

## Jesus Healed a Leper and a Servant

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to teach the Word of God with authority, teaching them to accurately explain the Word of God by using other passages of the Word, instead of the opinions of men. We also saw that Jesus has all authority. In this topic, we will see how Jesus showed His authority over disease and sickness.

Matthew 8:1-4 says, “When He had come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed Him. And behold, a leper came and worshiped Him, saying, ‘Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean.’ Then Jesus put out *His* hand and touched him, saying, ‘I am willing; be cleansed.’ Immediately his leprosy was cleansed. And Jesus said to him, ‘See that you tell no one; but go your way, show yourself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, as a testimony to them.’” In these verses, we see that Jesus showed His authority over an incurable disease. A person with leprosy was forced to live out in the wilderness and cry “Unclean” when anyone came close so that the person would not catch the disease.

Here, we see that one such leper came running to Jesus as He came down from the mountain. He began by worshiping Jesus. Then he said, “Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean.” We see some important lessons about the faith of this man. First, he recognized Jesus as Lord. Second, He asked Jesus to work in his life if Jesus was willing. Third, he recognized that Jesus could make him clean and cleanse him from his leprosy. There were only two people mentioned in the Old Testament who had been cured from leprosy. One was Miriam, the sister of Moses, more than fourteen hundred years earlier. The other, was Naaman who was a Syrian in the time of the prophet Elisha who the Lord had healed more than eight hundred years earlier. However, this man realized that Jesus had the power and authority to heal him.

Jesus immediately put out His hand and touched the man. Most people were very careful to avoid touching a leper because they were afraid they would catch the disease. In contrast, Jesus touched the man and healed the man instead of catching the disease. Then, Jesus gave the man some instructions. Jesus told the man to go and show himself to the priest and offer the sacrifice which Moses had commanded in the law. That command is given in Leviticus 14:1-32. Jesus said that this was to be done as a testimony to the priests. Since the last leper to be cured in the Old Testament had been a Syrian, and that had happened more than eight hundred years earlier, this was a powerful way for the priests to be forced to recognize that Jesus had the authority of God. Instead of obeying Jesus and going to show himself to the priest, Mark 1:45 says, “However, he went out and began to proclaim *it* freely, and to spread the matter, so that Jesus could no longer openly enter the city, but was outside in deserted places; and they came to Him from every direction.” The priests did not recognize the power of Jesus, but the people did and came from every direction to see Jesus perform more miracles. In fact, it became necessary for Jesus to spend part of His time in deserted places because the crowds became so great.

Matthew 8:5-9 says, “Now when Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to Him, pleading with Him, saying, ‘Lord, my servant is lying at home paralyzed, dreadfully tormented.’ And Jesus said to him, ‘I will come and heal him.’ The centurion answered and said, ‘Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof. But only speak a word, and my servant will be healed. For I also am a man under authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to this *one*, ‘Go,’ and he goes; and to another, ‘Come,’ and he comes; and to my servant, ‘Do this,’ and he does *it*.’” Here, we see that the priests did not recognize the authority of Jesus, but a Roman centurion certainly did recognize that Jesus had authority from God that gave Him power to heal.

A Roman centurion had a servant that was paralyzed, and the servant was experiencing great suffering. Some of the Jews told Jesus about the centurion and the need of his servant. In Luke 7:3-5, these Jewish leaders said to Jesus, “So when he heard about Jesus, he sent elders of the Jews to Him, pleading with Him to come and heal his servant. And when they came to Jesus, they begged Him earnestly, saying that the one for whom He should do this was deserving, ‘for he loves our nation, and has built us a synagogue.’” When they got close to his house, the centurion came to Jesus and told Jesus that he had a servant that had become paralyzed. He was in great suffering because of whatever had paralyzed him. The centurion pleaded with Jesus to do something to help the servant. Jesus just replied, “I will come and heal him.” The centurion said that he was not worthy for Jesus to come to his house. This centurion knew that most Jews would not even enter the house of a Gentile, so he did not feel worthy to have Jesus come into his house.

Keep in mind that a centurion was an officer in the Roman army with one hundred men under his command, as we study what Jesus did and said. The centurion then said, “But only speak a word, and my servant will be healed.” This statement showed that the Roman centurion had heard enough about Jesus to recognize that Jesus had to be from God. He realized that Jesus did not even need to see the servant in order to heal him. Then, the centurion made a statement that showed he understood why Jesus could heal his servant just by speaking the word.

Luke 7:8 says, “For I also am a man placed under authority, having 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*.” The word translated “placed” means *to set in place, to appoint or to be given authority*. This centurion recognized that he had been given authority by the Roman government to be over the one hundred soldiers under his command. In the same way, he realized that Jesus had been given authority by God over all sickness and disease. He realized that Jesus could just speak the word and his servant would be healed, even though Jesus did not see the servant. The word that the centurion used for “authority” is the same word that Jesus used in Matthew 28:18 before He gave what is known as the Great Commission. That verse says, “And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.’” This Roman soldier understood the principle of authority.

Matthew 8:10-13 says, “When Jesus heard *it*, He marveled, and said to those who followed, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel! And I say to you that many will come from east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. But the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’ Then Jesus said to the centurion, ‘Go your way; and as you have believed, *so* let it be done for you.’ And his servant was healed that same hour.” The word translated “marveled” means *to wonder at or to be had in admiration*. It is the same word used in Acts 4:13, where we read, “Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus.” The religious leaders were amazed at the boldness of Peter and John. Jesus showed this same wonder and amazement about this Roman centurion. The reason for such amazement was due to the fact that none of the Jews in Israel had shown such wonder.

Jesus used that opportunity to help His disciples notice and understand that there were Gentiles at that time that had true faith in God and that many more in the future would show that same faith. Here, we see that Jesus took each opportunity to help His disciples understand that God had a great concern for the Gentiles. This same concern caused Jesus to say in John 4:35, “Do you not say, ‘There are still four months and *then* comes the harvest’? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!” The disciples heard these statements by Jesus but did not fully understand until we read in Acts 11:17-18, “If

therefore God gave them the same gift as *He gave* us when we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could withstand God?’ When they heard these things they became silent; and they glorified God, saying, ‘Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life.’”

In contrast, Jesus warned that judgment would come on many of the Jews because of their unbelief. The Jews had received the Old Testament and the promises. However, most of them, in the time of Jesus, did not believe in Him. Jesus gave the Jews whose hearts were controlled by unbelief a warning that day. Jesus said that many sons of the kingdom would be cast into outer darkness. The phrase “outer darkness” is mentioned three times in Matthew and each time it speaks of the eternal judgment of the unbelievers. Matthew 22:13 says, “Then the king said to the servants, “Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast *him* into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”” Then, Matthew 25:30 adds, ““And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”” In all of these verses, we see that Jesus was warning of the eternal judgment of unbelievers.

After Jesus honored the faith of the Roman centurion, He told the centurion that it would be done just as he had believed. The centurion went home and found that his servant had been healed because of his faith. We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand that this Roman centurion demonstrated what authority means and help them recognize that Christ is the One who is to have that kind of authority over our own lives. As Jesus said in Matthew 28:18, “And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.’” We want to help our children understand that we are servants of Christ who have been commissioned by Him. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children understand these things.