

## Miracle 12: Jesus Heals a Centurion's Paralyzed Servant in Capernaum

Matthew 8:5-13; Luke 7:1-10

Matt. 8:5-13- 5 And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto him a centurion, beseeching him, 6 And saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented. 7 And Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him. 8 The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed. 9 For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it. 10 When Jesus heard it, he marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. 11 And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. 12 But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. 13 And Jesus said unto the centurion, Go thy way; and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee. And his servant was healed in the selfsame hour.

Luke 7:1-10- 1 Now when he had ended all his sayings in the audience of the people, he entered into Capernaum. 2 And a certain centurion's servant, who was dear unto him, was sick, and ready to die. 3 And when he heard of Jesus, he sent unto him the elders of the Jews, beseeching him that he would come and heal his servant. 4 And when they came to Jesus, they besought him instantly, saying, That he was worthy for whom he should do this: 5 For he loveth our nation, and he hath built us a synagogue. 6 Then Jesus went with them. And when he was now not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to him, saying unto him, Lord, trouble not thyself: for I am not worthy that thou shouldest enter under my roof: 7 Wherefore neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee: but say in a word, and my servant shall be healed. 8 For I also am a man set under authority, having under me soldiers, and I say unto one, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it. 9 When Jesus heard these things, he marvelled at him, and turned him about, and said unto the people that followed him, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. 10 And they that were sent, returning to the house, found the servant whole that had been sick.

### **The Context: (8:5-6; 7:1-2):**

- 1) Jesus has come down from the mountain with his disciples having preached to them the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) with others following them. As they come to the plain (above the Sea of Galilee and the town of Capernaum) the large crowd (from multiple areas where he has taught and performed miracles) followed and he heals them all that needed healing (Luke 6:17-19).
- 2) Jesus then delivers the Sermon on the Plain (Luke 6:20-49) which is a much shorter and slightly different sermon than the Sermon on the Mount; plus, he adds four woes to this sermon.

(over)

- 3) Having completed this Sermon on the Plain, Jesus, the disciples, and the crowd are coming toward Capernaum when a leper approaches and Jesus cleanses him (miracle #11-- Matt. 8:1-8).
- 4) Then, having entered into Capernaum, He is encountered with the need of a Gentile Centurion's servant who was "sick and about to die."
- 5) There are a couple of other contextual matters that need to be mentioned before we address how Jesus was encountered with this need.
- 6) First, this Centurion was a Roman military officer in charge of at least 100 soldiers (from which the name Centurion comes). Interesting, every Centurion mentioned in the Bible are highly spoken of.
- 7) Second, the Centurion was a Gentile. This is the first Gentile involved in the recorded miracles of Jesus Christ. All the previous miracles involved Jews.
- 8) Interestingly, as Jesus had just preached the Sermon on the Mount and the Sermon on the Plain, He now does a miracle first for a Jew (a leper) and then for a Gentile (the Centurion).
- 9) With Matthew's thematic approach of Jesus as King (of the Jews); perhaps He is signaling that which is to come.
- 10) Third, the need was that the Centurion's servant was sick of palsy (a paralytic) and about to die (imminent death). Paralysis is usually not painful, but Matthew says this servant was "grievously tormented" (likely indicating progressive paralysis with muscle spasms and respiratory issues or tetanus which ancient physicians included in paralysis).
- 11) Fourth, the word for servant is different in Matthew (Greek *pias* #3816; usually translated child or boy, but sometimes servant) and Luke (Greek *doulos* #1401 translated servant or slave). This is likely because Luke says the servant "was dear (highly regarded; esteemed) unto him" (v. 2).

### **The approach (8:5-6; 7:3-8):**

- 1) This is a very important issue in this miracle; for many critics of the Scriptures use this as one of the examples of errors, discrepancies, or contradictions in the Bible.
- 2) Matthew says "there came unto him (Jesus) a centurion beseeching (entreating, imploring) him;" while Luke says, "hearing about Jesus, he (the centurion) sent unto him elders of the Jews beseeching him."
- 3) **Is this a contradiction in the Scriptures?** Initially, I thought, WOW, this must be two different miracles, but the context, timing, other wording, etc. all points to one miracle being recorded. **How can this be?** This **apparent discrepancy** can be clearly explained with an understanding of 1<sup>st</sup> century practices which are often still practiced today.
- 4) In the 1st century, it was understood that when a representative was sent to speak for his master, it was as if the master was speaking himself. Even in our day this is still the case. When the Secretary of State meets individuals from other countries, he goes out in the name of the President of the United States. In other words, what he says, the president says. Therefore, Matthew states that a centurion came entreating Jesus about his sick servant, when in fact the centurion sent the Jewish elders on his behalf.
- 5) So, when Matthew declares that the centurion was speaking, this was true, even though he was (as Luke indicated) speaking through his official representatives. Scripture says Solomon built the Temple (I Kings 16:14), but we know that he did not actually build the

Temple himself but ordered the Temple built and provided for the material and financial means.

- 6) Pilate is said to have scourged Jesus (Matt. 27:26), but it was Roman soldiers who did the actual scourging. They simply did it at Pilate's orders.
- 7) And in this text, the centurion is said to have built the Jews a synagogue (Luke 7:5), when we know he did not actually build the building himself, but simply provided the finances to make it possible.
- 8) A very similar example is found concerning the petition of James and John to Jesus (Mark 10:35-37); when they had their mother petition for them (Matt. 20:20-22).
- 9) Additionally, it is amazing that Jewish elders would be willing to petition on behalf of a Roman Gentile (Jews normally hated the Roman Gentiles for occupying their nation). But the context tells us that this Centurion loved the Jewish nation and built the synagogue for them (v. 5). It is a measure of the respect for this man in the Jewish community that he could send Jewish elders to bring his cause to Jesus.
- 10) **There is no discrepancy** when proper allowance is made for the common practice of ascribing to one person the deeds /words he actually did/said through an agent. The same for addition or omission of details by one narrator (writer) as compared with another. Such things are evidences of independent witnesses, casting no suspicion of inaccuracy, but rather corroborating the validity of the accounts.
- 11) Now, let's complete the account of the approach starting with some presuppositions (based on Scripture) and proceeding with the record of the accounts in Matthew and Luke.
- 12) First, the Centurion did not perceive himself as "worthy" to ask Jesus to do what he was asking for (v. 7); and that is why he sent the Jewish elders.
- 13) Second, the Jewish elders believed the Centurion was "worthy" and said so (v. 4).
- 14) Third, the Jewish elders initially asked Jesus to come and heal the Centurion's servant (v. 3).
- 15) Fourth, Jesus begins to go with them (v. 6).
- 16) Fifth, as they were not far from the house, the Centurion sent friends to Jesus telling Him that he was not worthy that Jesus would enter under his roof (v. 6).
- 17) Sixth, Jesus saw the faith of the Centurion (vs. 9-10). Perhaps Matthew wants to bring out the distinctiveness and personal nature of the centurion's faith; and, therefore, emphasizes the one who was actually responsible for the orders, rather than the details of the messengers who carried them out and articulated them to Jesus.

We are going to **stop here tonight** and will finish the miracle and other important points of the passages next Wednesday.