other people Jesus encounters?
- What do the **different verbs** in the woman's approach tell us about her faith? (**"Came"** → **"Cried out"** → **"Knelt"**)
- Why does Matthew emphasize **"great faith"** here when it's only used for **one other person** (the Roman centurion, another Gentile, in Matthew 8:5-13)?
- Why does Mark's account differ slightly from Matthew's? What does each Gospel emphasize?

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5. Connections to the Old Testament

- Where else in Scripture do **non-Israelites show great faith**? (e.g., Rahab, Ruth, Naaman)
- Is there a parallel between this woman and **Hagar** (Genesis 16) in how they are seen as outsiders yet receive God's mercy?
- How does Jesus' **reference to Israel as children** reflect Old Testament imagery?
- Are there prophecies that hint at Gentile inclusion? (e.g., Isaiah 42:6, Isaiah 49:6)

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6. Connections to the New Testament & Jesus' Ministry

- How does this encounter foreshadow the **Gospel reaching the Gentiles** in Acts?
- What other stories show Jesus **breaking cultural barriers** (e.g., the Samaritan woman in John 4)?
- How does this story compare to the **Roman centurion's faith** (Matthew 8:5-13)?
- How does the woman's faith contrast with the **Jewish leaders' lack of faith**?

A – Application

What have you learned from this story? How has it applied to you / your life / your situation / your walk with Jesus?

The Gentile woman's response— "I'll take the crumbs'. "Even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table" (Matthew 15:27)—is profound and packed with deep theological, spiritual, and personal implications. Here are some key insights:

1. Radical Humility

- She does not argue for her own worthiness but acknowledges her lowly status before Jesus.
- Unlike the Pharisees, who approached Jesus with entitlement, she comes with a posture of humility.

2. Persistent Faith
- She refuses to be discouraged by Jesus' initial response.
- Her faith is not dependent on immediate affirmation but on her trust in Jesus' character.

3. Understanding of Jesus' Abundance
- She recognizes that even the "crumbs" of His power and mercy are enough.

4. Recognition of Jesus' Lordship
- By calling Him "Lord" (Matthew 15:25), she acknowledges His divine authority.
- She understands that His power extends beyond Israel to the Gentiles.

5. Foreshadowing of the Gospel to the Gentiles
- She anticipates the inclusion of the Gentiles in God's salvation plan.
- This moment reflects God's promise to bless all nations through Abraham (Genesis 12:3).

6. Contrast with the Jewish Leaders
- Many Jewish leaders rejected Jesus, despite having direct access to Him.
- This Gentile woman, considered an outsider, demonstrates greater faith than the religious elite.

7. Illustration of God's Grace
- She acknowledges that she has no claim to God's blessings but still believes in His mercy.
- This foreshadows Paul's teaching that salvation is by grace, not entitlement (Ephesians 2:8-9).

8. Echoes of Other Outsiders in Scripture
- Similar to Rahab, Ruth, and the Roman centurion (Matthew 8:5-13), she is an outsider who displays remarkable faith.
- Her story aligns with God's pattern of welcoming the marginalized.

9. Reveals the Heart of Jesus

- Although His initial response seems harsh, He ultimately affirms her faith and grants her request.
- This shows that God is not distant but responds to sincere faith.

10. Encouragement for Persistent Prayer

- She does not give up when faced with silence or resistance.
- Jesus' commendation—"Great is your faith!"—encourages believers to persevere in seeking God.

11. Symbol of Gentile Inclusion in the Kingdom

- The "crumbs" represent how the blessings of Israel overflow to the Gentiles.
- This moment foreshadows Acts 10 (Peter and Cornelius) and the full inclusion of Gentiles in the church.

12. Demonstrates True Worship

- She kneels before Jesus, an act of submission and worship.
- Her faith is not just intellectual but deeply reverent and relational.

13. Challenge to Human Pride and Self-Righteousness

- Many people resist God because they feel entitled to His blessings.
- This woman shows that true faith comes through humility, not pride.

14. A Model of Bold Faith

- She takes a risk by approaching a Jewish rabbi, breaking cultural norms.
- Her faith is bold and unashamed, much like the woman with the issue of blood (Mark 5:25-34).

15. Jesus' Response Shows That He is Testing, Not Rejecting

- Jesus’ conversation with her is not about exclusion but drawing out her faith.
- He often tested faith before granting miracles (e.g., the healing of the blind men in Matthew 9:27-30).

16. Shifts the Disciples' Perspective

- The disciples initially want to send her away, reflecting their cultural biases.
- Through this encounter, Jesus teaches them that faith is not limited to Jews.

17. Teaches That Even the Smallest Portion of God's Blessing is Powerful

- "Crumbs" from Jesus are more than enough to heal and restore.
- This highlights the infinite power of God—His grace is sufficient, even in small measures.

18. Points to the Feeding of the 4,000 (Which Includes Gentiles)

- Immediately after this story, Jesus feeds the 4,000 (Matthew 15:32-39), showing His provision extends beyond Israel.
- The abundance of leftovers in the feeding miracles symbolizes God's overflowing grace.

19. A Lesson in Intercession

- She pleads on behalf of her daughter, showing the power of interceding for others.
- This reflects the heart of a true believer—concerned not only for personal needs but for others as well.

20. The Reversal of Expectations

- In the ancient world, a Jewish rabbi would typically dismiss a Canaanite woman.
- Jesus instead elevates her, commends her faith, and grants her request, overturning societal norms.

21. A Personal Challenge for Believers

- How do we approach Jesus? With entitlement or humility?
- Do we persist in faith even when we don't receive immediate answers?
- Are we willing to believe that even the "crumbs" of God's grace are enough for us?

Discipleship & Application Questions

- How do we approach Jesus when we feel **rejected or unheard**?
- What does this woman teach us about **persistence in prayer**?
- How does her story challenge our **prejudices or assumptions** about who belongs in the kingdom of God?
- What does Jesus' **eventual healing** of her daughter say about His **compassion**?
- How does this passage shape our understanding of **faith and humility**?
- How should the **disciples' reaction** challenge us in how we treat outsiders today?

- How does this passage encourage us to **minister across cultural and racial boundaries**?
- What does it mean to have **"great faith"** in our daily walk with Christ?
- How does this passage relate to the **inclusion of all people in God's kingdom**?

P – Pray

Extra Notes:

The Emphasis of Matthew's Gospel: An Academic Overview

1. Purpose and Audience

Matthew's Gospel is traditionally understood as being written for a Jewish-Christian audience in the late first century (c. 70–90 AD). While it is deeply rooted in Jewish tradition, Matthew also progressively reveals that Jesus' mission extends to the Gentiles.
The Gospel's primary themes include:

- Jesus as the Messianic King fulfilling Old Testament prophecy.
- The Kingdom of Heaven, emphasizing both its present reality and future fulfilment.
- The inclusion of the Gentiles in God's redemptive plan.
- Jesus as the New Moses, giving a new law and forming a new covenant community.

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2. Key Emphases in Matthew's Gospel

A. Jesus as the Fulfilment of Jewish Prophecy

Matthew frequently uses fulfilment formulas, explicitly linking Jesus to Old Testament prophecies. For example:

- The Virgin Birth – "All this took place to fulfil what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: 'Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son…'" (Matthew 1:22-23, quoting Isaiah 7:14).
- Jesus as the New Moses – Like Moses, Jesus survives an infant massacre (Matthew 2:16-18, cf. Exodus 1-2) and later gives a new Law from a mountain (Matthew 5-7).
- The Suffering Servant – Jesus' passion fulfils Isaiah's prophecy of the suffering servant (Matthew 26:56, cf. Isaiah 53).
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Matthew wants to show that Jesus is the true Son of David, the long-awaited Messiah, and that His coming is the culmination of Israel's history.

B. Jesus as the Jewish Messiah—But for All Nations

While Matthew's Gospel begins with a strong Jewish focus, it ends with a universal mission. Some key passages that show this shift:

1. Jesus' Ministry Begins with the Jews – Jesus tells His disciples, "Go nowhere among the Gentiles... but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matthew 10:5-6).

2. Jesus' Encounter with the Canaanite Woman (Matthew 15:21-28) – This is a turning point in the Gospel. Initially, Jesus appears to focus only on Israel, saying, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel" (v. 24). However, after the woman's persistent faith, Jesus grants her request, foreshadowing the inclusion of the Gentiles.
3. The Great Commission – Jesus commands His disciples to "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations"(Matthew 28:19), making it clear that the Gospel is for both Jews and Gentiles.

C. The Kingdom of Heaven: Present and Future

Matthew uniquely uses the phrase "Kingdom of Heaven" (rather than "Kingdom of God"), emphasizing both:

- The present reality of God's rule (e.g., Matthew 12:28 – "the kingdom of God has come upon you").
- The future fulfilment of the kingdom when Jesus returns (Matthew 25:31-46).
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Many of Jesus' parables in Matthew (e.g., the Parable of the Mustard Seed, Matthew 13:31-32) emphasize how the Kingdom starts small but expands to include all nations—again, pointing toward Gentile inclusion.

D. Jesus as the New Moses and the True Israel

Matthew structures his Gospel around five major teaching sections, possibly paralleling the five books of Moses (Torah).

- Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) – Jesus, like Moses, delivers the law from a mountain, but He intensifies it ("You have heard it said… but I say to you").
- The Exodus Parallel – Jesus goes to Egypt and returns (Matthew 2:13-15), fulfilling Hosea 11:1 ("Out of Egypt I called my son").
- The Temptation in the Wilderness (Matthew 4:1-11) – Unlike Israel, which failed in the wilderness, Jesus remains faithful.

By portraying Jesus as the New Moses and True Israel, Matthew emphasizes that He is the one who leads God's people into the new covenant.

E. Conflict with Religious Authorities

Matthew portrays growing tension between Jesus and the Jewish religious leaders (Pharisees, Sadducees, scribes). Some key moments:

- The Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) – Jesus reinterprets the law and righteousness, exposing hypocrisy.
- The "Woe" Passages (Matthew 23) – Jesus strongly condemns the Pharisees, calling them "whitewashed tombs" (v. 27).
- The Crucifixion Narrative – The Jewish leaders' rejection of Jesus fulfils prophecy (Matthew 27:25).

However, Matthew never rejects Judaism itself—only the hypocrisy of the religious leaders who fail to recognize the Messiah.

F. The Role of Gentiles in Matthew's Gospel

While Matthew's Gospel is deeply Jewish, it subtly hints at the inclusion of Gentiles throughout:

1. The Genealogy of Jesus (Matthew 1:1-17) – Includes Gentile women (Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, Bathsheba), foreshadowing God's plan for all nations.
2. The Visit of the Magi (Matthew 2:1-12) – The first people to worship Jesus are Gentile wise men from the East.
3. The Centurion's Faith (Matthew 8:5-13) – Jesus praises a Roman centurion's faith as greater than any in Israel.
4. The Parable of the Tenants (Matthew 21:33-46) – Jesus implies that the Kingdom will be given to others, hinting at the Gentiles.
5. The Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20) – Ends with the command to go to all nations, completing the shift from a Jewish Messiah to a universal Savior.

Conclusion: The Dual Emphasis of Matthew's Gospel

Matthew presents Jesus as the Messiah of Israel, fulfilling Jewish prophecy, but also as the Savior of the world, including the Gentiles.

- Early chapters emphasize Jesus' Jewish identity and mission to Israel.
- Midway through, Gentile faith is introduced (Canaanite woman, Roman centurion).
- The Gospel ends with the Great Commission, expanding the mission to all nations.

This dual emphasis makes Matthew's Gospel both deeply Jewish and globally missional, positioning Jesus as the fulfillment of God's redemptive plan for the entire world.

The Route Jesus Likely Took in the Story of the Gentile Woman (Matthew 15:21-28, Mark 7:24-30)

The story of the Canaanite (Syrophoenician) woman takes place when Jesus travels to the region of Tyre and Sidon(Matthew 15:21; Mark 7:24). This is one of the few times recorded in the Gospels where Jesus deliberately leaves Jewish territory and enters a predominantly Gentile region.

1. Possible Route Taken

Jesus was likely traveling from Galilee (Capernaum or Gennesaret) to the region of Tyre and Sidon. The most probable route:

- Via the Via Maris ("Way of the Sea") – This was a major trade route running along the Mediterranean coast, connecting Egypt to Syria.
- Through the Jezreel Valley and Northward – He may have passed through Nazareth and Bethlehem of Galilee, heading northwest toward the coast.
- Entering Tyre and Sidon – These cities were part of Phoenicia (modern-day Lebanon) and were known for their wealth, paganism, and independence from Jewish rule.

Mark 7:31 suggests Jesus later returned through the region of the Decapolis (ten Gentile cities east of the Jordan River), meaning He may have made a circular journey rather than retracing His steps.

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2. Why Did Jesus Go to Tyre and Sidon?

This journey was highly unusual for a Jewish rabbi, raising the question: Why did Jesus go to a Gentile region?

A. Seeking Rest and Privacy

- Mark 7:24 says Jesus “entered a house and did not want anyone to know it.”
- His growing fame in Galilee (after miracles like feeding the 5,000) made it difficult to find solitude.
- He may have wanted time to teach His disciples privately without the pressure of crowds.

B. A Strategic Teaching Moment on Gentile Inclusion

- The Canaanite woman’s faith foreshadows the expansion of the Gospel beyond Israel.

- Jesus initially resists her plea (“I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel” – Matthew 15:24), but her persistence demonstrates the faith that Jesus commends.
- This aligns with Matthew’s larger theme of the Gentiles being included in God’s plan (culminating in the Great Commission, Matthew 28:19).

C. Prophetic Fulfilment and Old Testament Connection

- The region of Tyre and Sidon was historically associated with Israel’s enemies (e.g., Jezebel, the Phoenician queen who led Israel into idolatry, 1 Kings 16:31).
- The prophets condemned these cities (Isaiah 23, Ezekiel 26-28), yet Jesus visits them, suggesting a reversal of judgment and an opening for salvation.
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D. A Practical Demonstration for the Disciples

- The disciples still had prejudices against Gentiles.
- This encounter challenged their mindset and prepared them for the coming Gentile mission (Acts 10, Peter’s vision of unclean foods).

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3. Conclusion: A Deliberate and Purposeful Journey
Jesus’ trip to Tyre and Sidon was not random—it was likely:

A strategic withdrawal from Galilee’s crowds.
A prophetic sign of the Gospel extending to the Gentiles.
A challenge to Jewish-Gentile boundaries.
A preparation for the disciples' future mission to the nations.

The Feeding of the 4,000 (Matthew 15:32-39; Mark 8:1-10) – A Gentile Audience?

Immediately after Jesus' encounter with the Canaanite woman (Matthew 15:21-28; Mark 7:24-30), we see Him performing another miraculous feeding—this time feeding 4,000 people (Matthew 15:32-39; Mark 8:1-10).

Key Differences Between the Two Feedings

Event	Feeding of the 5,000 (Matthew 14:13-21; Mark 6:30-44)	Feeding of the 4,000 (Matthew 15:32-39; Mark 8:1-10)
Location	Jewish territory (near Bethsaida)	Likely Gentile territory (Decapolis region)
People Fed	5,000 men (+ women & children)	4,000 men (+ women & children)
Number of Loaves	5 loaves & 2 fish	7 loaves & a few fish
Baskets Left Over	12 baskets (Greek: *kophinos*, small baskets)	7 baskets (Greek: *spuris*, larger baskets)

Why Is This Significant?

1. **The Location Suggests a Largely Gentile Audience**
    - The feeding of the 5,000 took place in Jewish territory.
    - The feeding of the 4,000 happened after Jesus had traveled through Tyre, Sidon, and the Decapolis—largely Gentile regions.
    - Mark 7:31 says Jesus went to "the region of the Decapolis", a known Gentile area.
    - This strongly suggests that many of the 4,000 were Gentiles.

2. **A Parallel to Show the Inclusion of Gentiles**
    - In the first feeding, 12 baskets of leftovers likely symbolize the 12 tribes of Israel, indicating Jesus as the provider for the Jewish people.
    - In the second feeding, 7 baskets of leftovers may symbolize completeness or the nations (in Jewish thought, 7 often represents the Gentile nations).

- This mirrors the Canaanite woman's story, where Jesus first focuses on Israel but then extends grace to a persistent Gentile.

3. **Repetition to Emphasize the Universal Nature of the Gospel**
   - The disciples were still struggling to grasp Jesus' mission to the Gentiles (Mark 8:14-21).
   - Jesus essentially repeats the miracle in a different context to emphasize:
     ➡️ He is not only the Jewish Messiah but the Savior of the world.
     ➡️ He provides for both Jew and Gentile alike.
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Conclusion: A Turning Point in Jesus' Ministry

The Canaanite woman's persistent faith set the stage for Jesus' expanded mission beyond Israel. The feeding of the 4,000 immediately afterward serves as a powerful, symbolic act showing that Gentiles, too, are recipients of God's provision and grace.