

The Miracles Of Jesus Christ: Healing A Centurion's Servant (Part One)

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Only Matthew and Luke record the miracle of the healing of a centurion's servant (Matthew 8:5-13; Luke 7:1-10). Both accounts indicate that the afflicted servant who needed Jesus Christ's help was young. Luke uses the Greek word *doulos*, meaning bond slave, someone born into slavery (Luke 7:2). Matthew, however, uses *pias*, meaning a child or young person (Matthew 8:6). The context indicates that this servant was not a little boy but a young man still in his teens.

The servant's master was a centurion, a Roman soldier in charge of one hundred soldiers of the Roman garrison in Capernaum. Several centurions recognized Christ's special purpose and honored Him (Mark 15:39; Acts 10:1; 22:25-26; 27:1, 43; 28:16). This miracle reveals that faith is sometimes found where we least expect it.

1. Why do Matthew's and Luke's accounts differ?

Comment: Although Matthew and Luke generally agree in their accounts of this incident, some differences occur. Matthew, a Jew, seems to have Israel in mind as he records Christ's somber warning to the nation not to neglect personal responsibility and to put their faith and hope in God instead of civil and religious institutions of man. They were in serious need of humility (Romans 12:16).

On the other hand, Luke, a Greek, had fellow Gentiles in mind, so excluding the warning to Israel, he instead encourages the proud Gentiles to ask for the help they needed for their problems. He does this by showing that a centurion was able to persuade the Jewish elders to help in pleading to Jesus for his servant. Humility is necessary for happiness in life (Psalm 69:32).

2. What is the relationship between the centurion and his servant? Luke 7:2.

Comment: The centurion's servant "was dear to him." His affection for his young servant suggests that he thought of him with respect and as important. The centurion's character reveals that he not only thought of his servant as valuable, but also that he was concerned for his well-being as a key member of his household. Apparently, the servant was cherished by the centurion because he had endeared himself to his master through noble service. He must have been diligent and faithful to his master since he received his master's esteem and concern. A good employee has a good relationship with his employer and vice-versa.

3. How serious is the servant's condition? Matthew 8:6; Luke 7:2.

Comment: The servant is "lying at home paralyzed, dreadfully tormented" and "sick and ready to die." Three words describe the servant's sickness: *paralyzed*, *in pain*, and *danger*. His paralysis could have been the result of any number of life-threatening diseases.

With this paralysis came horrible pain, and with the pain came misery. "Ready to die" (Luke 7:2) reveals how grave the danger was for him. Jesus acts at the proper time to save us from suffering and danger: "For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly" (Romans 5:6).

4. What responsibility do the messengers have? Luke 7:3-4.

Comment: The centurion gives the messengers the responsibility to go to Jesus, not to sorcerers or pagan gods—He is the One the centurion seeks for help. The messengers are to seek Him earnestly and formally on his behalf. The centurion's approach to Christ is not casual but committed and respectful. He desires a blessing, and to secure it, he knows he has to demonstrate earnest commitment.

To convey the centurion's faithful attitude, the messengers have to present the centurion's request carefully and accurately to Jesus to heal his servant. The centurion does not ask in a general or indirect way that would be unclear; the messengers are to be detailed and clear. They present the centurion's request enthusiastically and promptly, as the Greek text indicates. They were committed and faithful in carrying out their responsibility.

They set an excellent example for members of God's church today. When we are asked to pray for people who are suffering from illness or injury, are we as diligent and earnest as these messengers were? When we ask others to pray for us, are we as faithful as the centurion was?

The messengers, in appealing to Christ to come and heal the servant, highly praise the centurion (Luke 7:4-5). The centurion's attitude shows that he was a man who loved those under his authority. In addition, he loved the Jews, which was quite unusual since the Romans did not normally even like the Jews. His love for the Jews was more than just talk; it was combined with action. He gave generously of his resources to build a synagogue for them in Capernaum.

Likewise, God expects love to flow from His church in generous and caring actions. He sets the example for us in that God demonstrates His love by giving. He gave us the greatest gift of all: Jesus Christ, our Savior (John 3:16). Never has there been a greater love.