

Lost Legacies: Study Nine
"The Roman Centurion"

"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' –Matthew 8:10

Following the Babylonian invasion of 586 BC, the Jewish exiles were eventually allowed to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the city. At that time the Persians were the world superpower, so although the exiles were given permission to go back, in a sense they were still under Persian rule. This continued when the Grecian Empire headed by Alexander the Great conquered Persia, and then again when the Romans came in to power. During the life of Jesus, although the Jews were free, they were very much still under Rome's dominion. As a result, the Jews were anticipating that the coming Messiah would conquer the Romans and rule all the nations from Israel, just like their prophetic scriptures had alluded to.¹ The problem is they confused Jesus' first coming with his second coming, thus creating some tension between their interactions with the Roman authorities. So what happens when Jesus meets a Roman commanding officer? Perhaps it's not quite what you (or any Jew) would have expected.

The story begins when a Roman centurion, a commanding officer over at least 100 soldiers, approaches Jesus, asking him to heal his servant. Based on the historical context, it's worth noting that Jesus doesn't bash him and the other 100 to pieces in order to demonstrate his kingly rule over Caesar. Instead, Jesus simply agrees to go and heal him. It's also worth noting that the centurion doesn't respond with something like, "You better come...as you know I am an important person." Instead he responds, "Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under

my roof, but only say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I too am a man 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."² This statement is surprising at a number of levels.

The first thing that sticks out is the fact that he calls Jesus, "Lord." Recognizing Jesus' lordship is step one in seeing God respond to your requests. Secondly, notice his humility in saying, "I am not worthy to have you come under my roof." For Christians living in the west, 2000 years later, this might not seem all that surprising, but when you consider his position and authority in the natural over Jesus, this is unexpected. In the third place, notice his faith, "Only say the word, and my servant will be healed." At this point, we should probably ask how does a Gentile have that much faith in this Jewish prophet? It's doubtful that the centurion fully understood that Jesus was the second person of the trinity incarnate. He probably wasn't thinking, "Jesus, you did speak the entire universe into existence so this should be a cakewalk." He didn't understand Christology, but he did understand authority.

The centurion had seen the authority that Jesus walked in, so he relates Jesus' authority to the authority he had in the Roman government, saying, "For I too am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. And I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes." He recognizes that things happen when Jesus speaks, just as his soldiers obey when he speaks. When the centurion gave commands he spoke on behalf of his commanding officer, and his superior, and ultimately on behalf of Caesar himself. So if a soldier were to disobey the centurion, the soldier was essentially disobeying Rome. Thus, the centurion knew he spoke with all the authority of Rome

¹ Psalm 2:1-9, Psalm 110:5-7, etc

² Matthew 8:8-9 – ESV

just as Jesus spoke with all the authority of God. This leads Jesus to say, “Truly, I tell you, with no one in Israel have I found such faith.”³ How’s that for unexpected?

It is important for us to recognize that all authority has been given to Jesus, yet he extends that to us so that we may make disciples.⁴ Many Christians shrink back and never walk in their authority, usually because they either don’t understand God’s power or they give in to the lies of the enemy. The devil knows his time is short and that we have authority through Jesus’ victory on the cross, so he lies to keep us from walking in our destiny. We must not give in, but instead let us recognize our authority and humbly advance the Kingdom!

Scripture Reading:

Matthew 8:5-13- ESV

5When he had entered Capernaum, a centurion came forward to him, appealing to him, 6“Lord, my servant is lying paralyzed at home, suffering terribly.” 7And he said to him, “I will come and heal him.” 8But the centurion replied, “Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof, but only say the word, and my servant will be healed. 9For I too am a man 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.” 10When 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. 11I tell you, many will come from east and west and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, 12while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” 13And to the centurion Jesus said, “Go; let it be done

³ Matthew 8:10- ESV

⁴ Matthew 28:18-20

for you as you have believed.” And the servant was healed at that very moment.

Luke 10:17-20- ESV

17The seventy-two returned with joy, saying, “Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!” 18And he said to them, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. 19Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall hurt you. 20Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.

Matthew 28:18-20- NIV

18Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

Prayer Partners Assignment:

1. Scripture Meditation: **Matthew 4:23-25**
2. Meet with your prayer partner this week to discuss the readings, answer the following questions, and pray.
 - According to this passage, how did Jesus demonstrate his authority?
 - What does it look like for you to walk in authority? Describe a time in your life when you feel like you were walking in your authority in Christ? How did

it impact the situation at hand?

- Read John 14:12. What does this verse say about what our lives should look like?
- Read 1 John 3:8. What does this verse say about Jesus' mission and our lives?

Roman Centurion: Study Nine Questions

Purpose:

The purpose of this study is to focus on the authority of Jesus and our authority as followers of Jesus.

Pre-Article Questions:

1. Is there a person in your life who was or is in a position of authority that demonstrated great humility as well? In what ways has this person's life impacted you?

Post-Article Questions:

2. Any comments, questions, or thoughts on the article?

Post Scripture Questions:

1. From Matthew 8:5-13, what stuck out to you about the Roman centurion? What stuck out to you about Jesus?
2. How would you describe the centurion's character by his actions and words? (*Some Thoughts: He was humble, secure, and considerate of Christ as Jew, not wanting to bring him in His home since Jews did not enter Gentile homes. He was compassionate in that he would even care about his servant, Romans treated servants as sub-human in those days*)

3. Specifically, how did the centurion demonstrate both confidence and humility? What about Faith? What was the outcome of the centurion's faith?
4. Why did Jesus marvel over the centurion's faith? (*Thoughts: One reasons being he was a Gentile. Gentiles did not have all the advantages (law, prophets, covenants,...) or opportunities to believe as Jews*)
5. Read Isaiah 25:6-8 and Matthew 22:1-14 and compare it to verses 11-13 of Matthew 8.
6. In what areas of your life do you need to trust in Jesus' power and authority?
7. Re-read Matthew 28:18-20. Where does our authority come from? (*Hint: Christ's victory*) Can we walk in the authority that Jesus walked in and see miracles like this today? (*Hint: John 14:12*)
8. Why does Jesus extend authority to us? (*Hint: So that we can make disciples.*)
9. Why do you think it is hard to walk in compassion and humility when you are in a place of authority over people? How is God challenging you with this right now?

In Closing:

Discuss with your prayer partner this week: What practical and spiritual steps can we take to ensure we walk in greater humility and compassion as we live out the authority we have in Christ?

More Time?....Part 2: More Spiritual Authorities

1. Re-read Luke 10:17-20. Who rules the world: God or Satan? (*Hint: Satan always operates in the boundaries God gives him. Jesus has ultimate authority yet Satan still has influence*)
2. Are people under the rule of Satan? (*Hint: Unbelievers are...2 Timothy 2:25-26, 1 John 5:19, 2 Cor. 4:4*)

3. Are believers under the rule of Satan? (*Hint: Col. 1:13*)
4. In what ways can the enemy still influence believers? (*Hint: Through temptation, deception, accusation, etc*)
5. What lies of the enemy have kept you from walking in your destiny?
6. Why is it important that we walk in our authority daily?
7. In verse 20, how does Jesus warn against spiritual pride?
8. What should be our greatest reward: ministry success or spending eternity with God? How can we make this our focus?
9. In what ways did this passage of scripture challenge you or encourage you tonight?