

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

Matthew 8:5-13; Luke 7:1-10 (Continued)

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.

Last Wednesday night we set the context of this miracle as Jesus had just preached the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-7), healed multiple people as He came off the mountain (Luke 6:17-19), and preached the Sermon on the Plain (Luke 6:20-49). As He and the crowds approach Capernaum, He cleanses a Jewish leper (Matt. 8:1-8); then, as He enters Capernaum, He is approached by Jewish elders (speaking on behalf of a Gentile Centurion) asking Jesus to come and heal the Centurion's servant who was sick and dying. We got into a lengthy textual issue which we needed to settle prior to addressing the remaining details of this miracle. Having seen that there is no discrepancy between the accounts of the miracle when proper allowance is made for the common practice of ascribing to one person the deeds/words he actually did/said through an agent. We will now proceed with the remaining interactions leading to the miracle itself.

The interactions (8:6-9; 7:3-8): Nine observations:

- 1) Hearing about Jesus, the Centurion sent some Jewish elders to beseech Jesus to come and heal the Centurion's servant from a deadly case of palsy (8:6; 7:3).

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- 2) Not only did the Jewish elders go, they pleaded earnestly that Jesus would come, saying that the Centurion was “worthy” to have Jesus “grant” the request, “for” (an explanatory conjunction indicting the reason) the Centurion loves the Jewish nation and built a synagogue for the Jews in Capernaum (7:4-5).
- 3) Sadly, these Jewish elders did not understand grace; “worthy” as they understood it is based on what the Centurion had done (works-based worthiness). Regardless, Jesus went with them, saying, “Coming, I will heal him” (8:7; 7:6).
- 4) But, while Jesus was not far from the house, the Centurion sent some friends to him (7:6a).
- 5) Once again speaking on behalf of the Centurion, they say, “Lord, do not trouble, for I am not worthy that you will enter under my roof, wherefore, I accounted myself not worthy to come unto you; but speak the word only and my servant will be cured (healed)” (8:8; 7:6b-7).
- 6) Remember, this was a Gentile Levitical unclean house in the thinking of the Centurion (and the Jewish elders). This Centurion demonstrated humility and faith in this statement.
- 7) The Centurion also indicates that he believes that Jesus can heal his servant “by a word” (7:7).
- 8) How much more should we (as believers) say, “Lord, I know you can do this.” The more faith we have, the less we esteem ourselves. Humility should lead us to see our insufficiencies, and Christ’s all sufficiency (Phil. 4:13).
- 9) The Centurion goes on to say that he understands the principles of authority by having soldiers and servants under him (lesser to greater subordinate position and immediate obedience--8:9; 7:8). He recognizes and believes by faith that Jesus is the ultimate authority.

Jesus’ Response (8:10-12; 7:9): Ten observations:

- 1) Jesus “marveled” (to be amazed; to admire; to deem remarkable) at the faith of this Gentile Centurion. Jesus is so amazed that He gives a Messianic proclamation to the crowd following Him, “Verily (truly), in Israel I find not such faith” (8:10; 7:9).
- 2) If this is saving faith, this Gentile Centurion is the first recorded Gentile convert in Jesus’ ministry.
- 3) Interestingly, the Bible tells us of only two things that made Jesus marvel: 1) this Centurion’s great faith and 2) the unbelief of the Jewish people in Nazareth (Mark 6:6).
- 4) Two things make Jesus step back and say “WOW!” Faith and Unbelief; does Jesus ever marvel at our faith or lack of faith (Prov. 3:5-6)? Our faith in Jesus grows greater the more we recognize the greatness of our Lord.
- 5) Jesus goes on and makes a further Messianic proclamation in Matt. 8:11-12 (Luke omits this). He declares that in the “Kingdom of Heaven” the Gentile Centurion will set down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob along with many others from the East and West. Gentiles setting down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Jewish patriarchs) is unthinkable to Jews at this time.
- 6) This foreshadows Jews and Gentiles as one in Christ in the church (Gal. 3:28). Ultimately, we will also be there feasting together with them as part of the church on the New Earth.
- 7) It is important to understand this proclamation. The term “Kingdom of Heaven” is used 32 times in the Bible (with all 32 in the Book of Matthew). The term “Kingdom of God” is used 68 times in 10 different New Testament books. Jesus makes no distinction between the two terms in Matt. 19:23-24 where He uses them interchangeably. There seems to be some slight differences between the terms, but they are very similar and the context always determines the meaning. (For a thorough understanding of similarities and differences, see John Walvoord’s excellent article, “The Kingdom of Heaven.”).
- 8) Jesus goes on to say, the “sons (children) of the kingdom” will be cast out into outer darkness; and there will be “weeping and gnashing of the teeth.” The “sons of the Kingdom” who will be cast out into outer darkness are unbelieving Jews who reject the Messiah. The disciples were initially commanded by Jesus not to go into the way of the Gentiles, but to go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Matt. 10:5-6).

- 9) Seven times Jesus says, “there will be weeping and the gnashing of the teeth.” Jesus has much to say about Hell; which involves separation from God, absence of spiritual light (outer darkness), and eternal torment.
- 10) In the Parable of the Talents (Matt. 21:33-46), Jesus tells the religious leaders that the Kingdom of God will be taken away from them (v. 43). Natural birth does not bring spiritual sonship; faith in Jesus Christ brings spiritual sonship (Gal. 3:26).

The Miracle (8:13; 7:10):

- 1) The ones sent returned to the house and found the servant well (healthy; cured—medical term).
- 2) Faith in Jesus brought immediate healing. Jesus didn’t need to go to the house to heal him.
- 3) The Centurion believed that Jesus could heal his servant by a word (7:7); Jesus goes beyond that and heals with simply a thought (no indication of a specific word spoken to heal the servant).
- 4) We don’t find out if the servant that was healed or the Jewish elders believed in Jesus. There was miraculous physical healing; but was there spiritual cleansing? Did they become part of the “miracle seeker crowds” or believers in Christ?
- 5) The Centurion had great faith; saving faith? Is this the same Centurion that is at the cross when Jesus died (Matt. 27:54; Luke 23:47)? If so, he is there with Mary, Mary Magdalene, Joseph of Arimathea, and others who had followed Jesus from Galilee.

Below is a brief outline of the centurions in the Bible for study.

Centurions (Greek #1543) study: (1) the Centurion at the cross who glorified God saying, "Truly, this was the Son of God" (Matthew 27:54) and “Certainly, this was a righteous man” (Luke 23:47); (2) Cornelius, a Gentile convert (Acts 10:1, 22); (3) the centurions who rescued Paul from the mob (Acts 21:32); (4) the centurion who brought Paul's message to the chief captain (Acts 22:25-26); (5) the centurion who brought Paul's nephew to the chief captain (Acts 23:17-18); (6) two centurions who help bring Paul to Felix (Acts 23:23-24); and (7) Julius, who courteously treated Paul and saved his life (Acts 27:1, 6, 11, 31, 43; 28:16).