

## JESUS' AUTHORITY RECOGNIZED

Matthew 8:5-13, Luke 7:1-10 / Yeshua §56

Who are you looking forward to meeting in the Resurrection? Is it someone from the Old Testament? Adam, Eve, Abraham? Maybe you're looking forward to meeting Queen Esther or King David or Daniel.

Or is it someone from the New Testament? Maybe it's Mary or Peter or the Apostle Paul. Won't it be fun to talk to the paralytic who was lowered through the roof.

This morning we will be reading about a man whom I am looking forward to meeting in the Resurrection. His story impacted my life starting in high school. We don't know his name, but this man caused Jesus Himself to marvel. In fact, no one received greater praise from Jesus than this man.

And he wasn't even a Jew.

This encounter took place in Capernaum, a fishing town on the north shore of the Sea of Galilee.

We were first introduced to Capernaum when Jesus was in Cana and an official came to Him from Capernaum (about 20 miles to the east) begging Jesus to heal his son. From Cana, Jesus healed the boy in Capernaum (John 4:46-54).

After being rejected by His hometown of Nazareth, Jesus made Capernaum His base of operations. Capernaum was the hometown of Peter, Andrew, James and John. Fishing was the main industry. A major road led through Capernaum towards Syria to the north. Herod Antipas, ruler of the territory, maintained a toll booth to collect taxes on merchandise transported through Capernaum. Matthew likely worked this toll booth before his calling by Jesus. The presence of the toll booth may also explain the presence of a garrison of Roman soldiers under the command of a centurion.

We're about a year and a half into Jesus' public ministry. Jesus is opposed by the scribes and Pharisees, the religious leaders of Israel, but still popular with the general populous. Sometime after preaching the Sermon on the Mount (Luke 6:20-49) in which He rejected Pharisaism, Jesus returned to Capernaum.

We pick up the story in Luke 7:1.

LUKE 7:1-10 (ESV)

1 After he had finished all his sayings in the hearing of the people, he entered Capernaum. 2 Now a centurion had a servant who was sick and at the point of death, who was highly valued by him. 3 When the centurion heard about Jesus, he sent to him elders of the Jews, asking him to come and heal his servant. 4 And when they came to Jesus, they pleaded with him earnestly, saying, "He is worthy to have you do this for him,

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5 for he loves our nation, and he is the one who built us our synagogue." 6 And Jesus went with them. When he was not far from the house, the centurion sent friends, saying to him, "Lord, do not trouble yourself, for I am not worthy to have you come under my roof. 7 Therefore I did not presume to come to you. But say the word, and let my servant be healed. 8 For I too am a man set under authority, with soldiers under me: and I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes; and to another, 'Come,' and he comes; and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it." 9 When Jesus heard these things, he marveled at him, and turning to the crowd that followed him, said, "I tell you, not even in Israel have I found such faith." 10 And when those who had been sent returned to the house, they found the servant well.

What sets this occasion apart is the fact that it is a Gentile, a non-Jew, who recognizes Jesus' authority. This is in keeping with Jesus' mission to reach both Jews and Gentiles.

Both Matthew and Luke tell us he was a centurion; a centurion commanded 100 soldiers in a Roman Legion of 6000 soldiers. He was extraordinary in many ways beginning with the fact that he cared about his servant in a day and age when servants were expendable. He was exceptional in that he loved the Jewish nation and showed it by funding the construction of the Capernaum synagogue. Jesus taught in that very synagogue.

Though a man of significant authority, he was incredibly humble. He recognized he was not worthy of Jesus, that's why he communicated through intermediaries and why he declined Jesus' offer to come to his home. The king doesn't come to you. The centurion honored Jesus as the King he recognized Him to be.

What produced this incredible humility and faith?

His thoughtful reflection upon the authority Jesus possessed.

It appears to me the centurion lived in Capernaum for some time. If he funded the building of the synagogue which was built by the time Jesus arrived, that would indicate he'd been in Capernaum for at least a year.

He likely knew the official and his son whom Jesus healed from Cana (John 4:46-54).

He likely heard Jesus teach the Scriptures with authority in the synagogue.

He likely heard of or saw Peter's miraculous catch of fish (Luke 5:1-11).

Undoubtedly when the large crowds came to Capernaum, the centurion and his soldiers mobilized to keep the peace. He may have witnessed hundreds if not thousands of healings and exorcisms.

He likely knew Levi because he worked in the toll booth guarded by the centurion's soldiers.

As a military officer, the centurion understood authority and the chain of command. He recognized Jesus possessed authority over nature, disease and demons. Incredibly he understood and believed Jesus did not need to be present to heal his servant – His authority transcends space.

Jesus marveled.

Matthew records Jesus as saying:

**MATTHEW 8:10–12 (ESV)**

10 When Jesus heard this, he marveled and said to those who followed him, “Truly, I tell you, with no one in Israel have I found such faith. 11 I tell you, many will come from east and west and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, 12 while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

Many Gentiles, like the centurion, will believe Jesus and be in the kingdom of heaven while many Jews will not.

Having said this, Jesus healed his servant.

We will meet the centurion in the Resurrection!

There are many qualities to admire, but I want to focus on two. First, the centurion reflects the true righteousness of which Jesus spoke in the Sermon on the Mount. The Jewish elders who advocated for him insisted Jesus should heal his servant because the centurion “was worthy” because he built their synagogue. They reflect the works mentality of Pharisaism. In contrast, the centurion, knowing the true condition of his heart, recognized he was not worthy of receiving anything from Jesus. He didn’t deserve anything from Jesus. He reflected the true righteousness, the true humility God desires from us. We don’t deserve anything from God. What He gives; what we receive from Him is by His grace and compassion. Our response should be humble gratitude for all God has done and is doing in our lives.

Second, the centurion reflects the quality of faith God desires from us. His was not a “blind faith”. His was a “reasoned faith”. He obviously mulled over what he had seen and heard about Jesus and came to the conviction that He is the Messiah King. We, too, are responsible to mull over all the evidence presented in the Gospels and make a decision about who Jesus is. Indecision about Jesus is a decision; a deadly one.

Is it time for you to decide?