



Becoming a Centurion  
*of Faith*

## Centurion of Faith

Welcome to Jesus Time where we spend time with Jesus in His time and culture.

After first healing many people and then giving what is considered to be the greatest speech of all time now forever known in all Christendom as the "Sermon upon the Mount," Jesus once again returns to His newly adoptive home town of Capernaum.

✝ When he came down from the mountain, great crowds followed him,  
As he entered Caper'na-um, a centurion came forward to him, beseeching him.

Matthew 8: 1 & 5 RSV

We have spoken before and mention here again dear Bible studying friend that Capernaum was within the heart of what was known in Jesus Time as the "Fisherton" area of Galilee.

Being such the fish trade alone enriched this entire area & then by adding in the bountiful produce from the outlying fields and groves making Capernaum's growth and prosperity almost legendary.

Now what we have not as of yet covered was Capernaum's proximity to the Roman city of Tiberias.

Tiberias, like Capernaum was located on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee being only 6 1/3 miles south of Capernaum, it was built only about ten years prior to Jesus public Ministry by Herod Antipas.

Meaning Jesus was a young adult in His late teens or early twenties when Tiberias the city was founded by Antipas to each flatter the Roman Emperor Tiberius Julius Caesar Augustus,(Octavian) and to assist the Romans as well as the Herodians by giving them each a peaceful safe place to live within Israel.

All of course on the average Jewish tax payers dime but being totally pagan & fully Hellenistic in culture. So as for the social fabric of Israel was concerned- Tiberias the city, was triple hated, shunned, and disdained by the Jewish people.

1<sup>st</sup> Being built by a Herod alone in Israel & even worse by using taxed Jewish funds infuriated the Jews.

2<sup>nd</sup> It was Roman. Pagan & vile where even every sympathizer and traitor for safety ultimately retired.

3<sup>rd</sup> Herod Antipas shrewdly built Tiberias in an area containing a well known cemetery.

Meaning for any and all of these 3 reasons no good Jew would even think of stepping foot within.

So now to our point; with all of the services and products already available in Capernaum add now even more over sea and land trade routes pouring into Jesus's adoptive hometown specifically for the consumption of the nearby wealthy pagan Gentile town of Tiberias.

It might be splitting hairs to say no Jew would deliver to Tiberias but many would be happy to deliver to Capernaum or even carry Roman or Herodian purchases from Capernaum drawing near to Tiberias.

Think of it like this; today are not Cuban cigars forbidden to be exported or carried directly into the United States? Yet in the good ole US of A Cuban cigars can be discretely found coast to coast.

Now I'm certainly not promoting Cuban cigars but you get the idea; money can often break the rules. Capernaum was rolling in money each properly gained or infamously made by trade with undesirables. Remember this; it was the Pharisees who personally oversaw all of the trade commissions or guilds. Meaning they also decided who could or could not even work at a specific occupation or location.

The Pharisee's within Israel forbid any trade or interaction between the average Jewish individual while through corporate disguise or commercial cronyism they supplied & profited from each the reviled Romans & the hated Herodians, let alone any black market activities right in front of permitting Legions.

The Babylonian Talmud does in fact record the Pharisees were known as even more corrupt in their personal business affairs than their actual Temple requirements. Shortchanging and underpaying were routine & when tax time come around the Pharisee's also already knew exactly what they had paid you.

Continuing

✝ And when Jesus entered Capernaum, a centurion came to Him, begging Him, <sup>6</sup> and saying, “Lord, my servant is lying paralyzed at home, terribly tormented.” <sup>7</sup> Jesus said to him, “I will come and heal him.” Matthew 8: 5-7 NASB

The Roman Centurion had learned Jesus was back in town and immediately the commanding Legionary sought out Christ believing that Jesus could heal his servant son.

You read that right- his son, as in born from a slave mother owned by the Centurion with he being personally the boy's father. The Greek/Hebrew of Matthew with its inference of more detail does in fact mean a young boy, a son/servant. Meaning each a son of a slave woman and this Roman man.

Several things are becoming obvious here; first and foremost was that the Centurion was very much concerned for the health & well being of his son. In fatherly love he a powerful Roman unashamedly approached Jesus a traveling Jewish preacher now rumored to be The Messiah for His help.

Not only that but did you notice?

That the ruling commanding Roman Centurion just called Jesus “Lord.”

Yes, within western society the title of Lord is equal to Sir, as in with regard and respect of person and or position. However as we have previously learned in Jesus Time conveying the title of Lord upon someone carried more weight than just of a respectful secular prestige, it also held an air of righteousness. There can be no question here that the Centurion had just greeted Jesus in reverence.

So how did Jesus respond?

By immediately offering to go to the Centurion's home in order to heal his son.

It is not only possible but most likely probable that the Centurion's home was located in nearby Tiberias. Because the gist of this conversation was that the Roman's home was close only a short journey away. Meaning Jesus readily volunteered to proceed to a location that would have made Him triple ceremonially unclean by the Pharisee's decrees. Christ in Jesus had just demonstrated that He cares more for the person and their Faith than for any laws superstitions or traditions of human kind.

At this point Dr. Luke with his exacting precision as a physician records that the Jewish elders of Capernaum now came to the defense of this Centurion by stating to Jesus that by all the Centurion had done locally for them, if Jesus could then He should help the Pagan Roman.

Regardless of the fact that they knew it was forbidden for Christ as a Jewish man to enter into the Roman Centurion's home. Especially if it was as scholars think within the Roman enclave of Tiberias.

Remember Matt was there & Dr. Luke was not & yet no one ever disputed Luke's addition of the elders. So Why? Did not Matthew/Levi mention this request of the elders at all.

All we can do is speculate; is it possible Matthew wished to keep his Gospel focused upon Jesus and not explain his negative personal history with these very same elders?

Whatever his reason Matthew stuck to the Faithful Centurion while ignoring totally the words of those elders who reviled him. Also with Matthew being Capernaum's former tax collector is it actually possible that Matt knew or knew of this Roman Centurion? Again only GOD knows.

As for John and Mark's Gospels not mentioning this event at all; the suspected reasoning here is that each John, & Peter- who's thoughts were used to compose the Gospel of Mark, were not present when the Centurion made his request of Christ. As in once returning to Capernaum it is likely the two sets of fishing brothers Peter and Andrew, & James and John, each went home to their business and families.

Many Biblical Historians place the “Sermon upon the Mount” in the spring just prior to Passover thusly beginning Jesus's second year of public Ministry. The point here being having just wintered in Capernaum, the Apostles automatically returning to their homes would be normal for them at this time.

Now here is Dr. Lukes undisputed additional information:

✝ And when they (elders) came to Jesus, they pleaded with him earnestly, saying, “He is worthy to have you do this for him, <sup>5</sup> for he loves our nation, and he is the one who built us our synagogue. Dr. Luke 7:4-5 ESV

Ruins do still exist today of this large Centurion funded Synagogue & likewise as do the remains of our Apostle Peter’s main big home that he converted into a Christian Church in Capernaum.

Continuing

✝ But the officer said, “Lord, I am not worthy to have you come into my home. Just say the word from where you are, and my servant will be healed. <sup>9</sup> I know this because I am under the authority of my superior officers, and I have authority over my soldiers. I only need to say, ‘Go,’ and they go, or ‘Come,’ and they come. And if I say to my slaves, ‘Do this,’ they do it.” Matthew 8: 8-9 NLT

Again here the Centurion demonstrates that he was each unfit or perhaps even ashamed to invite Christ into his personal residence feeling unsuitable Levitically speaking by heritage conduct or character. Additionally the Imperial soldier was respectfully aware that by Christ coming to his home even if it was only for a brief moment Jesus could and would be declared ceremonially unclean.

Also by his life experience as a military officer with duty and a chain of command, the Centurion was demonstrating enormous Spiritual Faith. Meaning he knew in his heart mind and soul that if Jesus said his son was healed if even from a distance that if Christ Willed it- his son would be healed sight unseen. Just as the “Nobleman’s Son” in Cana was previously healed also from afar, so was this Centurions son.

Continuing

✝ When Jesus heard it, he marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. Matthew 8:10 KJV

After all of His Preaching and teaching, healing and traveling; Jesus Christ the truly incarnate Messiah was amazed with this Gentile ( non Jewish ) Roman Centurion of Faith.

Continuing

✝ And I say to you that many will come from east and west, and recline at the table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven; <sup>12</sup> but the sons of the kingdom (Jews) will be thrown out into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Matthew 8:11-12 NASB

This is a prophetic statement by Jesus serving each as a promise to us the Gentile people that by having Faith in Jesus is the “Way” of getting into Heaven. However Jesus says by not accepting Him Jews be warned that just by being Jewish, this does not guarantee automatic admittance into Heaven. As for Jesus saying east and west this was in reference to the present Roman Centurion & his Empire. In a parallel teaching Dr. Luke records Jesus stating Gentile peoples of all nations will get into Heaven.

✝ People (non Jews) will come from east and west and north and south, and will take their places at the feast in the kingdom of God. Dr. Luke 13:29 NIV

The reason Why? Jesus keeps mentioning Gentiles at a Heavenly Feast with the founding Patriarchs of Israel; being Abraham Issac and Jacob, is that in Jesus Time the Jewish people believed that when Messiah redeems Israel a great banquet will take place in Heaven having all of the Faithful Biblical hero's in attendance. (This is recorded in Revelation 19:9)

A few final details; surviving Roman historical documents do in fact record that Capernaum was patrolled and garrisoned by specific Legionnaires recruited from Samaria and Caesarea with the thought they would be more accustomed to local behavior and interactions while being quartered in several locations in or near Capernaum as was necessary.

Their commander (Centurion) and his immediate staff were assigned more fitting semi permanent living arrangements in nearby Tiberias while stationed there assigned in service to Herod Antipas.

Jesus Concludes

✝ Then Jesus said to the officer, "Go home, and what you believe will be done for you." And the officer's servant was healed that very moment. Matthew 8:13 GNT

Take note Jesus said by your Faith your request will be.

No dispute or denial of this healing from afar of the Roman Centurions son was ever raised or questioned after the Life & Ministry of Jesus was complete.

Not even by the enemies of Christ. Think about that.

So what do you Believe?

We should all strive to be Centurions of Faith.