

The Centurion

Matthew 8:5-13

When He entered Capernaum, a centurion came to Him asking for help: "Lord, my servant is lying at home paralyzed, in terrible anguish." Jesus said to him, "I will come and heal him." But the centurion replied, "Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof! Instead, just say the word and my servant will be healed. For I too am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I say to this one, 'Go!' and he goes, and to another 'Come!' and he comes, and to my slave 'Do this!' and he does it." When Jesus heard this he was amazed and said to those who followed him, "I tell you the truth, I have not found such faith in anyone in Israel! I tell you, many will come from the east and west to share the banquet with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, but the sons of the kingdom will be thrown out into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Then Jesus said to the centurion, "Go; just as you believed, it will be done for you." And the servant was healed at that hour.

- A centurion was a Roman soldier who commanded 100 men (a centuria). Most who were stationed in Judea were auxiliaries who gained Roman citizenship after 25 years of service, while others gained citizenship if they originally enlisted in the Roman legions (army).
- Most were feared and hated by the Jews while this one, a Gentile, recognized Jesus' authority. This was a stark contrast to the Jews who didn't believe in Jesus yet were of His nationality.
- There's no confirmation on the nationality of the centurion, but we can assume they were exposed to the Roman pantheon of pagan gods before being stationed in Capernaum.
- Luke 7:1-10 gives a different version of the story where the centurion sent Jewish elders to Jesus requesting the same thing. The elders mentioned that this centurion supported the creation of the synagogue (whether by donations or directed it to be built). The Luke version shows that the Centurion possibly respected cultural boundaries, while the Matthew version shows more desperation by him finding Jesus directly.
- What's special here is in the Matthew version, the centurion came to Jesus himself instead of possibly telling one of his servants or soldiers to go on his behalf.
- The centurion had to have been exposed to Jewish culture/Moses' laws/prophecies of Jesus' coming during his time in Capernaum whether through osmosis or from hearing it in passing for him to want to meet Jesus directly.
 - Also possible that he heard of Jesus' earlier miracles via word spread and was desperate to try Jesus. *He doesn't mention calling for a physician at all.*
- He addressed Jesus as Lord twice, that alone shows he believed who Jesus was\is\will be before meeting Him.
- Both Luke ([Luke 7:9](#)) and Matthew ([Matthew 8:10](#)) use the Greek word *thaumazo* (thou-mad'-zo) which we translate "marveled" or "amazed" to describe Jesus' response to the centurion's faith. The only time this word is used to describe Jesus' response to others' faith is in [Mark 6:6](#), when he marvels at the lack of faith in the people of Nazareth.
- verse 11 may seem out of place at first, but it's there for an imagery reason.

- First century middle eastern meals were not eaten while sitting at a table, but while reclining on one's side on the floor with the head closest to the low table and the feet farthest away. The phrase "share the banquet" has been used in the translation to clarify the festive nature of the imagery. The banquet imagery is a way of describing the fellowship and celebration of participation with the people of God at the end.
- The phrase "sons of the kingdom" was a Jewish term for the nation of Israel. Jesus is teaching that simply being born into the nation of Israel will not guarantee someone a place in heaven, as was commonly thought among the Jewish people (Galatians 3:7–9). Instead, Jesus is emphasizing that **faith in Him**—faith like that of the Roman centurion—will be the deciding factor about who is allowed into the kingdom (Galatians 3:28–29).
- **Modern Lesson:** We should let the faith of the centurion be an example of the kind of desperate faith to have in Christ. Willing to humble ourselves to meet Him and trust in His power above anything else.

References:

- <https://biblia.com/books/gs-netbible/Lk7.1>
- [https://thirdmill.org/studybible/note.asp/id/43281#:~:text=A%20centurion%20was%20a%20Roman,repeated%20theme%20in%20Matthew%20\(Matt.](https://thirdmill.org/studybible/note.asp/id/43281#:~:text=A%20centurion%20was%20a%20Roman,repeated%20theme%20in%20Matthew%20(Matt.)
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