

# Meeting Jesus

## The Centurion

### Foundation



#### Bible passage : Matthew 8.5-13

It would seem that this Centurion in this incident did not actually meet Jesus because in Luke's account (Lk 7.1-10) the man sent Jewish acquaintances to Jesus. Matthew seems to cut out the middle men to simplify the account and so it reads as if the two did meet. Sending others was not a sign of arrogance, but humility.

A Centurion was a middle ranking officer in the Roman army and would be an important local figure. Typically he would command about 80 soldiers and 20 servants. In a place like Capernaum they were not there to fight but to keep law and order. He seems to have been posted there for some time and was on good terms with the locals. He had built a synagogue for them and they were willing to go to Jesus on his behalf. They also said that he loved their nation and we know that many non-Jews admired both the teaching of the Old Testament and the faith of Israel. Such people were often described as "god fearers", as was Cornelius in Acts 10, another Centurion.

**"only speak a word, and my servant will be healed"**

The man's character is seen not only in the respect others had for him, and his generosity, but in his compassion when one of his many servants was ill. The incident also shows his humility because, as Matthew notes, he felt unworthy for Jesus to come to his house. Indeed, we know that other Jewish religious leaders would not consider visiting the house of a man like the centurion.

In the previous unit we saw how Jesus healed the lame man by simply telling him to get up and walk. We are reminded that Jesus had caused quite a stir. The

Centurion, who would be used to issuing commands himself, evidently knew about what Jesus had been doing and was convinced that Jesus could heal his servant, do so by giving a command, at long distance!

All this demonstrated incredible faith, a fact which Jesus drew attention to, and then linked the man's faith to his request being granted (v13).

Notice however, that though the Centurion had said all Jesus needed to do was "speak the word and my servant will be healed". Jesus barely did that, he just said, "let it be done", and it was.

Jesus then used the Centurion as an illustration of faith. Jesus only came for "the lost sheep of Israel" (Mtt 15.24) but after His resurrection and ascension the disciples would be sent to all nations. Jesus alludes to this when he speaks about how many will come, though some who should have trusted in Him will miss out because they refused to believe (v11 & 12).



**The Centurion showed great faith, his request was answered, and he became a sign of many who would believe in Jesus.**