

Dogs - Why can't you see?

Week 36 ~ Notes for November 20th

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Background

Subject	Matt	Mark	Luke	John
More Healings	15:21-31	7:24-37, 8:22-26		

Discussion

An important theme in last week's exchange was the concept of purity. Can we take this week's lesson and partly explore the opposite of 'purity': 'DEFILEMENT'?

Some atheistic critics hammer their perceived image of the God of the Old Testament, particularly for His cruelty to the Canaanites and other surrounding tribes. Apart from the permanently fought over piece of Real Estate we call 'Israel', the Canaanite culture was extremely seductive. I think without extreme action, the new religion, Judaism, would have been strangled at birth. However, the Canaanites always appeared to have an existence to the north of Israel. I find the genetic mix, as pointed out in the article ["Who were the Canaanites? New insight from 73 ancient genomes"](#) of considerable interest. You can draw your own conclusions from that.

The Canaanite woman's daughter was possessed by a demon. The behaviour of those who are demon possessed in the New Testament, always strike me as bordering on the demented, creating in my mind, a tragic-comic image. However, the concept of 'demon possession', I equate with an extremist form of evil.

From a personal point of view, the concept of supernatural possession by a demon does not feature in my conscious thinking, because my thoughts have been shaped by the Western culture which has influenced my cognitive development. This approach obviously has a bearing on shaping my faith, which is key in aiding it to remain authentic. Crucially, it is informed by scriptural revelation given in a historical, cultural context from a Judaistic/Middle Eastern perspective from two to three thousand years ago.

We concluded last week that a pure heart is having the 'mind' of Christ within us. Perhaps the modern equivalent of being possessed by a 'demon' is permitting ourselves to be defiled by being dominated by our baser natures.

From this week's study, I want to explore with you the following questions:

1. The Canaanites were never annihilated. Can the biblical historians in the group give a sense of the relationship between the Canaanites and the Israelites two thousand years ago?
2. Why was the Canaanite's daughter possessed? (Purely speculative)
3. Under possession, was the daughter (or Gerasene) responsible for her actions?

4. Is there firm evidence to demonstrate that the form of possession we observe in the New Testament, is active in our own culture?
5. If not, does demon possession still exist and what form does it take? Give examples.
6. Initially, Christ appears to treat the woman's plea in an off-hand manner. "It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs". If Christ made that statement about someone from a different race in our country, would He have been arrested for a hate speech? Why did Christ respond in that fashion?
7. If the woman would have had little or no faith, her daughter may not have been healed. Should the practice of compassionate acts be conditional?
8. Again, the multitudes come to Christ for healing. The Compassionate Christ has dominated a number of our recent studies. Can you identify a number of qualities which makes this virtue special?

Resources

Further reading:

- Some further thoughts on the origins of the ['Canaanite/Syrophoenician/Gentile' woman](#).
- ["Who were the Canaanites? New insight from 73 ancient genomes"](#) - a paper from Science Daily.
- ["Stella Immanuel's theories about the relationship between demons, illness and sex have a long history"](#) - Another perspective. The article is very contemporary. It is associated with current right-wing, evangelical Christian, Trumpian thinking. From my Christian perspective, I'm repelled by it. I don't want to enter a controversial political arena, except when, from a moral or ethical position, it is egregious...
- ["Jesus, Hitler and The Abolition of God"](#) - The origins of modern secularism lie in the age of the Renaissance. This lecture tracks that legacy down to the present. This is a Gresham College lecture by Professor Ryrie. It is the last in a series of excellent lectures on Church history of the last few centuries. I would appreciate it if those partaking on Saturday would take the opportunity to listen to it. There is no evidence of the kind of demonic possession that was witnessed two thousand years ago in our western culture. However, the influence of evil is much more productive in its modern manifestation, in its partial destruction of Godly belief in the latter part of the 20th century up until the current age. Professor Ryrie's arguments clearly bring this out much better than even I could begin to attempt.
- ["Four Reasons Why Compassion Is Better For Humanity Than Empathy"](#) - I read this article some days ago. Although it is written from a non-religious point of view, it struck me the similarities in quality with Christian compassion. As I want to generate a discussion about the nature of compassion as well as 'demons' and 'The Canaanites' I thought I'd share it with the group.