

The Believing Centurion

Key Verse: “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

Selected Scripture:
Matthew 8:5-13

During Christ’s earthly ministry he performed many miracles in Capernaum, which was located in Galilee, including the healing of a centurion’s servant. In this account, although there is no written record that this servant was a good one, the inference is probable that the centurion was an orderly man. Such men would usually seek for and obtain obedient servants. Furthermore, in his dialogue with our Lord, he declared that

he was accustomed to having his servants to do what he instructed them. Though a Gentile, the centurion suggested that Jesus should merely speak the word. He believed that the Lord had powerful agencies at his command that would not require him to personally visit and touch the servant in order to heal him.—Matt. 8:5-9

Our Key Verse reveals that Jesus was amazed at the Roman centurion’s faith. On the other hand, the Jews as a whole were afflicted with unbelief as to the truth of his being their long-promised Messiah. “I say unto you, that many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom

shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. And Jesus said unto the centurion, Go thy way; and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee. And his servant was healed in the selfsame hour.”—vss. 11-13

There is a lesson for us in these words in that Jesus' ability was unlimited. Furthermore, his blessings to us are proportionate to our readiness to receive them by faith; for “without faith” it is impossible to please God. (Heb. 11:6) Thus those who are unable to exercise faith cannot share in the blessings offered under the heavenly calling, but must wait for the time of God's glorious kingdom to be set up upon the earth.—Matt. 6:10

The nucleus of the heavenly kingdom class was Jewish from the day of Pentecost for three and a half years, until the time when Cornelius was received as the first Gentile convert. Since then, “the middle wall of partition” between Jew and Gentile, which previously hindered the latter from a full share of God's favors, has been broken down. (Eph. 2:14) From that time until the present, the Lord has “called” and gathered disciples from all nations.

While the faithful of the Jews will have a share in the heavenly kingdom, the nation as a whole was rejected and cast into the “darkness” of the world in general. They have had “weeping and gnashing of teeth” for nearly twenty centuries. According to the Scriptures, however, the time will come when God graciously forgives their sin and saves them from their national blindness. (Jer. 31:31-34) They will be blessed, together with all the families of the earth, in the Messianic kingdom.—Gen. 12:3; 28:14

How much the consecrated saints of God should rejoice in this marvelous provision. All who will accept the offer of salvation and who yield in obedience to the Heavenly Father's grand design to establish peace and righteousness for eternity will attain to perfect and everlasting life upon the earth.—Rev. 21:1-5 ■