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*God, through His Son Jesus, provides eternal grace for our failures and human limitations.*

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## Matthew 15.

(2013)

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The Bible not only reveals God's eternal plans purposes and promises

But also shows how you can know God for yourself.

***Teach it, don't demand it.***

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## Matthew 15.

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### Topics.

- Honour your father and your mother.
- It is not what goes in the mouth that defiles, but what comes out of the mouth.
- Even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table.
- Jesus heals the lame, the blind, the crippled, the mute, and many others.
- Jesus feeds four-thousand.

**The Previous Chapter:** in the previous chapter John the Baptist is beheaded, Jesus feeds about five thousand men and women and walks on the Sea of Galilee. Peter walks on water and many who touch the fringe of Jesus' garment are healed.

**NOTE:** for information concerning people, places and the meaning of words see Map Locations and People of the Bible, and Bible Dictionary on Website Menu.

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### Honour your Father and your Mother.

Matthew 15:1-6 ----- <sup>1</sup>Then Pharisees and scribes came to Jesus from Jerusalem and said, <sup>2</sup>"Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat." <sup>3</sup>He answered them, "And why do you break the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition? <sup>4</sup>For God commanded, 'Honour your father and your mother,' and, 'Who ever reviles father or mother must surely die.' <sup>5</sup>But you say, 'If anyone tells his father or his mother, What you would have gained from me (their son or daughter) is given to God, <sup>6</sup>he need not honour his father.' So for the sake of your tradition you have made void the word of God.

**Honouring your parents:** in this context means taking care of them.

Under the Old Testament the common people of Israel supported the Levitical Priesthood by giving them shelter and a tithe (10%) of all that their land produced (i.e., food in the way of meat, fruit, vegetables and grain). When the people did this it was considered the same as giving to God, because the priests stood before God on behalf of the people.

Based on this concept the religious leaders of Jesus day were telling their followers if they gave the money they needed to support their mother and father to God as a gift then they would not be held responsible by God to financially care for their parents. Of course the Pharisees motivation for teaching this to the people was simply to increase the size of their own pockets financially, because they are the ones who actually receive the money.

### NOTICE.

The Pharisees and scribes ask Jesus a question, but he knew the Pharisees were asking the question to condemn his followers and not because they cared for their well-being so instead of answering their question he responds by asking them a question which they cannot answer.

### Jesus rebukes the Pharisees and Scribes.

Matthew 15:7-9 ----- <sup>7</sup>You hypocrites! (the Pharisees and scribes) (v1) Well did Isaiah prophesy of you, when he said: <sup>8</sup>"This people honours me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; <sup>9</sup>in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.' "

Jesus cites this from the following verse of Isaiah: -

- The LORD said: "Because this people draw near with their mouth and honour me with their lips, while their hearts are far from me, and their fear of me is a commandment taught by men (Isaiah 29:15).

The Pharisees and scribes are likened to the religious leaders of Isaiah's era, they heard the word of the Lord, but did not perceive it because they did not have a right heart attitude toward God (Isaiah 29:10-12) says this is why the word of the LORD was sealed to them).

Ezekiel in the following verses made a similar statement to Isaiah's: -

- As for you, son of man, your people who talk together about you by the walls and at the doors of the houses, say to one another, each to his brother, 'Come, and hear what the word is that comes from the LORD.' <sup>31</sup>And they come to you as people come, and they sit before you as my people, and they hear what you say but they will not do it; for with lustful talk in their mouths they act; their heart is set on their gain. <sup>32</sup>And behold, you are to them like one who sings a very lovely song of one with a beautiful voice and plays well on an instrument, for they hear what you say, but they will not do it (Ezekiel 33:29-32).

As for you, son of man and to your people refers to Ezekiel and Old Testament Israel, but it is also echoing Christ and the Pharisees. Jesus is likening the Pharisees to Israel during the time of Ezekiel. The religious leaders in Ezekiel's era loved being in all the important places and going to Ezekiel to hear if any new word had come from LORD, but because their hearts were set on selfish ambition and their own gain they were not going to the prophet because they wanted to know and apply what he said to their lives they only want to hear what Ezekiel had to say so they could make themselves feel even more important by talking about it amongst themselves.

Jesus is telling the Pharisees that they are exactly like Israel's priests in the Old Testament they listen to Jesus as Israel did to Ezekiel, but they have no interest in changing. Ezekiel and Jesus are pictured as majestic singers with lovely voices singing a beautiful song while their listeners are pictured as hearing the songs, but not applying the messages they contain to their daily lives, they hear but do not do (Ezek. 33: 32).

**It is not what Goes into the Mouth that Defiles, But what comes Out.**

Matthew 15:10-20 ---- <sup>10</sup>And he called the people to him and said to them, "Hear and understand: <sup>11</sup>it is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but what comes out of the mouth; this defiles a person." <sup>12</sup>Then the disciples came and said to him, "Do you know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this saying?" <sup>13</sup>He answered, "Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be rooted up. <sup>14</sup>Let them alone; they (the Pharisees) are blind guides. And if the blind lead the blind, both will fall into a pit." <sup>15</sup>But Peter said to him "Explain the parable to us." <sup>16</sup>And he said, "Are you also still without understanding? <sup>17</sup>Do you not see that whatever goes into the mouth passes into the stomach and is expelled? <sup>18</sup>But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a person. <sup>19</sup>For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander. <sup>20</sup>These are what defile a person. But to eat with unwashed hands does not defile anyone."

Remember at this time the Pharisees, Jesus and his disciples are still under the Old Testament Law which declared certain foods spiritually clean and others unclean. Jesus by telling his disciples that it is not what a person eats that defiles a person is turning the Old Covenant Law upside down, he is revealing to his listeners that what God values is the good that comes from the human heart and not what kind of foods they may or may not be eating. It is only what we speak that has the potential to defile us because what we say comes from who we are in our heart. Eating with unwashed hands though it may not be healthy does not spiritually defile anyone before God.

This shows how the Pharisees and Scribes had turned their own traditions into the law of God. They had turned what is a good practice health wise (washing hands before eating) into a legalistic commandment of God and a spiritual law that if not practised would defile a person before God. This is a good example of man taking traditions or what they believe to be important and turning them into legalistic laws that will bring condemnation on those who do not strictly adhered to them.

### **Every Plant that God has Not Planted will be Rooted Up.**

Jesus tells his disciples rather than try to change the Pharisees and Scribes even though they are leading others astray let them and their followers continue in their spiritual blindness and on their path to destruction. Jesus is simply saying if a person does not what to hear because they are full of pride and selfish ambition don't try to force or impose the gospel on them, let them go their own way even if it is taking them on a path of spiritual blindness.

Trust that the Lord knows those who are his and the Day of Judgment he will root out of his Kingdom those who are not. It is not our calling or our ministry to cause strife and contention by attempting to force or impose the Gospel onto those who have a wrong heart attitude to hear it, rather move onto those who do want to hear and who do have a right heart attitude.

### **Even Dogs Eat the Crumbs that Fall from their Masters' Table.**

Matthew 15:21-28 --- <sup>21</sup>And Jesus went away from there and withdrew to the district of Tyre and Sidon. <sup>22</sup>And behold, a Canaanite (non-Jew) woman from that region came out and was crying, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David; my daughter is severely oppressed by a demon." <sup>23</sup>But he did not answer her a word. And his disciples came and begged him, saying, "Send her away, for she is crying out after us." <sup>24</sup>He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." <sup>25</sup>But she came and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, help me." <sup>26</sup>And he answered, "It is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs." <sup>27</sup>She said, "Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table." <sup>28</sup>Then Jesus answered her, "O woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire." And her daughter was healed instantly.

This story beautifully contrasts the previous verses in which the religious leaders the Pharisees and scribes are presented as blind guides who have such a wrong heart attitude that they are unable to receive anything from God whereas in this story we are presented with a Gentile woman without God who has an absolutely beautiful heart attitude toward Christ.

### **Even the Dogs eat the Crumbs that fall from their Masters' Table.**

**Dogs:** (kunarion) is translated from is the Greek word puppy, it is used in the sense of a pet or friend figuratively it carries the idea of the lessor. The Jews considered themselves full grown concerning the things of God they saw themselves as the superior and righteous race and the Gentiles as the unclean or lessor class of people.

To the Jews the Canaanite (non-Jew) Gentile woman would be seen as unclean and inferior concerning the things of God. Jesus is contrasting the Jewish nation who had known God for over four-thousand years with the Gentiles who had been without God. He is stating the fact that concerning the things of God the Gentiles are lessor (at this stage) than the Jews who God had chosen from the Exodus.

Jesus came firstly to the "Lost Sheep of Israel" (i.e., the Jews that were humble and desired the truth but could not find it because of the religious leaders of that era.

The Pharisees and scribe who were serving God for their own selfish gain had made it almost impossible for the average person to find God, thus Jesus first priority was to this group of people (the Lost Sheep), nevertheless because Jesus was full of compassion and mercy (unlike the Pharisees and scribes) he responded to this Gentile woman's great faith and humble attitude and healed her daughter.

**NOTICE:** the woman's great faith was not that she believed Jesus would heal her daughter, but that she believed he could heal her daughter and knowing this she humbly asks him to heal her.

**Have mercy O Lord, my daughter is oppressed by a demon:** (v22) during Jesus era the people believed that sickness they could not understand were caused by inferior evil gods called demons possessing them.

For further information see the title: -

- Demons at the end of his chapter.

### **Jesus Heals the Lame, the Blind, the Crippled and the Mute.**

Matthew 15:29-31 --- <sup>29</sup>Jesus went on from there and walked beside the Sea of Galilee. And he went up on the mountain and sat down there. <sup>30</sup>And great crowds came to him, bringing with them the lame, the blind, the crippled, the mute, and many others, and they put them at his feet, and he healed them, <sup>31</sup>so that the crowd wondered, when they saw the mute speaking, the crippled healthy, the lame walking, and the blind seeing. And they glorified the God of Israel.

Multitudes came to Jesus, but it was not always because they wanted to know God, but because they knew he had the power to heal them, nevertheless they knew it was God's power flowing through Christ and to Him they gave the glory.

### **Jesus feeds Four-Thousand.**

Matthew 15:32-39 --- <sup>32</sup>Then Jesus called his disciples to him and said, "I have compassion on the crowd because they have been with me now three days and have nothing to eat. And I am unwilling to send them away hungry, lest they faint on the way." <sup>33</sup>And the disciples said to him, "Where are we to get enough bread in such a desolate place to feed so great a crowd?" <sup>34</sup>And Jesus said to them, "How many loaves do you have?" They said, "Seven, and a few small fish." <sup>35</sup>And directing the crowd to sit down on the ground, <sup>36</sup>he took the seven loaves and the fish, and having given thanks he broke them and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. <sup>37</sup>And they all ate and were satisfied. And they took up seven baskets full of the broken pieces left over. <sup>38</sup>Those who ate were four thousand men, besides women and children. <sup>39</sup>And after sending away the crowds, he got into the boat and went to the region of Magadan.

Feeding the Four-Thousand is only recorded in Mathew and Mark (chapter eight).

Jesus leaves the district of Tyre and Sidon and goes back to Galilee on his arrival in the region he goes up a mountain beside the Sea of Galilee (also called the Sea of Gennesaret and of Tiberias) and heals the multitudes that came to him. After three days Jesus is concerned that the crowd of four-thousand plus have nothing to eat, so he has the multitudes sit and then takes some bread and fish, prays to God and the disciples take the bread and fish in baskets through the crowd and they are all fed. Then after sending the crowds away Jesus gets in a boat and sails to the region of Magadan.

**NOTE:** the parallel text in (Mark 8:9) calls Magadan, Dalmanutha.

### **Feeding the Four-Thousand and the Five-Thousand.**

Gennesaret and Magadan are only about three miles apart on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. From Tiberias it is three miles to Magadan and then a further three miles to Gennesaret. Magadan is where Jesus went after feeding the four-thousand and Gennesaret is where he went after feeding the five-thousand. We know that the feeding of the four-thousand and the five-thousand are two different events because Jesus asked the disciples, "Do they not remember the five loaves for the five thousand and or the seven loaves for the four thousand?" (Matt 16:9-10) clearly showing us that feeding the five-thousand and the four-thousand were two separate events. Much of Jesus public ministry took place along the north shore of the Sea of Galilee.

## **Galilee of the Nations.**

The region of Galilee was known as the heathen circle and called Galilee of the Nations or Gentiles. This was because during the Old Testament era the Israelite population of Galilee was carried away captive to Assyria to Tiglath-pileser and replaced by a colony of heathen immigrants. After the captivity the Israelites returned to their land, but the predominant mixture of Gentile races impoverished and diminished the worship of Judaism, and also resulted in the Galilean accent and dialect being noticeably peculiar (Matt 26:73).

This caused the southern Jews of purer blood and orthodox tradition to despise them (John 7:52) thus the reason Nathanael rather contemptuously asked, can any good thing come out of Nazareth? (John 1:46). Yet it was in this very darkness Jesus was sent and as light to the Gentiles (Isa 42:6) as well as the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Matt. 15:24) rather than going to the self-satisfied and privileged in Judea.

(2 Kings 15:29), (2 Kings 17:24) (Isa. 9:1) (Matt. 4:13-16).

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## **Demons, Devils and Sickness.**

The English word demon and demons are not found in the entire King James Bible. In the New Testament of the King James Bible the translators have unfortunately translated both (diabolos) and (daimion) as devil or devils which gives a completely wrong understanding of the Greek words diabolos (devil) and daimion (demon). This has over the years led to a misunderstanding of the difference between devils and demons. Most well recognized and globally accepted modern Bibles have translated demons (daimion) and devils (diabolos) correctly. The word demons (daimion) was believed to be an inferior deity or god and primarily relates to sickness whereas devils (diabolos) means a false accuser or slander and primarily relates to people's behavior and not sickness.

## **The Jews and Demons.**

The Jews believed demons to be an inferior evil god or deity that held possession of those with severe sickness either bodily or mentally those that were mentally sick were believed to be possessed by an evil inferior god called daimon. They believed that the demons (daimonions) so held possession of them as not only to afflict them with ills, but also to dethrone the reason and take its place themselves and that people possessed with demons were forced by the demons to express the mind and consciousness of the demons dwelling in them, and the only cure was by the expulsion of the demons.

The fact that the Pharisees and scribes and certain Jews believed John the Baptist and Jesus were possessed by demons (Jn. 7:20) (Jn. 8:48-49) (Jn. 10:19-20) (Matt. 11:18) clearly shows us that just because the religious leaders of Jesus era believed mental illness, deafness, blindness and sickness they didn't understand were a result of demons does not mean it is a true fact.

## **The biblical difference between Sickness and Demons.**

In most instances when people had an illness that does not control the person, it is referred to in biblical writings as a sickness, but when a sickness (mental illness) controls a person to do things they do not want to do (have fits etc.), they are referred to as having demons or an unclean spirit.

Sickness commonly related to illnesses the people understood, while demons primarily relate to severe illnesses and diseases, either bodily or mentally the people did not understand. Just because people believe something does not mean it is true if the Bible were being written today it would contain words like bi-polar disorder, schizophrenia epilepsy, melancholy, loss of speech etc., which in the New Testament are referred to as unclean spirits, demons or caused by demons as are paralysis, blindness and deafness and any other sickness the people did not understand.

**One super evil god in control of millions of lesser evil gods:** any force in a human that controls a person to do things they cannot control themselves, things that affects their behavior and mental well-being, voices or words in the mind and severe diseases, either bodily or mentally, (such as schizophrenia paralysis, blindness, deafness, loss of speech, epilepsy, melancholy, insanity and seizures etc., plus speeches that entice people against the things of God and God Himself are all commonly called demons in the New Testament.

But the Bible does not present a picture of one super evil god (slightly less in power than God) being in control of millions of lesser evil gods. This is a modern day misunderstanding of the language of the Bible. Demons are not evil people as Hollywood portrays demon possessed people in their movies. People in the Bible that had demons were morally good people and in some case only children who were sadly afflicted with severe diseases, either bodily or mentally such as paralysis, blindness, deafness and loss of speech, epilepsy, melancholy and insanity, etc.

In the opinion of the Jews demons had entered their bodies, and so held possession of them as not only to afflict them with ills, but also to dethrone the reason and take its place themselves. The people of Jesus age believed the possessed were driven to express the mind and consciousness of the demons dwelling in them; and their only cure was thought to require the expulsion of the demon.

### **The Origin of Demons.**

A demon is believed to be a supernatural being, spirit, or force capable of influencing human lives, usually by evil means. Demons have played a role in the traditions of most religions. The practice of expelling demons (exorcism) that possess people or places has been carried out by many religions. The belief in evil spirits and their ability to influence the lives of people dates from prehistoric times. Many early people believed that spirits occupied all elements of nature.

Evil spirits or demons were spirits that brought harm to living people. Societies that believed in demons sought to influence the actions of both good and bad spirits through worship and sacrifices. Some ancient societies, including those in Egypt and Babylonia (now Iraq), believed that such spirits were responsible for the functions of the body and that demons caused specific illnesses.

The word demon originated from an ancient Greek term, daimon, which referred to beings whose special powers placed them between people and the gods. These beings had the ability either to improve people's lives or carry out the punishment of the gods. Basic Christian ideas about demons originated from references to evil beings or unclean spirits in the Old Testament. By the middle ages, Christian theology had developed an elaborate hierarchy of angels, who were associated with God, and fallen angels, or demons, who were led by satan. Satan himself was considered the original fallen angel.

Islam also developed a complex system of demons. Muslim writings describe a group of evil beings, called jinn, who cause destruction and preside over places where evil activities take place. The original jinn was called Iblis, who was cast out by Allah for refusing to worship Adam, the first man.

### **Modern day misunderstanding of Demons.**

Demons can be seen as any controlling power or force in people that is destructive to their well-being, science says, anorexia and such like are mental problems and not physical, doctors call anorexia a destructive mental power or force whereas the Bible calls it, demons meaning, something that is destructive to a humans well-being. Today's generations primary understanding of demons comes from Hollywood and not New Testament or spiritual thinking because of this to think of someone having a demon is highly offensive as it implies they are either extremely evil or extremely morally bankrupt which not one of the persons who are said to have demons in the Bible were. It is not the Bible that is wrong, but the modern day misunderstanding of the terminology and language of the Bible because modern generations have been influenced by a wrong understanding of the language used during the time of Jesus and the apostles.

## **SOME SIMILAR BIBLICAL STORIES.**

**A woman and her daughter:** a Greek Syrophenician woman asked Jesus to cast forth the demon (daimon) (meaning an inferior deity or god) out of her daughter, Jesus said the demon is gone out of her daughter and when she went to her house, she found her daughter healed. This is a woman's young daughter, a child. The child would not be evil or morally bankrupt, this was not an inferior evil god or deity possessing the child as the Jews believed but a mental disorder or disease (Mark 7:23-30).

**A man and his child:** a man tells Jesus that a spirit takes his child, and the son cries out during his epileptic fits and the boy suffers bodily harm. This is a man loved his son, the child would certainly not be evil or morally bankrupt, the spirit, is not an evil god possessing the child as the Jews believed, but a mental disorder, illness or disease (Luke 9:37-41).

**A lunatic:** a man came to Jesus and asked him to have mercy on his son telling Jesus that his son is lunatic (meaning affected by the moon), and often has very bad fits that sometimes seriously harm the boy (Matt. 17:14-18). The Jews believed evil inferior gods caused mental disorders and the Greeks believed the moon could cause bodily seizures or fits. Today we know the moon does not cause illness, but understand that the child had epilepsy or a similar disease and was having a fit, the Greeks and the Jews knew nothing of epilepsy or the like so they simply referred to illnesses and sicknesses they did not understand as being the result of the moon or the sick person being possessed by inferior evil gods. The Jews mistaken understanding of demons was the same as the Greeks wrong belief about the moon.

**There are many so-called gods in heaven and on earth:** the Bible teaches that there is only one real God and creator of all that exists and His name is I AM the God of Abraham Isaac and Jacob, yet the apostle Paul says there are many so-called gods in heaven and on earth (1 Cor. 8:5). Immediately after making this statement Paul says, nevertheless not everyone possesses this knowledge. Meaning the knowledge that there are many gods, neither do they understand how and why (1 Cor. 8:7).

Pagans believed in various gods, often referred to as "the god." These false but very real illusionary gods are created by a very strong belief in "the god" in the imagination of the mind. The New Testament calls these gods demons (daimonion), but that does not mean real inferior false gods actually exist, they are an entity created by a false belief of the mind, but to the person believing in false gods and demons they are very real entities this is most likely why Jesus did not try to explain the medical terms as we know them today.

Jesus rather than go into lengthy detail to explain in detail the medical causes of sickness simply used the common language of his era and manifested God's power over all other gods people believed in by supernaturally healing people. Once a person saw and experience the healing power of God why would they continue to believe in their false inferior gods who had no power?

When Jesus gave this same healing power to his apostles to heal physical sickness and spiritual or mental disorders of the mind it was not solely so they could deliver people from their sickness, but to prove to the people that they were teaching the words of the only true God and the only way to eternal salvation. Thus the apostles and Jesus ministry was not to teach medical science, but to connect people separated from God to God.

### **Demons (illusionary gods and the Mind).**

Demons as evil spiritual gods only exist in the mind of those who believe in them, they are an image of the mind created by imagination through a false belief in them. This false image in the mind will affect a person's emotions and feelings accordingly because the human nervous system cannot tell the difference between a real image of the mind and a false one. The imaginary but real images of the mind create real emotions and feelings of fear through the human nervous system and these feelings in turn reinforce and convince those that believe in demons or monsters that real evil gods do exist.



**Not everything is black and white:** perhaps everything regarding demons is not quite as black and white as I have explained, even the best doctors and scientist in the world today still don't fully understand the cause of many of these illness, but one thing that is very clear and is black and white is that those in the Bible who were said to be possessed by demons were not evil wicked people in fact some were children and others humbly fell at the Lords feet and wanted to follow him added to this God through the Lord Jesus Christ showed them great compassion and mercy.

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**For further information see the titles: -**

- Devils.
- Demons.
- Unclean spirits.

Both titles are in, Satan and his Family (ON WEBSITE MENU).

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End.