

Episode: Luke Series No. 8

Narrator: Centurion

Primary Scriptures: Luke 7

Story Summary: Some healings and miracles of Jesus

Location: Galilee

Time: Circa 30 AD

Suggested Memory Scriptures: Luke 7:22, 7:28, 7:47, 7:50

Think of centurions as being the toughest of the tough. In terms of rank, they would be somewhat equivalent to a captain in the United States army. The typical centurion led a dangerous life because he led his soldiers in battle, and if he survived, he typically received Roman citizenship and a grant of land upon retirement. Like many soldiers of the time, they sought a calm, peaceful assignment as they approached retirement.

Very little is known about the centurion located in Capernaum. We can surmise he was there to protect the Via Maris trade route, and possibly act as an implicit threat to Herod's nearby town of Tiberius. However, he treated the Jews and their religion with respect, which was unusual for a Roman; possibly he had become a God-follower, a person who believed in God but was not willing to become a Jew.

Since he was responsible for keeping peace, you can be sure the centurion knew all of the local leaders and kept abreast of all gossip and social news. He would have been familiar with Jesus and his healings and teachings. It was not a big leap for him to think of Jesus when his favorite servant was on the verge of death.

The healings, miracles, and resurrections of Jesus caused such a stir that he began to spend too much time doing those things instead of teaching. Desperately ill people certainly preferred healings over spiritual teaching, but Jesus was intent on healing people spiritually, too.

In *Luke*, this is the time when all of the attention turns from John the Baptist to Jesus. It is challenging for modern Christians to understand the importance of John the Baptist. It seems like Luke spends too much time on somebody who announces Jesus and then gets killed.

Jesus makes the effort to show the immense importance of John in preparing the way for Jesus. Jesus invokes Old Testament prophecies to show the validity of John's message. This is important in trying to turn the Jews from the Laws of Moses to a new way of thinking. When Jesus gives John validity, it also provides validity for Jesus' messages and claims.

Discussion Questions:

1. Why might the centurion have been posted in Capernaum?
 2. Why would the centurion have treated the Jews with respect?
 3. How might the centurion have known Simon the Pharisee?
 4. How did the centurions and other government leaders keep up with local news and threats?
 5. How do you suspect Simon the Pharisee reacted when Jesus publicly embarrassed him?
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1. Protect the trade route, keep the peace, act as a check on Herod. 2. To keep the peace. He might have been a God-fearer who believed in God but wasn't willing to convert to Judaism. 3. As a Jewish leader, the centurion had probably met him in the normal course of governmental matters. 4. Hired spies, bribed people, made friends with local leaders.

Application Questions

1. The Centurion was able to get help when he most needed it by gaining favor way ahead of time. How are you wisely gaining favor from others before it is needed? How can you navigate this so that you still see people for their humanity and not as a possible future transaction?
2. The mother of the son who died was probably destined for death or extreme poverty herself. Why did Jesus take such pity on her? Is there somebody in your life or peripheral to your life who needs your compassion? What can you do to show it to them?
3. John showed great humility by announcing Jesus and then bowing out of the way. Have you ever bowed out of the way in deference to someone else? Might you need to be doing so now?

Application Questions for Teens

1. The Centurion recognized authority not only because he received deference from others, but because he deferred to others himself. Do you defer to authority figures in your life willingly or are you rebellious? How will that help or hurt you as you become an adult? When is it appropriate to stand up to authority instead of showing deference?
2. Simon the Pharisee could not see his own shortcomings because of his pride. Can you name a time when your pride blinded you to your faults? Do you think of yourself as prideful? Do your friends think of you as being prideful? How do you know?
3. Jesus forgave a known sinful woman because of her faith and repentance. Is there something you need to quit doing? How will you take steps to follow through with that?