

## *The Gospel According to*

SAINT MATTHEW

SAINT MARK

SAINT LUKE

SAINT JOHN

CHAPTER 8, VERSES 5-13	NOTHING RECORDED	CHAPTER 7, VERSES 1-10	NOTHING RECORDED
<p><b>8:5</b> - And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum<sup>1</sup>, there came<sup>2</sup> unto him a centurion<sup>3</sup>, beseeching him<sup>4</sup>.</p> <p><b>8:6</b> - And saying, Lords, my servant<sup>6</sup> lieth<sup>7</sup> at home<sup>8</sup> sick<sup>9</sup> of the palsy<sup>10</sup>, grievously<sup>11</sup> tormented<sup>12</sup>.</p> <p><b>8:7</b> - And Jesus saith unto him, I will come<sup>13</sup> and heal him<sup>14</sup>.</p> <p><b>8:8</b> - The centurion<sup>3</sup> answered and said, Lord<sup>5</sup>, I am not worthy<sup>15</sup> that thou shouldest come under my roof<sup>16</sup>: but speak the word only<sup>17</sup>, and my servant<sup>6</sup> shall be healed<sup>18</sup>.</p> <p><b>8:9</b> - For I am a man under authority<sup>19</sup>, having soldiers<sup>20</sup> under me<sup>21</sup>: and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth<sup>21</sup>; and to another, Come, and he cometh<sup>22</sup>; and to my servant<sup>6</sup>, Do this, and he doeth it<sup>23</sup>.</p> <p><b>8:10</b> - When Jesus heard it, he marvelled<sup>24</sup>, and said to them that followed, Verily<sup>25</sup> I say unto you, I have not found<sup>26</sup> so great faith<sup>27</sup>, no, not in Israel<sup>28</sup>.</p> <p><b>8:11</b> - And I say unto you, That many shall come<sup>29</sup> from the east<sup>30</sup> and west<sup>31</sup>, and shall sit down<sup>32</sup> with Abraham<sup>33</sup>, and Isaac<sup>34</sup>, and Jacob<sup>35</sup>, in the kingdom of heaven<sup>36</sup>.</p> <p><b>8:12</b> - But the children of the kingdom<sup>37</sup> shall be cast out<sup>38</sup> into outer darkness<sup>39</sup>: there shall be weeping<sup>40</sup> and gnashing of teeth<sup>41</sup>.</p> <p><b>8:13</b> - And Jesus said unto the centurion<sup>1</sup>, Go thy way<sup>42</sup>; and as thou hast believed<sup>43</sup>, so be it done unto thee<sup>44</sup>. And his servant<sup>6</sup> was healed<sup>18</sup> in the selfsame hour<sup>45</sup>.</p>		<p><b>7:1</b> - Now when he had ended all his sayings<sup>46</sup> in the audience of the people<sup>47</sup>, he entered into Capernaum<sup>1</sup>.</p> <p><b>7:2</b> - And a certain<sup>48</sup> centurion's<sup>3</sup> servant<sup>6</sup>, who was dear unto him<sup>49</sup>, was sick<sup>9</sup>, and ready to die<sup>50</sup>.</p> <p><b>7:3</b> - And when he heard of Jesus, he sent unto him<sup>51</sup> the elders of the Jews<sup>52</sup>, beseeching him<sup>4</sup> that he would come and heal his servant<sup>6</sup>.</p> <p><b>7:4</b> - And when they came to Jesus, they besought<sup>53</sup> him instantly<sup>54</sup>, saying, That he was worthy<sup>15</sup> for whom he should do this:</p> <p><b>7:5</b> - For he loveth our nation<sup>55</sup>, and he hath built us a synagogue<sup>56</sup>.</p> <p><b>7:6</b> - Then Jesus went with them. And when he was now not far from the house<sup>57</sup>, the centurion<sup>3</sup> sent friends<sup>58</sup> to him, saying unto him, Lord<sup>5</sup>, trouble not thyself<sup>59</sup>: for I am not worthy<sup>15</sup> that thou shouldest enter under my roof<sup>16</sup>.</p> <p><b>7:7</b> - Wherefore neither thought I myself worthy<sup>15</sup> to come unto thee: but say in a word, and my servant<sup>6</sup> shall be healed<sup>18</sup>.</p> <p><b>7:8</b> - For I also am a man set under authority<sup>19</sup>, having under me soldiers<sup>20</sup>, and I say unto one, Go, and he goeth<sup>21</sup>; and to another, Come, and he cometh<sup>22</sup>; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it<sup>23</sup>.</p> <p><b>7:9</b> - When Jesus heard these things, he marvelled<sup>24</sup> at him, and turned him about, and said unto the people that followed him, I say unto you, I have not found<sup>26</sup> so great faith<sup>27</sup>, no, not in Israel<sup>28</sup>.</p> <p><b>7:10</b> - And they that were sent<sup>60</sup>, returning to the house<sup>61</sup>, found the servant<sup>6</sup> whole<sup>62</sup> that had been sick<sup>9</sup>.</p>	

**CHRONOLOGY:** Between April 10<sup>th</sup> and April 30<sup>th</sup>, 28<sup>CE</sup>

**LOCATION:** Capernaum.

**COMMENTARY:** The chronology this chapter is debatable. Most scholars feel that Matthew has arranged his gospel account thematically, ignoring the actual chronology. Holzapfel and Wayment record, "Matthew has gathered these healings together to exemplify that Jesus is the Messiah in both word (Matthew 5-7) and deed (Matthew 8-9)." (The Life and Teachings of Jesus Christ: From the Transfiguration through the Triumphal Entry, Volume 2, Edited by Richard Neitzel Holzapfel and Thomas A. Wayment, , page 306). It is thought that Luke's account is the original account and better aligns with the actual chronology of events. Though some argue that Mark represents the original text. "Meyer regards the account of St. Luke as the original, Keim that of St. Matthew – both on subjective rather than historical grounds. But we may as well note, that the circumstance, that the event is passed over by St. Mark, militates against the favourite modern theory of the Gospels being derived from an original tradition (what is called the 'original Mark,' 'Ur-Marcus')." (The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, Volume 1, Alfred Edersheim, page 544).

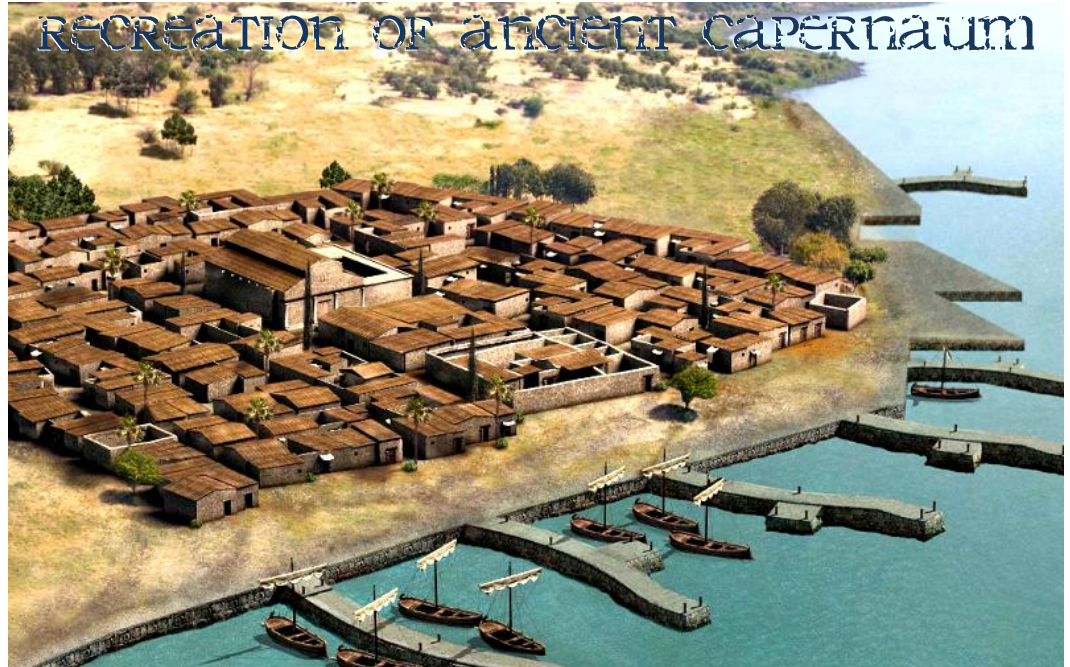
Jesus has returned to His home town of Capernaum. The most likely chronology is that he has returned from Decapolis and the Sermon on the Plain of Bethsaida. As Jesus enters the city, He is approached by a Roman Centurion. In Luke's account, Jesus is approached by a group of Jewish Elder's acting on his behalf. The centurion has a good knowledge of Jewish Law and may have been a convert of at least a believer. He had obviously heard of Jesus' reputation as a great Rabbi and healer. He wanted to request a miracle at the Master's hand. He had a servant, possible a son, who was deathly ill. He had a great love for this servant, which would be odd for a Roman servant or slave. He is said to be tormented with palsy, though we are not sure what the modern equivalent is. He was speaking for the servant who apparently couldn't speak for himself. He was seeking a healing. The Centurion is a type of mediator to Jesus for a servant that was ill. In a sense, He was a symbol of Jesus petitioning the Father on our behalf. The ill servant represents mortal men who are all spiritually ill. In fact, our prognosis is terminal without some mighty cure. Jesus recognized the faith that the centurion had. The centurion believed beyond doubt that Jesus could heal His servant. In fact, the when Jesus offered to go to his home and heal his servant, He declined knowing that he was ritually unclean, but asked that Jesus just utter the words and the servant would be

healed. With this Jesus takes the opportunity to teach. He declares that He has not seen so much faith among the covenant people. One would expect the Jews to be the ones with such faith, but here was a Roman of all people, believing in the divinity of Jesus Christ. This would have been offensive to the Jews, but we have no record of their reaction. Jesus declares that the gospel will be spread to the east and to the west, representing the Jews and the Gentiles. He declares that all who are willing to enter into covenants with the Lord will be allowed to figuratively sit down at the table with great patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) and partake of the promises reserved for the elect. In contrast, Jesus declares that the covenant people who break their covenants and turn from the like will be cast out into outer darkness. Jesus then turns to the centurion, or the friends of the centurion in the account of Luke, and tells him (them) to go his (their) way, that he would find his servant healed. He returned to find that his servant was healed that same hour.

## FOOTNOTES:

- 1- **Capernaum** – The name of the city known as “Capernaum” is translated from the Greek word “Καφαρναούμ” or “Kapharnaoum”. Translated literally, it means “village of comfort”. The name is derived from two Hebrew words, “כִּפְּרָה” or “kaphar” meaning village, and “נַחֲוִים” or “Nachuwim” meaning consolation. The city of Capernaum, more appropriately a village, was “a town on the North West shore of the Sea of Galilee where Jesus made His headquarters during his ministry in Galilee.” (Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary, General Editor Merrill C. Tenney, Page 146). Its population was likely no more than 1,000 to 1,500 people. The town, in Jesus’ day, was a poor fishing village. It extended along the actual lake shore only for a distance of about 1600 feet (about 1/3 of a mile). Today, the archeological remains are called Tell Hum.

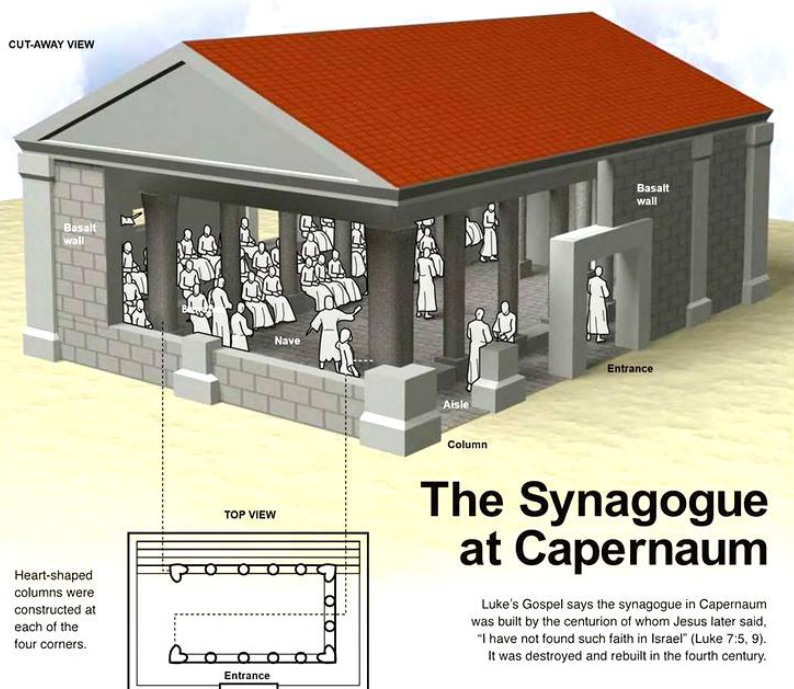
The village of Capernaum has some importance. It was a fishing village that was built next to the Via Maris which passed by Capernaum on the north side. Ogden and Skinner wrote, “Capernaum was situated on the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee and was a local crossroads near the International Highway (the Via Maris, the ‘Way of the Sea,’ which runs from Egypt on the southwest to Mesopotamia on the northeast). Roman soldiers were stationed there.” (The Four Gospels - Verse by verse, D. Kelly Ogden and Andrew C. Skinner, page 228). Villagers were mainly fishermen, farmers and people that provided services to the Via Maris, which by this time was a Roman road. Josephus, who spent some time in Capernaum, described its soil as fruitful. Grapes and figs were available ten months during the year and other fruits and nuts were available seasonally, such as olives, dates and walnuts. A cemetery was about 200 meters north of the synagogue beyond the inhabited area of the village.



Homes in Capernaum were built of local basalt, a hard, black volcanic rock. The stones were not dressed and no mortar was used. Each house had a courtyard with small dwelling rooms around it, often separated from the courtyard by a wall with a row of windows to allow air and light to enter into the interior. The courtyard had one opening to the street and usually no windows in the outer walls to maintain privacy. Ovens and stores for cooking were in the courtyard and a stone staircase gave access to the roof or, rarely, a second story. Roofs were constructed by placing light wooden beams across the opening and then a thatch of briar branches mixed with mud. When the mud hardened it provided a nice hard surface. The roofs were used to dry fruit, and in warm weather, people often slept on them. The floors were cobbled stone. People often lived communally, using the same courtyard and door-less internal passages. The houses had no drainage or bathroom facilities.



Christ taught and healed many people in this synagogue. It was here the man with the unclean spirit proclaimed Jesus the Holy One of God (Mark 1:21–28; Luke 4:31–35). Jesus also delivered the discourse on the Bread of Life here (John 6:59).



## The Synagogue at Capernaum

Luke's Gospel says the synagogue in Capernaum was built by the centurion of whom Jesus later said, "I have not found such faith in Israel" (Luke 7:5, 9). It was destroyed and rebuilt in the fourth century.

are distinct. In the picture below one can see the short under-floor columns and wall piping used to heat the bath. There have been no such ruins discovered in the Capernaum ruins. Second, a Roman Garrison, even a small one, would have been much larger than any structures identified in the current ruins. Finally, there is no historical records indicating that a Roman garrison was ever established in Capernaum.



RUINS OF A ROMAN BATH



A TYPICAL ROMAN GARRISON

It is more probable that the Centurion was from a garrison in nearby Tiberias. Edersheim supports this theory. He wrote, "Closely considered, whatever verbal differences, there is not any real discrepancy in this respect between the Judean presentation of the event in St. Matthew and the fuller Gentile account of it by St. Luke. From both narratives we are led to infer that the house of the Centurion was not in Capernaum itself, but in its immediate neighbourhood, probably on the road to Tiberias." (The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, Volume 1, Alfred Edersheim, page 548).

What we do know is that Capernaum was the home of Peter. It was likely the home to Mary, the mother of Jesus, and Jesus' siblings. It seems to have served as Jesus' home base or operations. It is the town where the events of this chapter occur. Though opposition came to the city on a consistent basis, Jesus also has faithful followers and believers who lived in Capernaum and the surrounding area.

- 2- **there came** – The phrase "there came" is translated from the Greek word "προσέρχονται" or "proserchomai". It means to come to, draw near to, or assent to.

Where the centurion came from we cannot say for sure. It is more probable theory is that he came from neighboring Tiberias. The more popular theory is that he came from Capernaum itself.

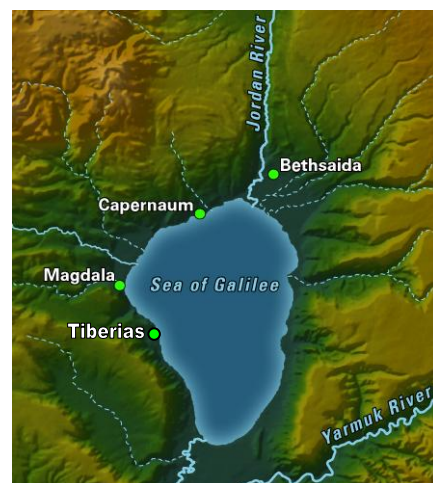
There is much debate surrounding the chronological order of events. Because there is such confusion over the Sermon

Objects found by archaeologists were mostly clay pots, plates, amphora's and lamps, fish hooks, weights for fish nets, striker pins, weaving bobbins and a few basalt mills for milling grain and pressing olives.

The city had its own synagogue, which is not surprising considering its size; however, the ruins would indicate a synagogue of size and quality superior to what would be expected for Capernaum. The original foundation is still intact, being made of black volcanic rock commonly found in the area. Subsequent synagogues have been built upon the original foundation, making it difficult to render a definitive rendering of the 1<sup>st</sup> century synagogue. Even so, some of the subsequent synagogues used pieces of the original structure. These pieces have been identified helping us see the quality of construction and the materials used. The synagogue would have been the crown jewel of Capernaum.

Many scholars believe that on the east side of the synagogue in Capernaum there was a small Roman garrison, probably the home of the centurion whose faith Jesus commended. They base this theory almost solely on the fact that the centurion mentioned in this chapter built the synagogue in Capernaum and is mentioned to have a home relatively close by. Great scholars seem to support this theory. Elder Talmage wrote, "There was at that time a Roman garrison in the city. A military officer, a centurion or captain of a hundred men, was stationed there." (Jesus the Christ, James E. Talmage, page 186). In similar fashion, Elder Bruce R. McConkie wrote, "We are with him now in Capernaum, his own city. A Roman garrison is located here." (The Mortal Messiah: Volume 2, Collector's Edition, Bruce R. McConkie, page 122).

The problem I have with this theory actual lies in multiple areas. First, A Roman home would have had a Roman bath. Remains of such a bath







on the Mount and Sermon on the Plain, as to whether they are different events or different recounting of the same event, the order of this chapter would be greatly affected by one's opinion of that debate. It is this author's opinion that events are separate, and follow the chronological order of this work. One can see the confusion in Farrar's statement, **"Whether the healing of the centurion's servant took place before or after this retirement is uncertain; but from the fact that both St. Matthew and St. Luke place it in close connection with the Sermon on the Mount."** (The Story of a Beautiful Life: Farrar's Life of Christ, The New 20th Century Edition, 1900, Canon Farrar, D.D., F.R.S., page 185).

In Matthew's account, the centurion personally came to meet the Savior and request a healing. In Luke's account, the centurion doesn't directly approach the Savior, but rather approaches the Elders of the city and has them approach Jesus. This may seem like a conflict, but in reality it may not be. Talmage explains, **"Matthew's briefer statement of the officer's petition, and the Lord's gracious compliance therewith, represents the man as coming in person to Jesus; while Luke refers to the elders of the local synagogue as presenting the request. There is here no real discrepancy. It was then allowable, as in our time it is, to speak of one who causes something to be done as doing that thing himself. One may properly be said to notify another, when he sends the notification by a third party. A man may say he has built a house, when in reality others did the work of building though at his instance. An architect may with propriety be said to have constructed a building, when as a matter of fact he made the design, and directed others who actually reared the structure."** (Jesus the Christ, James E. Talmage, page 195).

Another point of confusion among scholars is the fact that the Gospel of John has a similar story regarding a nobleman and his request to heal his son. **"Since patristic times it has been recognized that this Johannine story is related to the cure of the centurion's servant. There are obvious similarities and dissimilarities in the traditions. In all three accounts the official (in Luke and Matthew, a 'centurion'; in John, a 'royal official' [basilikos]) is located at Capernaum; he may be a non-Jew in each. A boy close to him lies gravely ill and cannot be brought to Jesus; the official requests of him a cure."** (The Gospel according to Luke I-IX: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, page 648). The chronology for the miracle in John and this miracle don't correlate. It is also not unreasonable to assume that Jesus may have had miracles of similar natures. He

literally healed tens of thousands of people during the course of His mortal ministry. The fact that the centurion came to Jesus may have even been prompted by the testimony of the nobleman, or another source reliable to the centurion. **"We may suppose that this military commander knew the nobleman, who also served Herod Antipas, and whose son in Capernaum had been healed by Jesus' word, spoken twenty miles away in Cana."** (The Mortal Messiah: Volume 2, Collector's Edition, Bruce R. McConkie, page 122). He came to Jesus because he heard from reliable sources who Jesus was. Fitzmyer recorded, **"This undoubtedly refers to his reputation as a miracle worker."** (The Gospel according to Luke I-IX: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, page 651). Surely, the centurion also received confirmations of the spirit.

- 3- **centurion** – The word "centurion" is translated from the Greek word "ἐκατοντάρχης" or "hekatontarchēs". It is a title used for an officer in the Roman army. The word can be divided into two Greek words, "ἐκατόν" or "hekatón", meaning one hundred and "ἄρχω" or "archo" meaning to be chief, to lead or to rule.

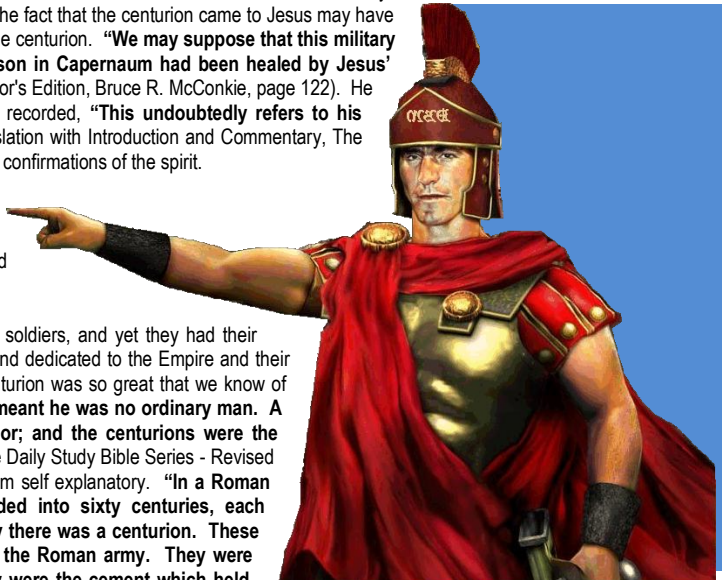
The centurion was the foundation of the Roman Army. They were commanders of soldiers, and yet they had their "boots on the ground" (or rather sandals in their case). They were extremely loyal, and dedicated to the Empire and their men. This balance often made the larger than life. In fact, the reputation of the centurion was so great that we know of them 2,000 years later. Barclay explains, **"The mere fact that he was a centurion meant he was no ordinary man. A centurion was the equivalent of a regimental sergeant-major; and the centurions were the backbone of the Roman army."** (The Gospel of Luke, The Daily Study Bible Series - Revised Edition, William Barclay, page 84). Their name may seem self explanatory. **"In a Roman legion there were 6,000 men; the legion was divided into sixty centuries, each containing 100 men, and in command of each century there was a centurion. These centurions were the long-service, regular soldiers of the Roman army. They were responsible for the discipline of the regiment, and they were the cement which held the army together. In peace and in war alike the morale of the Roman army depended on them. In his description of the Roman army Polybius describes what a centurion should be: 'They must not be so much venturesome seekers after danger as men who can command, steady in action, and reliable; they ought not to be over-anxious to rush into the fight, but when hard pressed, they must be ready to hold their ground, and die at their posts.' The centurions were the finest men in the Roman army."** (The Gospel of Matthew, Volume 1, The Daily Study Bible Series - Revised Edition, William Barclay, page 306)

Like most things, the ideal was somewhat different from reality. **"One would assume that a centurion was an officer over one hundred men but Roman records at the time suggest that a centurion commanded about eighty others. Still, a centurion was an important officer in command of many."** (The Four Gospels - Verse by verse, D. Kelly Ogden and Andrew C. Skinner, page 228).

There were different types of centurions. There were the Legionaries, which were probably those we think of when we hear the name "centurion". **"A Roman legionary officer commanded a century (i.e. from 50 to 100 men, the hundredth part of a legion), and occupying the social position of a modern sergeant or non-commissioned officer. (Dummelow page 653)"** (The Doctrinal New Testament Commentary, Volume 1: The Gospels, Bruce R. McConkie, page 258). They were the centurions that commanded the regular trained legionaries known as milites (the equivalent in rank of the modern private). Included in the ranks, aside from the milites, were the immunes; specialist soldiers with secondary roles such as engineer, artilleryman, drill and weapons instructor, carpenter and medic. These men were still fully trained legionaries, however, they would fight in the ranks only if called upon. They were excused from some of the more arduous tasks such as drill and fatigues and received better pay than their comrades in arms.

Auxiliary centurions were those commanders assigned to troops in typically none combat assignments. They may have been assigned in peace keeping functions, such as overseeing a conquered city, or a strategic highway or seaport. The auxiliary centurions may have been assigned to smaller centuries, or even to assist vassal states. This may have been the case with the centurion associated with this chapter.

Galilee at this time was under the control of the Herods, well, at least to a point. Galilee was part of the Roman Empire, and therefore ultimately under the rule of Caesar. Herod Antipas ruled Galilee as a vassal King under the ultimate rule of Caesar. He had great autonomy, however, he was expected to observe Roman law, keep the flow of taxes coming, and maintain order. Many Biblical scholars are puzzled, while some are concerned,





over the fact that there was a functioning centurion in an area controlled by Herod. Since we have no historical clarification, we are left to speculate using the facts that we have.

1. There were Roman troops in Galilee and Judaea on a regular basis during this time period. Judaea was not under the control of the Herods at the time of this chapter and consequently had an established garrison next to the Temple in Jerusalem. It was named the Antonio Fortress. There is no historical data that would support a garrison in Capernaum.
2. The Herods often requested troops from Roman in times of need. Unfortunately, this would not be a time that would qualify. It would have been unusual for the Romans to station soldiers in the territory of a loyal client-king who faced no serious internal or external threats. Roman troops were apparently not permanently stationed in Galilee until the second century C.E. A famous milestone exhibited at modern Capernaum that documents the construction of a road by Roman soldiers dates not to the time of Jesus but to the reign of Emperor Hadrian (117-138 C.E.). Because the armies of the Herodian kings included Gentiles and were sometimes organized along Roman lines, it is likely that the tradition underlying the gospels' story originally referred to an officer in the army of Antipas.
3. Retired Roman soldiers often signed on as mercenaries to vassal states, or provinces that were friendly to or part of the Roman Empire. It could be that our centurion was a retired Roman soldier serving as leader over some of Herod Antipas' troops. Fitzmyer said, **"He was not certainly in charge of Roman troops stationed at this time in Capernaum; he may have been in the service of Herod Antipas as the leader of mercenary troops, or may have been in police service or customs-service."** (The Gospel according to Luke I-IX: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, page 651).
4. The city of Caesarea Martima was a Roman stronghold on the Mediterranean. It was named in honor of Caesar Augustus by the Herods. The Herods dug a deep sea port, and developed it into a Roman city; complete with a coliseum, several pagan temples, and an amphitheater. As an important sea port, a Roman garrison of troops were stationed there. Some believe that the centurion of this chapter came from Caesarea. Edersheim wrote, **"We know too little of the history of the man, to judge what earlier impulses had led him to such reverence for Israel's God. There might have been something to incline him towards it in his early upbringing, perhaps in Caesarea; or in his family relationships; perhaps in that very servant (possibly a Jew) whose implicit obedience to his master seems in part to have led him up to faith in analogous submission of all things to the behests of Christ."** (The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, Volume 1, Alfred Edersheim, pages 546-547).
5. There may have been Roman troop in and throughout Galilee if the Romans suspected Herod Antipas of rebellion. This was the case with Caesar Agrippa. Josephus records, **"Now the centurion who was set to keep Agrippa, when he saw with what haste Marsyas came, and what joy Agrippa had from what he said, he had a suspicion that his words implied some great innovation of affairs, and he asked them about what was said."** (Antiquities of the Jews, Book 18, Flavius Josephus, Chapter 6, Verse 10, Page 991). Unfortunately, we believe that Herod Antipas was in good standing with Roman during this time period.

The last interesting notation on our centurion, is his heritage and religious status. Elder McConkie, who believed that the centurion was under Herod Antipas' command, also believed that the centurion was a Gentile, but not a typical one. He wrote, **"This centurion, a soldier in the service of Herod Antipas, is no ordinary Gentile upon whom the curse of disbelief rests, or who revels in the carnal lusts by which soldiers sometimes entertain themselves. He may have been a 'proselyte of righteousness,' one adopted into the family of Abraham, one who chose to live as an Israelite and worship the Lord Jehovah."** (The Mortal Messiah: Volume 2, Collector's Edition, Bruce R. McConkie, page 122). At the very least, the centurion had developed a tolerance for the Jewish people. Most Romans had a disdain for the Jews, probably because the Jews viewed them as unclean pagans; condemned by God. The Jewish Elders said that the centurion loved the Jewish Nation, and even built a synagogue for them. This has led many to believe that the centurion had converted to Judaism.



Gaskill wrote, **"The centurion is believed to have been a Gentile who had a fondness for the Jewish people but had not converted to Judaism or Christianity. He was a sincere soul not far from the kingdom – a 'proselyte at the gate,' as it were."** (Miracles of the New Testament: A Guide to the Symbolic Messages, Alonzo L. Gaskill, page 98). Jesus' statement that He had not found such faith in all of "Israel" may be used as an indicator that the centurion was still considered a Gentile.

Gentiles, or non-Jews, were allowed to convert to Judaism. To do so they were required to be baptized and the men were required to be circumcised. A convert that was not willing to perform these sacred ordinances, was often referred to as a "proselyte at the gate". We have no way of knowing what the status the centurion was other than educated guesses. Gaskill wrote, **"The centurion was a Gentile, a 'heathen' or 'non-believer,' as it were, in the eyes of many Jews of his day. He is, therefore, a fitting symbol of the Gentile world and how it would embrace Christ and accept His gospel, even without having connection to Judaism or being 'of Israel'."** (Miracles of the New Testament: A Guide to the Symbolic Messages, Alonzo L. Gaskill, page 98).

- 4- **beseeking him** – The word “beseeking” is translated in Matthew from the Greek word “παρακαλέω” or “parakaleō”. It means to call to one’s side, call for, or to summon. The word “beseeking” is translated in Luke from the Greek word “ἐρωτάω” or “erōtaō”. It means to question, to ask, to request, beg or beseech.

There are several interesting points that can be made from the simple fact that a Roman centurion was making a request of Jesus. The Romans considered themselves the alpha society. They were progressive in their education, culture, literature and science. They viewed all other societies as inferior. Yet, a Roman centurion was asking a Jewish Rabbi for help. He was humble beyond any typical Roman. As a centurion, he would have been expected to be a prideful and confident Roman. Instead, we see a meek and submissive man.

The two accounts of the centurion asking Jesus differ. **“Matthew says that the centurion approached Jesus, while Luke says he sent someone else to make the request. It has been suggested that Luke may have been ‘expanding’ on Matthew’s account – engaging in a bit of ‘independent redaction’ – thereby giving the story a ‘slightly different turn.’ Some scholars hold that Luke’s insertion of messengers being sent was made in order to back up the claim that the centurion was powerful and had command over many, and yet felt unworthy to approach Jesus, thereby accentuating Jesus’s greatness and power.”** (Miracles of the New Testament: A Guide to the Symbolic Messages, Alonzo L. Gaskill, pages 97-98). In either case, the Roman centurion was still the one asking the question. Whether direct or indirect, it probably makes little significance.

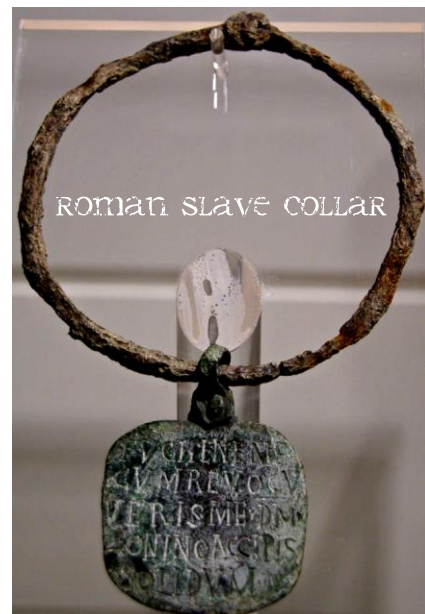
- 5- **Lord** – The word “Lord” is translated from the Greek word “κύριος” or “kyrios”. It means he to whom a person or thing belongs, about which he has power of deciding; master, or lord. This is a title reserved to someone of a higher position or rank. It was used in reference to Rabbis or great teachers. For a Roman centurion to use such a title in regards to a Jew says volumes of his view and opinion of the Jews and Jesus. His heart is softened to some degree, and perhaps even a testimony has begun to form. Faith in Jesus’ ability is evident in the question that will follow.

- 6- **servant** – The word “servant” is translated in Matthew from the Greek word “παῖς” or “pais”. It means a child (boy or girl), a servant, a slave, an attendant, or a minister. The word “servant” in Luke is translated in Luke from the Greek word “δούλος” or “doulos”. It means a slave, bondman, or man of servile condition. **“The best manuscripts read ‘doulos’ here, but some have ‘pais’, an obvious copyist’s correction, harmonizing the text...Luke’s shift from ‘pais’ was commonly used for ‘slave, servant’ in classical and Hellenistic Greek and would have been understood by Luke’s readers.”** (The Gospel according to Luke I-IX: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, page 651). The problem is ‘doulos’ can lead one to the translation as being a young son or young child. This is a viable theory, but many disregard this in favor of a ‘servant’. Albright says, **“The Greek can also mean ‘child,’ but it is definitely ‘servant’ in this context.”** (Matthew: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, W.F. Albright and C.S. Mann, page 93). On the other hand, Holzapel and Wayment wrote, **“Although the KJV indicates that the miracle concerns the centurion’s servant, the Greek word pais can also be translated as ‘son.’ The latter translation is to be preferred because in Matthew 8:9, the centurion uses a different Greek word (doulos) for servant.”** (The Life and Teachings of Jesus Christ: From the Transfiguration through the Triumphal Entry, Volume 2, Edited by Richard Neitzel Holzapel and Thomas A. Wayment, , page 306).

Here we must look at the word “servant” or “slave” from two different vantage points. The Romans viewed their slaves in a very different way from the Jews. The centurion was Roman, by definition, but he had apparent ties and sympathies for the Jews. We will first review the Roman view, and then the Jewish view of servants;

**Roman Slaves:** “In the Roman Empire slaves did not matter. It was of no importance to anyone if they suffered, and whether they lived or died. Aristotle, talking about the friendships which are possible in life, writes: ‘There can be no friendship nor justice towards inanimate things; indeed, not even towards a horse or an ox, nor yet towards a slave as a slave. For master and slave have nothing in common; a slave is a living tool, just as a tool is an inanimate slave.’ ” (The Gospel of Matthew, Volume 1, The Daily Study Bible Series - Revised Edition, William Barclay, page 307). Such language is offensive when one considers that all human beings are children of God. Even so, this was the stark reality of the time. **“A slave was no better than a thing. A slave had no legal rights whatsoever; his master was free to treat him, or maltreat him, as he liked. Gaius, the Roman legal expert, lays it down in his Institutes: ‘We may note that it is universally accepted that the master possesses the power of life and death over the slave.’ Varro, the Roman writer on agriculture, has a grim passage in which he divides the instruments of agriculture into three classes--the articulate, the inarticulate and the mute, ‘the articulate comprising the slaves, the inarticulate comprising the cattle, and the mute comprising the vehicles.’ The only difference between a slave and a beast or a cart was that the slave could speak.”** (The Gospel of Matthew, Volume 1, The Daily Study Bible Series - Revised Edition, William Barclay, page 307).

If indeed the centurion’s “pais” or “doulos” is a slave and not a child, he then exhibits an exceptional and culturally defiant attitude towards him. **“He loved this slave and would go to any trouble to save him. In Roman law a slave was defined as a living tool; he had no rights; a master could ill-treat him and even kill him if he chose. A Roman writer on estate management recommends the farmer to examine his implements every year and to throw out those which are old and broken, and to do the same with his slaves. Normally when a slave was past his work he was thrown out to die. The attitude of this centurion to his slave was quite unusual.”** (The Gospel of Luke, The Daily Study Bible Series - Revised Edition, William Barclay, pages 84-85). A sick slave would be cast out, and left to die on his own. His master would not have even taken the effort to allow him a proper death, and yet the centurion was seeking Jesus that He might heal him.





**Jewish Slaves:** “Under the Roman law the slave did not have the rights or protection such as he enjoyed under the Hebrew legislation. A master might have his slave crucified for almost any reason. Augustus Caesar had thirty thousand slaves crucified during his reign.” (Manners and Customs in the Bible, Victor H. Matthews, pages 394-395). The Hebrew slaves were expected to be freed at some point. They were human beings who through debt or crime found themselves in servitude. They were to be freed once their debt was paid. **“As to the legal position of the Jewish slave, we must state that slavery was not considered disreputable, and his master must spare the Jewish slave the more humiliating tasks of slavery. In law he was equal to the elder son of the family, and had a right to the same treatment as his master; good food, good clothing, a good seat at table and a good bed. Unlike the Gentile slave, he could acquire possessions by finding (M.B.M. i.5) or as gifts, and he could shorten his term of service by payment. Again unlike the Gentile slave, his master could not declare him devoted (M. Arak. viii.5). If he were married, his master was obliged to maintain his wife and children.”** (Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus: An investigation into Economic and Social Conditions during the New Testament period, Joachim Jeremias, page 315).

The centurion must have adopted the Hebrew way of thinking when it came to slaves. Additionally, it would appear that he knew the Hebrew Scriptures as evidenced by his comment, ‘But say the word, and my servant will be healed’. This is believed to be a direct quotation from Psalm 107:20, which reads, **“He sent his word, and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions.”** (Psalms 107:20).

- 7- **lieth** – The word “lieth” is translated from the Greek word “βάλλω” or “ballō”. It means to throw or let go of a thing without caring where it falls, to put in, insert or scatter. In the case of this chapter, it implies that the man was too ill to rise from his bed. Many theorize that the centurion pointed this out as justification as to why the servant couldn’t personally come to Jesus to be healed. Chrysostom wrote, **“Now some say, that by way of excuse he mentioned also the cause, why he had not brought him. ‘For neither was it possible,’ saith he, ‘paralyzed as he was, and tormented, and at his last gasp, to lift and convey him.’ For that he was at the point of expiring, Luke saith, he was even ready to die. But I say, this is a sign of his having great faith.”** (The Homilies of St. John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople on the Gospel of St. Matthew, Part II, Matthew 8-18, Translated from the works of John Chrysostom from the 4th Century C.E., Baxter Printer, Oxford, 1854, page 385).



- 8- **home** – The word “home” is translated from the Greek word “οἶκία” or “oikia”. It means a house, inhabited edifice, or dwelling. The Codex Sinaiticus translates the phrase “lieth at home sick of the palsy” as “lies in my house palsied”. (Codex Sinaiticus: The H.T. Anderson New Testament, Translated by Henry Tompkins Anderson, Matthew, Chapter 8, Verse 6, page 21).



It is supposed that the centurion was Roman, and therefore would have lived in a Roman style house. Such houses were opulent compared to the houses found in Galilee or Judaea. The Romans fancied heated baths, a garden, and spacious sitting areas. The Jewish homes were more practical, and did not commonly contain baths. A rich Jewish home may have a ceremonial private Mikvah, a ritual bath or font. They were never heated, and not used for pleasure. Jews who were rich and Hellenized embraced the Roman baths. We find them in Herodian palaces and homes of the ultra elite. The Jews saw the Romans as ritually unclean. Their homes were unclean because unclean people lived there, but also because they generally contained pagan idols, and the baths were generally taken naked with people present. Entering a Roman’s home would have posed significant problems as it relates to the oral law. Edersheim wrote, **“As the houses of the Gentiles were ‘unclean’ entrance into them, and still more familiar fellowship, would ‘defile’.** The Centurion must have known this; and the higher he placed Jesus on the pinnacle of Judaism, and more natural was it for him to communicate with Christ through the elders of the Jews, and not to expect the Personal Presence of the Master, even if then to him were attended with success. And here it is important (for the criticism of this history) to mark that, alike in the view of the centurion, and even in that of the Jewish elders who understood his commission, Jesus as yet occupied the purely Jewish standpoint.” (The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, Volume 1, Alfred Edersheim, pages 547-548).

The home of a centurion would not have necessarily been a large stately structure, but it would not have been a house of poverty either. The picture above is one of a smaller Roman villa.

- 9- **sick** – The word “sick” is translated from the Greek word “κακῶς” or “kakōs”. It means miserable, to be ill, improperly, wrongly or to speak ill of.

Sickness and illness was viewed quite differently than it is in our day. Most illnesses were viewed as divine punishment. Matthews wrote, **“The Jews of that day were largely lacking in a scientific knowledge of medicine. This fact may be accounted for in their belief that sickness was caused by either the sin of the sick person, or of his relations, and that it was sent as punishment for that sin.”** (Manners and Customs in the Bible, Victor H. Matthews, page 185). In fact, many diseases were even associated with specific sins. Leprosy, for instance, was associated with the sin of false witness. If a man were ill he would undoubtedly wonder what sin had brought about his illness. In similar fashion, if one were to witness another man’s illness it might be easy to pass judgment on his behavior. Perhaps this is the root of the symbolic meaning behind the term ‘sick’ or ‘ill’. Gaskill explained, **“As usual, the sick man can be viewed as a representation of the spiritually sick throughout the world.”** (Miracles of the New Testament: A Guide to the Symbolic Messages, Alonzo L. Gaskill, page 98).



Illness was also treated different in the ancient world. There were very few doctors, and they had little resemblance to the doctors of today. Most doctors in the ancient Jewish community at the time of Jesus, and prior, were Rabbis. The Rabbis were generally schooled on herbs and superstitious healing methods. A doctor without religious affiliation was rare in Israel. **“Ordinarily, the ancient Hebrews did not go to physicians when they were sick. There are surprisingly few references to physicians in Old Testament days. Job mentions the existence of such when he says, ‘Ye are all physicians of no value’ (Job 13:4). King Asa was criticized by the sacred writer who says of him, ‘He sought not to the Lord, but to the physicians’ (2Chron. 16:12). The prophet Jeremiah asked the question, ‘Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there?’ (Jer. 8:22). It is quite probable, that any physicians referred to in these days were foreigners, and not Jews of the land.”** (Manners and Customs in the Bible, Victor H. Matthews, page 183).

In this chapter, **“a centurion there had a servant whom he prized highly, but who was deathly ill.”** (The Gospel according to Luke I-IX: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, page 647). We can deduce that there was no known cure for his illness, and that the Jews would have considered the ill servant as deserving because of supposed sin.



- 10 - palsy** – The word “palsy” is translated from the Greek word “παρλυτικός” or “paralytikos”. It means paralytic, disabled, or weak of limb.

It is difficult to diagnose the actual affliction the man had based on the facts we have at our disposal. Paralysis is not necessarily a fatal condition, though in some cases it is a symptom of a greater illness or disease. It is most probable that the latter is true in the case of the centurion’s servant. This is based primarily on the fact that the centurion discloses that the man was “tormented” and “ready to die”. Neither the account in Matthew or Luke provide us clarity on the matter. If there was clarity to be offered, we would expect it from Luke who is known to be a physician. Gaskill wrote, **“While Matthew speaks of the man as having a painful form of palsy (or paralysis), Luke does not state the illness from which the man is suffering, only that he is near death because of the sickness. Luke (the physician) may have known best the man’s medical condition, though it matters little for the story.”** (Miracles of the New Testament: A Guide to the Symbolic Messages, Alonzo L. Gaskill, page 98).

- 11 - grievously** – The word “grievously” is translated from the Greek word “δενῶς” or “deinōs”. It means terribly or grievously. The Codex Sinaiticus translates the term “grievously” as “fearfully”. (Codex Sinaiticus: The H.T. Anderson New Testament, Translated by Henry Tompkins Anderson, Matthew, Chapter 8, Verse 6, page 21). The term is used to help us understand the significance of the Centurion’s servant’s state. It also has a symbolic overtone. **“The fact that he was ‘grievously tormented’ reminds us of what sin ultimately does to us, to our lives and our relationships with others.”** (Miracles of the New Testament: A Guide to the Symbolic Messages, Alonzo L. Gaskill, page 98).

- 12 - tormented** – The word “tormented” is translated from the Greek word “βασανίζω” or “basanizō”. It means to test (metals) by a touchstone, which is a black siliceous stone used to test the purity of gold or silver by the color of the streak produced on it by rubbing it with either metal. Symbolically, when the stone is subjected to a “conflict” with a pure metal it changes color; connotation torture; hence, the word “basanizō” is often used to mean torture. The Centurion’s servant was tormented by his illness. Symbolically, the consequences of sin torment our soul. Those willing to repent pass the eternal test and find themselves worthy to return home to God. Gaskill wrote, **“The servant of the Gentile centurion is immediately brought to the Lord for healing; this represented the people of the nations who were held in the bonds of worldly slavery, sick with deadly passions, to be cleansed by the Lord’s blessing. The Evangelist [Luke] did not err in saying that he was at the point of death, for he would have died if Christ would not have healed him. (Ambrose, circa AD 333-397 [Exposition on the Gospel of Luke, Ambrose, page 115]).”** (Miracles of the New Testament: A Guide to the Symbolic Messages, Alonzo L. Gaskill, page 99). Similarly, we are all tormented by sin, and cannot hope to be healed except by Jesus.



- 13 - I will come** – The phrase “will come” is translated from the Greek word “ἐρχομαι” or “erchomai”. It means to come; specifically to come from one place to another. **“The clause may also be translated as a question ‘Shall I come?’ Whichever way the translation is made, the essential point is that Jesus is prepared to have dealings with a Gentile, and by implication to enter his house. This was not forbidden by the Mosaic Law, but was certainly not regarded favorably by rabbinic legislation.”** (Matthew: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, W.F. Albright and C.S. Mann, page 93). The Oral Law, which was often regarded as an appendage to the Law of Moses, dictated that the home of a Gentile was ritually unclean, as well as anything made by the Gentile or coming from his home. In the case of the centurion, **“he was a Gentile and Jesus was a Jew... The Mishnah lays it down: ‘The dwelling-places of Gentiles are unclean.’ It is to that Jesus refers when he puts the question: ‘Am I to come and heal him?’”** (The Gospel of Matthew, Volume 1, The Daily Study Bible Series - Revised Edition, William Barclay, page 308).

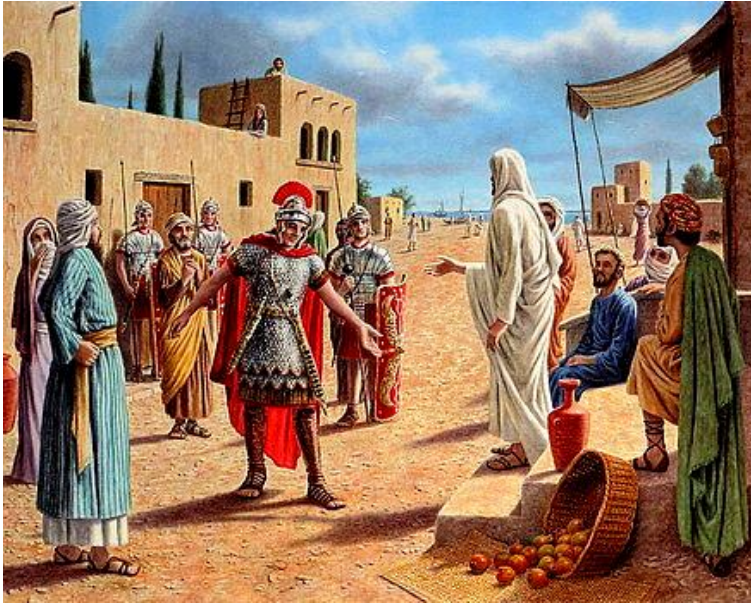
Jesus was not afraid of the Centurion’s unclean home. He was the author of Moses’ Law, and knew that the Oral Law was an uninspired work. His was a question regarding the centurion’s faith? Was the centurion beckoning Jesus to help? If so, Jesus was willing to come to the rescue. So it is with us. When we sin, and find ourselves wallowing in the consequences thereof, Jesus figuratively stands asking the question, “Am I to come and heal?” Jesus always allows our agency to determine the blessings of His healing power.

- 14 - heal him** – The word “heal” is translated from the Greek word “θεραπεύω” or “therapeuō”. It means to serve or do service. It also means to heal, cure, or restore to health. The Codex Sinaiticus translated the phrase “heal him” as “cure him”. (Codex Sinaiticus: The H.T. Anderson New Testament, Translated by Henry Tompkins Anderson, Matthew, Chapter 8, Verse 7, page 21).

The Book of Mormon teaches that Jesus is mighty to save. He has power to heal spiritually and physically. Once we accept His will and display faith in Him, we qualify for the gifts that He is ready to bestow. He is anxious to bless us. I like the description of this scene with the Centurion by Chrysostom. He wrote, **“He rather springs toward it, and offers not only to heal him, but also to come to the house.”** (The Homilies of St. John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople on the Gospel of St. Matthew, Part II, Matthew 8-18, Translated from the works of John Chrysostom from the 4<sup>th</sup> Century C.E., Baxter Printer, Oxford, 1854, page 386). This is the eagerness that Jesus has to bless our lives. Unfortunately, it is usually us that hinder Him from bestowing blessings.



- 15 - worthy** – The word “worthy” is translated from the Greek word “ἱκανός” or “hikanos”. It means sufficient, many, enough, meet, or fit. **“It should be read: ‘Trouble not Thyself, for I am not fit (Leviticly speaking) that Thou shouldest enter under my roof;’ Leviticly, or Judaistically speaking, my house is not a fit place for Thy entrance; ‘wherefore neither did I judge myself worthy (spiritually, morally, religiously) to come unto Thee’.”** (The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, Volume 1, Alfred Edersheim, page 548).



Worthiness, as defined by the Jews at the time of Jesus, is much different from the worthiness required by heaven. The Jews spent countless hours debating the definition of ritual purity or cleanliness (worthiness). A good portion of the Oral Law is devoted to this matter. Unfortunately, without the guidance of living prophets and the Holy Ghost, they came up with a set of guidelines that missed the mark. Here are some examples from the Mishnah (the Oral Law) on ritual worthiness;

**“These blemishes, whether permanent or transient, disqualify man [from serving in the Temple].**

- 7:1 A (1) the one whose head is wedge shaped,
- 7:1 C Humpbacks-
- 7:2 A The baldheaded man is invalid.
- 7:3 A The man who is flat-nosed is invalid.
- 7:4 A (1) If his eyes are as large as those of a calf.
- 7:5 A (1) If his upper lip stuck out over his lower.
- 7:6 C (3) and one who is bowlegged.”

(The Mishnah: A New Translation, Jacob Neusner, The Fifth Division: Holy Things, Bekhorot, pages 800-803).

The Jews had somehow decided that ritual worthiness was based on the outward factors associated with a man. It had to do with ones physical appearance, environment, and pedigree. They lost sight of the spiritual nature of things. The Roman Centurion in this story apparently knew enough about the Jewish law of the day so as to acknowledge his own unworthiness in association with the Oral Law. Unbeknownst to him, **“by calling himself unworthy, he showed himself worthy for Christ to come not [simply] into his house, but into his heart. Christ’s power can only come into our lives when we allow Him fully into our hearts. Outward religiosity does not save, only inner conversion.”** (Miracles of the New Testament: A Guide to the Symbolic Messages, Alonzo L. Gaskill, pages 100-101). This was lost to the Jews of the time, and shows the level of their apostasy from the truth.

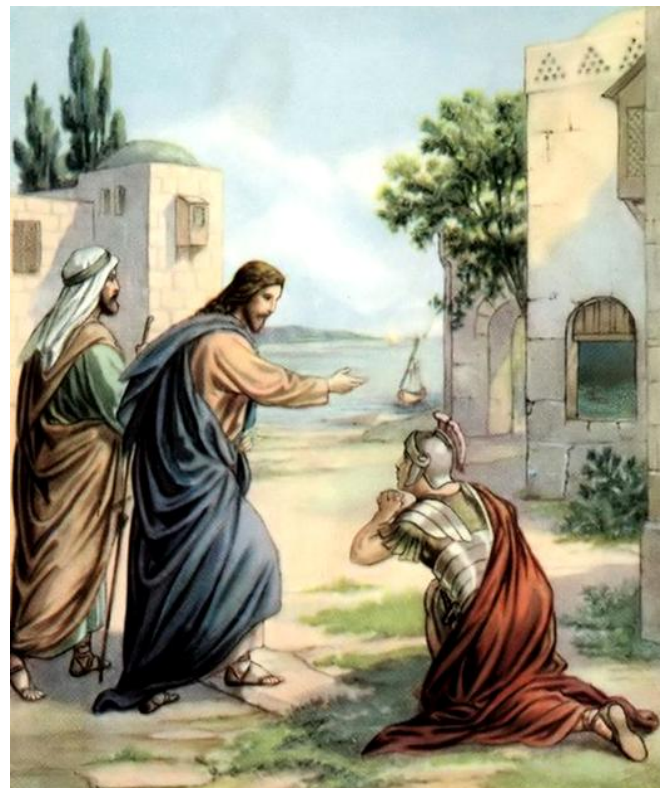
Even converts to Judaism were required to adhere to the strict outward ordinances, while there was an apparent absences of requirements to the spiritual. The question has been raised as to the status of the centurion in this chapter. Had he fully converted to Judaism? He may have been a man who had developed admiration and understanding, but not commitment. He may have been a proselyte; a non-Jew who had converted, or he may have been a believer who was not committed enough to endure the physical requirements of conversion. Jeremiah wrote, **“The proselytes formed another group of Israelites with a slight blemish, and they were much more numerous than the *haldlim*. We are concerned here with full proselytes, the ‘proselytes of righteousness’ (gerim = geresedeq), i.e. Gentiles converted to Judaism who had been circumcised, baptized and had offered sacrifice. They must be clearly distinguished from the ‘God-fearers’ who simply confessed faith in one God and observed part of the ceremonial laws, without total commitment to Judaism. Legally they were still regarded as Gentiles.”** (Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus: An investigation into Economic and Social Conditions during the New Testament period, Joachim Jeremias, pages 320). Since Jesus separated the Centurion from the Jews by saying, **“I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel”**, many suppose that this is an indication that the Centurion was not a Jew or a convert thereof. It makes him a Gentile, albeit it seems probable from his implied attitude that he was a “God-fearer”.

There is another school of thought that believes the centurion was a fully converted Jew and Jesus’ statement was made in regards to ancestry. Even though one converted to Judaism, the lineage of Abraham was important to the Jews. They believed that those who were direct descendants of Abraham were entitled to blessings that all others would be denied. The Centurion may have converted, and thus could be called a Jew, but would always be considered a non-Israelite. It is unlikely that the Centurion was a full convert. Even so, Chrysostom wrote, **“What then saith Luke? He sent elders of the Jews unto Him entreating Him to come. But Matthew saith, that he approached himself, and said, I am not worthy. And some indeed say, the one is not the same as the other, though they have many points of resemblance. Thus, of the one it is said, that he both hath builded our synagogue, and loveth our nation; but concerning this other Jesus Himself saith, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. And touching the former, He did not say, ‘many shall come from the east;’ whence it is likely that he was a Jew.”** (The Homilies of St. John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople on the Gospel of St. Matthew, Part II, Matthew 8-18, Translated from the works of John Chrysostom from the 4th Century C.E., Baxter Printer, Oxford, 1854, page 389).

- 16 - under my roof** – The word “roof” is translated from the Greek word “στέγη” or “stegē”. It means the roof of a house. The roof is a symbol for **“shelter; protection”** (An Illustrated Encyclopedia of Traditional Symbols, J.C. Cooper, page 140). A house can be used to symbolize one’s family, extended family, posterity, and origins. One’s house, no matter how humble, is often used to represent the good and bad things about the family that resides there.

Jewish homes at the time of Jesus were simple and practical. They typically combined all the elements of living. Livestock and animals were often stabled in part of the home. The homes were made for work and survival, and seldom equipped with space for leisure or luxury. Such homes were reserved for the very rich.

Roman homes at the time of Jesus were typically built with beauty and pleasure in mind. Even simple Roman homes adhered to this standard. Many Roman homes were equipped





with baths. Such baths had a floor supported by pillars whereby the under space could be filled with steam. The homes were also equipped with small gardens and large sitting areas.

While we do not know what the Centurion's house may have looked like, we can make some assumptions. He had servants; therefore we can assume that he had some financial means. He is said to have built a synagogue for the Jews, indicating that his financial means may have been substantial. Additionally, having been a centurion, or currently enlisted as a Centurion, may imply a Roman heritage. This may imply that he lived in a Roman house, with all of the amenities and cultural nuances of a typical Roman home. Below are two examples of a Roman home;





Additionally, here is a rendition of a sitting room in a Roman home;



RECONSTRUCTION OF A ROMAN DIONYSOS VILLA IN THE JEWISH TOWN OF SEPPHORIS

We do not know the location of the Centurion's home. I have found multiple claims on the internet that there was a small military garrison just east of Capernaum under the



command of a Roman Centurion, who would have been under the command of Herod Antipas. They then claim that a Roman bath has been found just east of Capernaum. When I was in Capernaum, in the year 2,000, more specifically Tel Hum or the ruins of ancient Capernaum, I found no evidence of an ancient bath there much more the remains of a Roman garrison. I don't doubt that the Roman Centurion had a home relatively near to Capernaum. I don't believe that it was in Capernaum or in the immediate vicinity. None of the ruins were large enough for a garrison, and none of the ruins show evidence of a Roman bath; which would have been very unique in its construction and therefore would have left distinct ruins. An example of the ruins of a Roman bath can be seen to the left.

A Roman house was ritually unclean because it housed Gentiles. It was also unclean because of the activities typically conducted there. The baths were done communally, and typically naked. This was an abomination to the Jews, and an unclean act which defiled the entire house. Therefore, "entrance into the house of a Gentile would be a source of defilement for a Jew."

(The Gospel according to Luke I-IX: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, page 652).

- 17 - **Speak the word only** – The word "only" is translated from the Greek word "μόνον" or "monon". It means only, alone, or but.

So great was the faith of the Centurion in Jesus' ability to heal that he suggested to Jesus that He only need speak the words and his servant would be healed. **"The centurion's response, however, exhibits a depth of humility and faith that moves Jesus."** (The Life and Teachings of Jesus Christ: From the Transfiguration through the Triumphal Entry, Volume 2, Edited by Richard Neitzel Holzapfel and Thomas A. Wayment, pages 306-307).

The Centurion understood the power of command. His soldier obeyed his word without hesitation. Such was the discipline of a Roman soldier. Using this perspective, the Centurion reasoned that if he can command the most basic foot soldier to carry out tasks, why would Jesus (the Son of God) not be able to command miracles in the same fashion. Edersheim explains, **"Again, the Centurion in the fullest sense believes in the power of Jesus to heal, in the same manner as he knows his own commands as an officer would be implicitly obeyed; for, surely, no thoughtful reader would seriously entertain the suggestion, that the military language of the Centurion only meant, that he**





regarded disease as caused by evil demons or noxious powers who obey Jesus, as soldiers or servants do their officer or master.” (The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, Volume 1, Alfred Edersheim, pages 548-549).

- 18 - **shall be healed** – The word “healed” is translated from the Greek word “ἰάομαι” or “iaomai”. It means to cure, heal, or to make whole. Notice the difference in translation in footnote #14. The Codex Sinaiticus translated the word “healed” as “restored to health”. (Codex Sinaiticus: The H.T. Anderson New Testament, Translated by Henry Tompkins Anderson, Matthew, Chapter 8, Verse 6, page 21).



Generally speaking, our society equates physical healing with medication. Some illnesses can be cured without medication, such as the common cold, however, even those illnesses are cured more effectively with the proper medications. Other illnesses can only be cured with medication. The advent of antibiotics took some life threatening illness and made them merely an inconvenience. Medication is often the primary factor in physical healing of illnesses.

That being said, there are spiritual illnesses and even physical illnesses that cannot be treated with medication. In fact, modern men have yet to find a cure for these types of ailments. More often than not, these ailments force us to consider other options. The spiritually minded often turn to God. Those that have received the Holy Ghost, have received revelation of eternal truths. So much so that they have faith in the power of heaven. They have developed a testimony. “Elder David A. Bednar said, ‘A testimony is personal knowledge of spiritual truth.’” (Miracles of the New Testament: A Guide to the Symbolic Messages, Alonzo L. Gaskill, page 101). Like medication for physical ailments, faith is a necessary and required ingredient for spiritual healing and physical miracles. One cannot draw upon the powers of heaven in disbelief.

The power of heaven is meter out upon men according to their spiritual capacity, or developed faith. This increases as we act upon the testifying witnesses of the Holy Ghost. Like a funnel, the spirit of the Lord is restricted according to the faith we possess. If one wants to increase the amount of liquid man can pass through a funnel, one must widen the restrictive hole at the bottom of the funnel. In similar fashion, if we wish to receive more spiritual direction and strength we must open the restrictive nature of the human mind. We do this by acting on the spiritual substance

we have already received. Conversely, a funnel can be restricted when the bottom opening gets gummed up with the fluid it is trying to pass through it. We can also restrict the amount of spiritual substance we are receiving by refusing to act on that which we have already been given, or worse yet acting contrary to it. Acting on faith is an indication that we are converted to the process of spiritual growth and development. “Elder David A. Bednar said, ‘Knowing that the gospel is true is the essence of a testimony. Consistently being true to the gospel is the essence of conversion.’” (Miracles of the New Testament: A Guide to the Symbolic Messages, Alonzo L. Gaskill, page 101).

The centurion in this chapter had faith in Jesus’ ability to heal. He must have, by very definition, received a confirmation of the spirit. Else how could he have known? He then acted on that spirit by purposefully approaching the Savior and asking Him to perform a miracle. His servant, who we assume to be ill beyond healing, was to be healed by the power of the priesthood.

- 19 - **under authority** – The word “authority” is translated from the Greek word “ἐξουσία” or “exousia”. It means power of choice, the liberty to do as one please. It also means to the Power of influence and right of privilege. Finally, it can mean the power of rule or government. Chrysostom writes, “Literally, ‘for, in fact, I too am a human being subjected to authority, having soldiers under me.’ Luke has added to the ‘Q’ material the ptc. Tassomenos, ‘subjected,’ which clearly implies the centurion’s subordination to superior officers and then his delegated authority over others. Matt. 8:9 reads, ‘I am one under authority, having soldiers under me.’ But variants in the Sinaitic and Curetonian Syriac version of Matt 8:9 mention only the centurion’s possession of authority: ‘for I also am a man having authority and soldiers under my hand.’” (The Gospel according to Luke I-IX: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, page 652).

One thing a Roman soldier understood was authority. His entire existence centered around a command structure that only worked because authority had been properly granted, and with that authority came power to act. Soldiers were trained to obey and honor authority. Such obedience was necessary to preserve life and assure victory. Undisciplined troops, with disregard for authority, were disastrous in combat; therefore, those that failed to respond to authority could be legally executed.

The Centurion understood authority from both sides. He commanded troops through the authority granted him by the Roman Empire. Likewise, Centurions typically reported to a senior Centurion who in turn reported to a “Tribuni angusticlavii” or “Narrow Band Tribune”. As the Centurion expected obedience and honor among his men, so did his commanding officer from the Centurion. Using this perspective, the Centurion tries to convey the idea of respect for Jesus’ authority and the fact that He would only act on the will of His Father, “Wherefore, he said likewise, for I also am a man set under authority; that is, Thou art God, and I am; I under authority, but thou not under authority. If I therefore, being a man, and under authority, can do so much; for more He, both as God, and as not under authority.” (The Homilies of St. John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople on the Gospel of St. Matthew, Part II, Matthew 8-18, Translated from the works of John Chrysostom from the 4th Century C.E., Baxter Printer, Oxford, 1854, page392).

The Centurion had power and authority, but it was limited and narrow in scope. He had no power or authority that could command the healing of his servant. This is where Jesus greatly differed from the centurion. “His authority was not only to use the voice and speak the words of Him whose servant he was, but to use the power given him to heal the sick and raise the dead. His miracles will stand as an attesting seal, written in the souls of men, to the words the he spake.” (The Mortal Messiah: Volume 2, Collector’s Edition, Bruce R. McConkie, page 122).

- 20 - **soldiers under me** – The word “soldiers” is translated from the Greek word “στρατιώτης” or “stratiōtēs”. It means a common soldier.

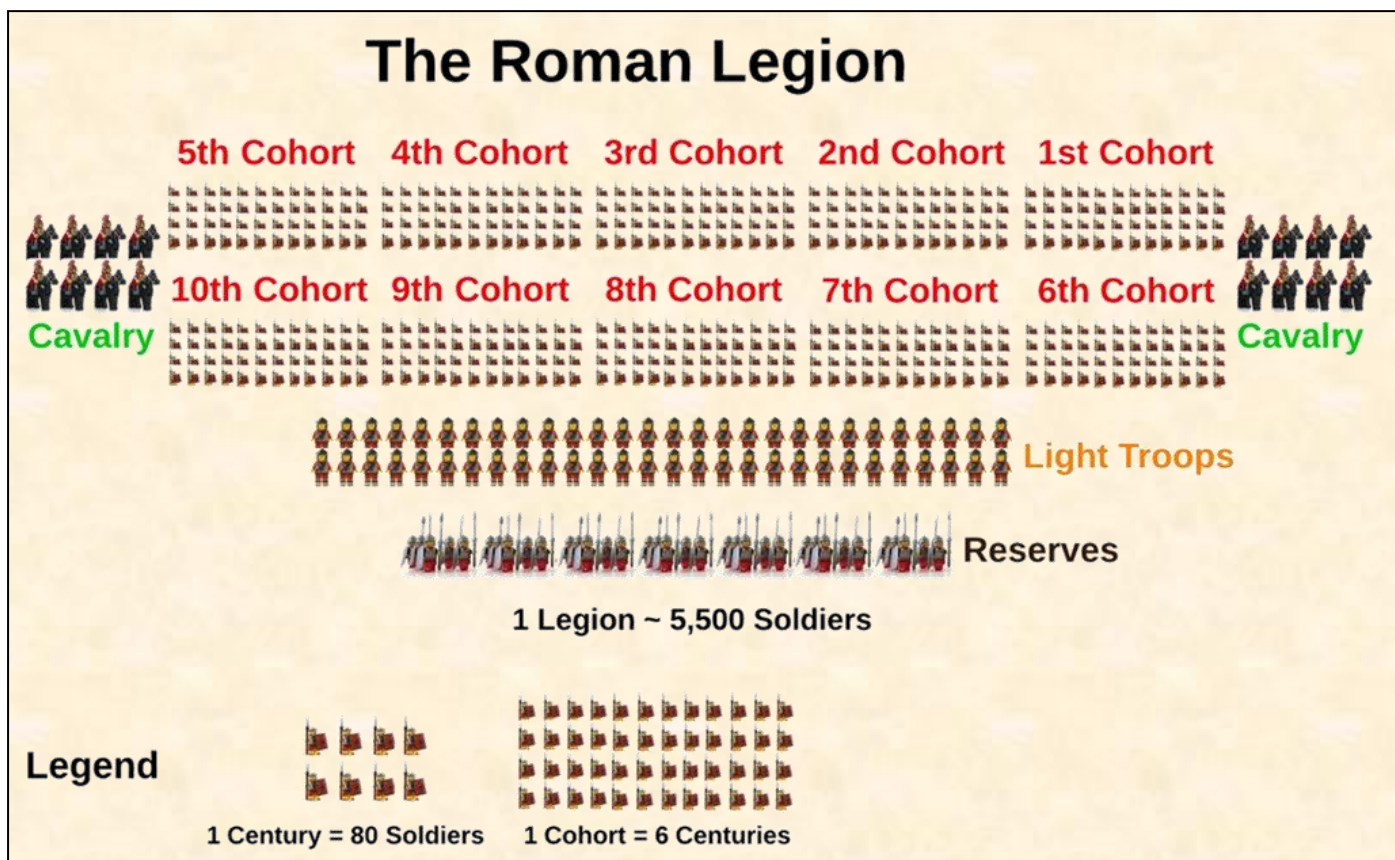
The soldiers “under” me, conveys the idea that the centurion had front line soldiers assigned to him. These soldiers were obligated to follow his orders, and respond to his words. They were literally under his command. “The centurion’s reasoning – profound in logic, perfect in showing forth faith – was to this effect: If I, a mere officer in the Roman army, must obey my superiors, and also have power myself to send others forth at my command, then surely the Lord of all needs speak and his will shall be done.” (The Doctrinal New Testament Commentary, Volume 1: The Gospels, Bruce R. McConkie, page 258).

This is probably a good spot to review the structure of the Roman Army. The Army was based on large fighting units called “Legions”. A Legion was about 6,000 men, though in actuality probably number around 5,500. The number 6,000 would represent a Legion at full capacity, which was not the actuality of the day. The Legion was divided into “Cohorts”. Each cohort contained 6 Centuries. At capacity, a Century was 100 men, just as the name indicates. The centuries were typically staffed with about 80 men. In addition to the standard Legion complement, were attachments of auxiliary and support troops. There were also cavalry, and a compliant of reserve troops. A Legion was designed





to be self sufficient. They had everything from cooks to blacksmiths in the auxiliary troops. They traveled with engineers, carpenters, and historians. They were designed to be able to overcome almost any obstacle.



The Centurions were the backbone of the Legion. Consequently, their mindset was to conquer all obstacles at all costs. They were doers. They solved problems. It must have been frustrating and humbling for the Centurion of this chapter that his servant was ill and he was helpless to solve the problem.



ROMAN CENTURIONS      STAND ROMAN FOOT SOLDIER

## THE GEAR OF A ROMAN SOLDIER

1. Culrass - Chest and Shoulder Armor (Metal Jackal)
2. Galea - Helmet
3. Purse
4. Canteen
5. Pick Axe
6. Army Shovel
7. Pilum – Javelin
8. Wooden Tunic
9. Scutum - Embossed Shield
10. Cingulum – Groin Protection
11. Caligae – Army Sandals
12. Tunic
13. Gladius Hispaniensi - Sword
14. Scarf
15. Dagger (on hip behind shield)



**21 - Go, and he goeth** – The word “go” is translated from the Greek word “πορεύω” or “poreuō”. It means to lead over, carry over, or transfer. The Roman Soldier was ordered when to march, and in which direction. He was afforded no input in the matter. The subject was not open for discussion. He simply marched. Josephus wrote, “**When they have thus secured themselves, they live together by companies, with quietness and decency, as are all their other affairs managed with good order and security. Each company hath also their wood, and their corn, and their water brought them, when they stand in need of them; for they neither sup nor dine as they please themselves singly, but all together. Their times also for sleeping, and watching, and rising are notified beforehand by the sound of trumpets, nor is any thing done without such a signal; and in the morning the soldiery go every one to their centurions, and these centurions to their tribunes, to salute them; with whom all the superior officers go to the general of the whole army, who then gives them of course the watchword and other orders, to be by them cared to all that are under their command; which is also observed when they go to fight, and thereby they turn themselves about on the sudden, when there is occasion for making sallies, as they come back when they are recalled in crowds also.**” (The Wars of the Jews or The History of the Destruction of Jerusalem, Book 3, Flavius Josephus, Chapter 5, Verse 3, Page 150).

**22 - Come, and he cometh** – The word “Come” is translated from the Greek word “ἐρχομαι” or “erchomai”. It means to come from one place to another. Roman soldier reported for duty when ordered. It mattered not what the time of day was, or what he was otherwise occupied with. Once beckoned by his commanding officer he sprang to attention.

**23 - Do this, and he doeth** – The word “Do” is translated from the Greek word “ποιέω” or “poieō”. It means to make, prepare, produce, construct, to form or to render something. One of the cardinal rules of soldiery is that one follows the orders given immediately and without question. Delays in response may cause death to the soldier or his fellow soldiers. Soldiers are trained to do without question, even if the order may seem outlandish.

**24 - marvelled** – The word “marvelled” is translated from the Greek word “θαυμάζω” or “thaumazō”. It means to wonder, wonder at or marvel. It can also mean to be had in admiration. The Codex Sinaiticus translated the phrase “he marvelled” as “Jesus was filled with admiration” (Codex Sinaiticus: The H.T. Anderson New Testament, Translated by Henry Tompkins Anderson, Matthew, Chapter 8, Verse 10, page 21).

Most Biblical scholars take this passage at face value. They believe that Jesus was full of wonder







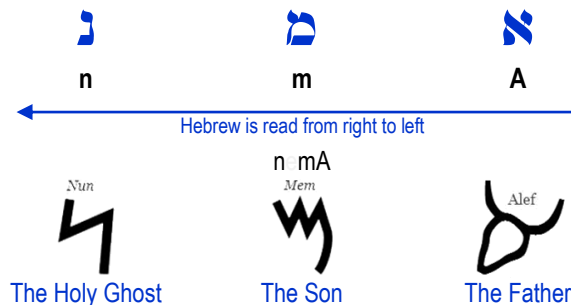
over the Centurions faithful response. Chrysostom wrote, “Wherefore at the centurion He both marvels, and prefers him to all the people, and honors with the gift of the kingdom, and provokes the rest to the real zeal.” (The Homilies of St. John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople on the Gospel of St. Matthew, Part II, Matthew 8-18, Translated from the works of John Chrysostom from the 4th Century C.E., Baxter Printer, Oxford, 1854, page 388).

The Savior of Mankind is Deity and surely had insight and understanding beyond our comprehension even while in the flesh. It is hard to imagine that Jesus would marvel or be surprised. His perfection qualified Him for a constant companionship of the Holy Ghost, who is the great revealer. Jesus received revelation on a continual basis. It would be difficult to surprise Him or cause Him to marvel. That is why the inspired translation reads, “And when they that followed him, heard this, they marveled. And when Jesus ...” (Joseph Smith Inspired Translation of Matthew 8:9). The new translation indicates that it was the witnesses to the centurion’s behavior that marveled.

It may also be that Jesus wasn’t surprised, but rather impressed with the faith of the Centurion. Talmage wrote, “Both Matthew and Luke tell us that Jesus marveled at the faith shown by the centurion, who begged that his beloved servant be healed (Matt. 8:10; Luke 7:9). Some have queried how Christ, whom they consider to have been omniscient during His life in the flesh, could have marveled at anything. The meaning of the passage is evident in the sense that when the fact of the centurion’s faith was brought to His attention, He pondered over it, and contemplated it, probably as a refreshing contrast to the absence of faith He so generally encountered. In similar way, though with sorrow in place of joy, He is said to have marveled at the peoples’ unbelief (Mark 6:6).” (Jesus the Christ, James E. Talmage, page 195).

- 25 - Verily** – The word “verily” is translated from the Greek word “ἀμὴν” or “amēn”. It means firm. It also means verily or amen. Used at the beginning of a discourse, it is typically translated as surely, truly, or of a truth. Used at the end of a discourse it is used to mean so it is, so be it, or may it be fulfilled. It was a custom, which passed over from the synagogues to the Christian assemblies, that when he who had read or discoursed had offered up a solemn prayer to God, the others responded with Amen, and thus made the substance of what was uttered their own. Fitzmyer explained it means “literally, ‘I say to you.’ Luke has omitted the introductory amen.” (The Gospel according to Luke I-IX: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, page 653).

The term “amen” is a word associated with covenant making and oath taking. When used at the beginning of a thought, it indicates that what follows is not only serious, but spiritually contractual in nature. When used at the end of the thought, it seals the covenant. The word “amen”, in Paleo Hebrew, is significant. It is as follows;



The Paleo Hebrew would indicate that the word “amen” seals or introduces a covenant in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

- 26 - I have not found** – The word “found” is translated from the Greek word “εὐρίσκω” or “heuriskō”. It means to come upon, hit upon or to meet with. It can also mean to find by enquiry, thought, examination, scrutiny, observation, to find out by practice and experience.

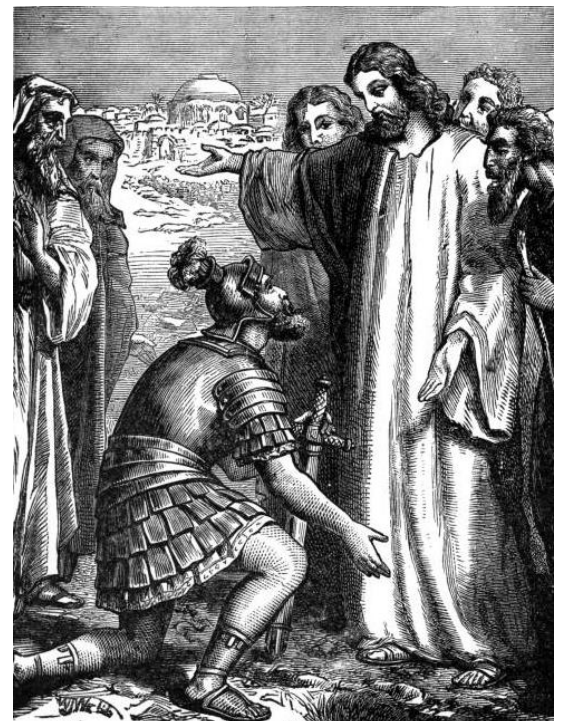
Jesus, who at this point has ministered throughout Galilee, Judaea, and the adjacent Jewish towns and provinces, has a firsthand knowledge of the faith and dedication of the people who considered themselves of the covenant. He has found individuals of faith, among whom He healed from their infirmities. He also found the symptoms of an apostate society dwindling in disbelief. Even among the faithful Jews that He came across, none exhibited the faith of the Centurion of this chapter.

Jesus makes it a point to announce that the “Gentile” Centurion, a Roman, had more faith than the “covenant” Jews. **“Such a statement would have caused some consternation among the members of the crowd. It was a ringing indictment against the covenant people. In Matthew’s Gospel, this is the first statement by Jesus of this kind, but it is not the first time He has praised Gentiles above Israel.”** (The Life and Teachings of Jesus Christ: From the Transfiguration through the Triumphal Entry, Volume 2, Edited by Richard Neitzel Holzapfel and Thomas A. Wayment, , page 307).

- 27 - so great faith** – The word “faith” is translated from the Greek word “πίστις” or “pistis”. It means faith. **“For Jesus, the striking thing was the man’s faith, the word pistis being used here as it is in most parts of the NT as meaning trust and confidence in the power of God.”** (Matthew: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, W.F. Albright and C.S. Mann, page 93).

I have a friend who took his son to the park. He is a great father, and works hard at that sacred calling. His son has responded to his efforts with extreme trust and faith. The son climbed high up on the playground equipment, and after climbing over the railing, he yelled to his father below, “catch me Dad”, as he flung himself from the top. His faithful father caught him as anticipated. My friend’s son had no fear or hesitation. He had absolute confidence in his father. This is the kind of faith that we need to develop in Jesus and His Father.

The Centurion had ‘great’ faith in Jesus. He knew that Jesus could heal his servant. There was no doubt in Jesus’ ability. Israel on the other hand, lacked faith. Their promised Messiah stood before them and they look for fault. They questioned his power and his abilities. **“Jesus’ acknowledgement of the**



Gentile centurion's faith contains a criticism of Israel's faith in him. It is the 'pronouncement' addressed to the reader, challenging him/her to a similar response of faith. The centurion thus becomes in Luke a symbol of Gentile belief over against the general reaction of Israel. The words do not mean that Jesus has, in fact, found such faith elsewhere outside of Israel, but only that he was not prepared to admit existence in a Gentile." (The Gospel according to Luke I-IX: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, page 653).

- 28 - **not in Israel** – The word "Israel" is translated from the Greek word "Ἰσραήλ" or "Israēl". Translated literally, it means "he shall be a prince of Elohim or God". Israel symbolizes **"the covenanted people, holiness, redemption"** (Encyclopedia of Traditional Jewish Symbols, Ellen Frankel and Betsy Platkin Deutsch, page 79).

The Lord clearly taught, **"For of him unto whom much is given much is required; and he who sins against the greater light shall receive the greater condemnation."** (Doctrine and Covenants 82:3). Israel, as a people, had been given the knowledge, covenants, and blessings associated with heaven. As they honored these sacred gifts, they were promised to be heirs to all that our Father in Heaven has. Full of pride, they had come to believe that they were entitled to their inheritance regardless of their faithfulness, and that the Gentiles were eternally damned. Albright wrote, **"Loyal trust is demanded of the rightful heir (Israel), whereas when the alienated (the Gentiles) demonstrate that faith, that trust, they are given equal place in the kingdom."** (Matthew: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, W.F. Albright and C.S. Mann, page 93).

The promises of heaven are contingent upon our obedience to the covenants we have made and the knowledge we have obtained. The Lord taught, **"I, the Lord, am bound when ye do what I say; but when ye do not what I say, ye have no promise."** (Doctrine and Covenants 82:10). Therefore, a gentile, even a Roman Centurion, can receive the blessings of heaven so long as he acts upon the light and knowledge afforded him under heaven. This doctrine is true for all men.

- 29 - **many shall come** – The phrase "shall come" is translated from the Greek word "ἔλκω" or "hēkō". It means to have come, have arrived, or be present.

Jesus is alluding to the fact that the gospel will be spread to all the ends of the earth. The Gentiles will be flooded with gospel light. The people who were consider "evil" by the Jews were to be given the precious gifts of heaven. **"Elder Bruce R. McConkie wrote, 'Many – not a few; Gentile hosts; members of the hated, alien nations – many would find glory in heaven with the ancient patriarchs, while the literal seed,... Jews who should have been the Children of the Kingdom, would be cast out.'"** (The Life and Teachings of Jesus Christ: From the Transfiguration through the Triumphal Entry, Volume 2, Edited by Richard Neitzel Holzapfel and Thomas A. Wayment, , pages 307-308).

Many prophets have foretold of the time when the gospel would go forth to the whole earth. Daniel interpreted King Nebuchadnezzar's dream of a rock being cut, without hands, out of the mountain and rolling forward until it defeated all the kingdoms of the earth. This dream symbolically shows the gospel going into every nations, people, and tongue. The Lord taught, **"And even so I have sent mine everlasting covenant into the world, to be a light to the world, and to be a standard for my people, and for the Gentiles to seek to it, and to be a messenger before my face to prepare the way before me."** (Doctrine and Covenants 45:9). The wise men of the world shall fall before the gospel. It shall envelop the entire earth. **"Yea, the kings of the Gentiles shall be nursing fathers unto them, and their queens shall become nursing mothers; wherefore, the promises of the Lord are great unto the Gentiles, for he hath spoken it, and who can dispute? But behold, this land, said God, shall be a land of thine inheritance, and the Gentiles shall be blessed upon the land."** (2<sup>nd</sup> Nephi 10:9-10).

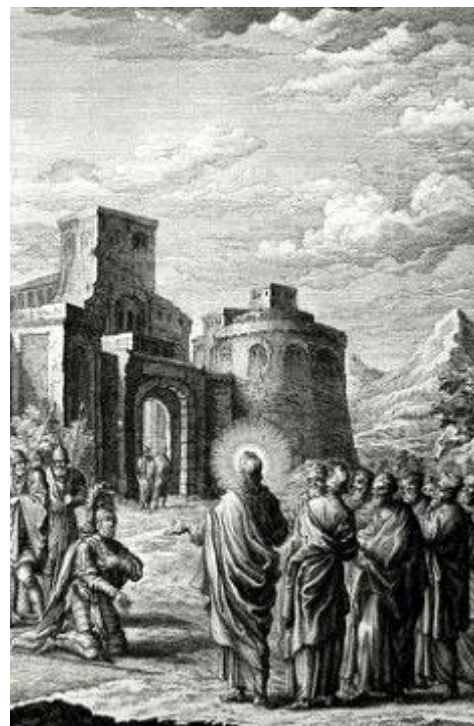
- 30 - **east** – The word "east" is translated from the Greek word "ἀνατολή" or "anatolē". It means a rising either of the sun or stars. It is often used to refer to the east, as in the direction of the rising sun. The east symbolizes **"the rising sun; dawn; spring; hope; childhood; dawning life; and youth."** (An Illustrated Encyclopedia of Traditional Symbols, J.C. Cooper, page 39). One author notes that the east can represent **"Jewish converts in the Holy Land."** (The Four Gospels - Verse by verse, D. Kelly Ogden and Andrew C. Skinner, page 229).

The gospel message, like the sun, dispels darkness. **"Before the invention of clocks and electricity, the sun ruled people's lives. They rose and slept to its daily rhythms, planted and harvested by its seasons."** It symbolizes a new **"beginning, exile, God, holiness, hope prayer, salvation, and status."** (Encyclopedia of Traditional Jewish Symbols, Ellen Frankel and Betsy Platkin Deutsch, page 44). The east symbolizes righteousness and the light of the gospel. The gospel is symbolized by the east and the sun. The east is the direction we look to for the return of Jesus.

- 31 - **west** – The word "west" is translated from the Greek word "δυσμή" or "dysmē". It means the setting of the sun, the region of the sunset or the west. The west symbolizes **"Autumn; the dying sun; middle age. It is also equated with sorrow."** (An Illustrated Encyclopedia of Traditional Symbols, J.C. Cooper, page 190). As the east may symbolize the righteous and those with the gospel, the west symbolizes those who do not have the gospel. It represents the sinners, **"even from among the Romans and other Gentiles."** (The Four Gospels - Verse by verse, D. Kelly Ogden and Andrew C. Skinner, page 229).

The message from Jesus in this chapter, in regards to this passage, is that the gospel shall go forth to the righteous and wicked alike. All will have opportunity to hear the good news of Jesus and change their lives accordingly.

- 32 - **shall sit down** – The phrase "shall sit down" is translated from the Greek word "ἀνακλίνω" or "anaklinō". It means to lean against, lean upon or to make a bid to recline. The Codex Sinaiticus translates the phrase "shall sit down" as "shall recline at tables". (Codex Sinaiticus: The H.T. Anderson New Testament, Translated by Henry Tompkins Anderson, Matthew, Chapter 8, Verse 11, page 22). **"I.E., 'will take their place at table with.' The usual practice at this time was to recline at table, though sitting at table also had an honorable and lengthy**







**history. The Messianic Banquet was a common Jewish theme.”** (Matthew: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, W.F. Albright and C.S. Mann, page 93). It is this Banquet being referenced by Jesus.

The Jewish culture celebrated significant events with large meals. These meals often included special foods and dishes that were not common to everyday meals. The scriptures often reference celebrations that include the killing of the “fatted calf”. This was not an ordinary event. Such celebrations were most often associated with ritual sacrifice, where a portion of the offering was given to God and the balance was eaten by the priests and the people making the offering. It should be remembered that after Adam left the Garden of Eden, he offered sacrifice. Likewise, Noah offered sacrifice after the Lord blessed his family to survive the flood. The scriptures read, **“And Noah builded an altar unto the Lord; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar.”** (Genesis 8:20). After Abraham entered into a covenant with the Lord, and was promised incredible blessings, **“he built there an altar unto the Lord.”** (Genesis 13:18). Such sacrifices occur repeatedly throughout the Old Testament. The sacrifices were seen as a way of expressing thanks to God, and celebrating His goodness.

One of the common celebrations among the Jews was a wedding. The Savior often uses the wedding feast as a symbolic representation for the sacred covenants of the gospel and our relationship with Him. Like other Jewish Feasts, sacrifice was involved. In the case of a wedding, meat and wine were required elements to the feast. Jesus equates the marriage ceremony to the covenants we enter into, binding us to Jesus like a bride to the groom. Only those who have accepted the invitation to the feast were allowed to attend. We understand that the invitation represents those that have been moved by the Spirit of the Lord. Their acceptance represents the individual's willingness to repent and follow the promptings of the spirit. The spirit will always guide us to the ordinances and covenants of the gospel. Therefore, we understand that those allowed to attend the feast were

covenant makers and keepers. This is just one example of Jewish feasts, all of which have symbolic ties to the blessings of heaven being associated with obedience to the Master, or Lord of the Feast.

The ancient temple was the center of any major Jewish feast. When a physical temple was available, sacrifices were offered at the temple and then enjoyed at home or a private gathering. When there was not a temple structure, the Lord required that mountains or high places to be used as a temple. In the “holy place” of the temple, the Lord specified that it contain a table called the table of showbread. The table contained loaves of bread and a container of wine. It represented the body and blood of the Messiah. Jesus took these same symbols and introduced a “new” covenant that replaced the Law of Sacrifice after He offered the great and final sacrifice. The new covenant is the ordinance of the sacrament. The table represents the Lord's table, while the bread and wine (water) represent the Atonement of Jesus. The sacrament is the feast of the Lord.

All of these elements are related, or contribute to the Jewish belief that the Messiah would come to earth and offer a great feast known widely among the Jews as the Messianic Banquet. The Jews believed the Messianic Banquet was reserved only for the children of Abraham. In their opinion, no Gentile would ever be allowed to sit at the table of the Lord. Barclay wrote, **“The Jews looked forward with all their hearts to this Messianic banquet; but it never for a moment crossed their minds that any Gentile would ever sit down at it. By that time the Gentiles would have been destroyed. ‘The nation and kingdom that will not serve you shall perish; those nations shall the utterly laid waste’ (Isaiah 60:12). Yet here is Jesus saying that many shall come from the east and from the west, and sit down at table at that banquet.”** (The Gospel of Matthew, Volume 1, The Daily Study Bible Series - Revised Edition, William Barclay, page 309).



The history of a Messianic Banquet is found in Old Testament writings. The Prophet Isaiah sets the foundation of our modern understanding of a Messianic Banquet when he wrote,

**“And in this *mountain* shall the Lord of hosts make unto *all people* a *feast of fat things*, a *feast of wines* on the *lees*, of fat things full of *marrow*, of wines on the lees *well refined*. And he will destroy in this mountain the *face of the covering cast over all people*, and the veil that is spread over all nations. *He will swallow up death* in victory; and the Lord God will *wipe away tears* from off all faces; and the *rebuke of his people shall he take away* from off all the earth: for the Lord hath spoken it.”** (Isaiah 25:6-8).

From Isaiah we learn key elements associated with the Messianic Banquet. They can be summarized as follows;

1. It is associated with the Temple, symbolically represented by **“this mountain”**.
2. It is related to Jesus overcoming spiritual death (**wipe away tears**).
3. It is related to Jesus conquering physical death (**swallow up death**).
4. It is related to the removal of the earth's curse (**rebuke...shall he take away**).
5. It applies to **all people**.
6. It is related to the sacrifice of the Savior offering salvation to the weak (**lees and marrow**).
7. The elements of the Sacrament of represented symbolically (**fat things and wine**).
8. The veil separating man from God is removed (**covering cast over all people**).
9. Men will be perfected through Jesus (**well refined**).
10. It is a celebration ushering in the Kingdom of God.

Jesus was apparently well aware of the subject defined as the Messianic Banquet. There are eight times in Luke that Jesus eats while teaching about the Kingdom of God. Seven of those eight times occur while Jesus is seated at an actual feast. Another time He is not seated at a traditional feast, but He is feeding 5,000 people. The later probably being more representative of a Messianic feast than those where He sat at a literal table. No doubt these settings provided the perfect opportunity for Jesus to teach about the coming of the Kingdom of God. The Jews would have readily identified the motif.

One of the Jewish sects, the Essenes, were so aware of the concept of Messianic Banquets that they



regularly pre-enacted (if that is even a word) the event. They would hold a feast in honor of the promised Messiah. The Essenes, like many of the Jews of the day, saw the Messianic Banquet as the overthrow of suffering and death. It was a day that the prophets had prophesied of and one that they look forward to with great anticipation. The Essenes recorded their thoughts on the Messianic Banquet as follows;

**“When God engenders (the Priest-) Messiah, he shall come with them [at] the head of the whole congregation of Israel with all [his brethren, the sons] of Aaron the Priests, [those called] to the assembly, the men of renown; and they shall sit [before him, each man] in the order of his dignity. And then [the Mess]iah of Israel shall [come], and the chiefs of the [clans of Israel] shall sit before him, [each] in the order of his dignity, according to [his place] in their camps and marches. And before them shall sit all the heads of [family of the congregation, and the wise men of [the holy congregation,] each in the order of his dignity. And [when] they shall gather for the common [tab]le, to eat and [to drink] new wine, when the common table shall be set for eating and the new wine [poured] for drinking, let no man extend his hand over the firstfruits of bread and wine before the Priest; for [it is he] who shall bless the firstfruits of bread and wine, and shall be the first [to extend] his hand over the bread. Thereafter, the Messiah of Israel shall extend his hand over the bread, [and] all the congregation of the Community [shall utter a] blessing, [each man in the order] of his dignity. It is according to this statute that they shall proceed at every me[al at which] at least ten men are gathered together.”** (The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English, Translated by Geza Vermes, 1Qsa, “The Messianic Rule”, page 200)



According to Jewish tradition, and the Dead Sea Scrolls, the main course as the Messianic Banquet is bread and wine. There are set places, set rules, and special blessings that accompany the meal. The Jews regularly attended synagogue on the Sabbath, and then went home to a Sabbath feast which foreshadowed the Messianic Banquet. Edersehim wrote, **“As each weekly Sabbath was to be honoured by a feast, in which the best which the family could procure was to be placed on the board, so would the world’s great Sabbath be marked by a feast in which the Great Householder, Israel’s King, would entertain His household and guests.”** (The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, Volume 1, Alfred Edersheim, page 550). They saw the Sabbath as a day of salvation.



Another element that seems to be associated with the Messianic Banquet is the “Tree of Life”. Adam and Eve were forbidden to partake of the Tree of Life so that they would not live forever in their sins. A period of preparation, and refinement, was set aside for man that they might adequately prepare to meet God. At the end of that preparation period, man will be allowed to partake of the tree of life. This will be the same time in which the Messiah returns and holds His symbolic banquet. The Book of Enoch actually references man’s access to the tree. The apocraphal book records, **“And this beautiful and fragrant tree, and no creature of flesh has authority to touch it until the great judgment, when he will take vengeance on all and bring everything to a consummation forever, this will be given to the righteous and the humble. From its fruit, life will be given to the chosen; towards the north it will be planted, in a Holy place, by the house of the Lord, the Eternal King. Then they will rejoice with joy and be glad in the Holy place. They will each draw the fragrance of it into their bones, and they will live a long life on earth, as your fathers lived. And in their days sorrow and pain, and toil and punishment, will not touch them.”** (1<sup>st</sup> Enoch 25:4-6). The tree of life theme fits perfect with the Messianic Banquet because the Messiah is to provide a way where by the all men may no longer taste the fruit of Adam’s sin, overcoming physical and spiritual death. Another apocraphal work records, **“And in his priesthood the Gentiles shall be multiplied in knowledge upon the earth, and enlightened through the grace of the Lord. In his priesthood shall sin come to an end, and the lawless shall cease to do evil. And he shall open the gates of paradise, and shall remove the threatening sword against Adam, and he shall give to the saints to eat from the tree of life, and the**

**spirit of holiness shall be on them.”** (Testimony of Levi 5:25-26). What is also interesting is that Jewish tradition says that the Messianic Banquet is to be held in the restored Garden of Eden.

The truth be known, Jesus is gathering and inviting His children to His grand banquet right now. This is the work of the latter days, to gather the children for the return of the Messiah. Isaiah wrote, **“Fear not: for I am with thee: I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west; I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back: bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth; Even every one that is called by my name: for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him. Bring forth the blind people that have eyes, and the deaf that have ears. Let all the nations be gathered together, and let the people be assembled: who among them can declare this, and shew us former things? let them bring forth their witnesses, that they may be justified: or let them hear, and say, It is truth.”** (Isaiah 43:5-9). Likewise, Zechariah wrote, **“Thus saith the Lord of hosts; Behold, I will save my people from the east country, and from the west country; And I will bring them, and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God, in truth and in righteousness.”** (Zechariah 8:7-8).

It should also be noted that the Jews believed that the Messianic Banquet will include some special guests. Seated at the table will be father Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The rest of the table is believed to be their descendants. What the Jews didn’t understand is that all who covenant with the Lord are adopted into the house of Israel and have a place at the Lord’s table.



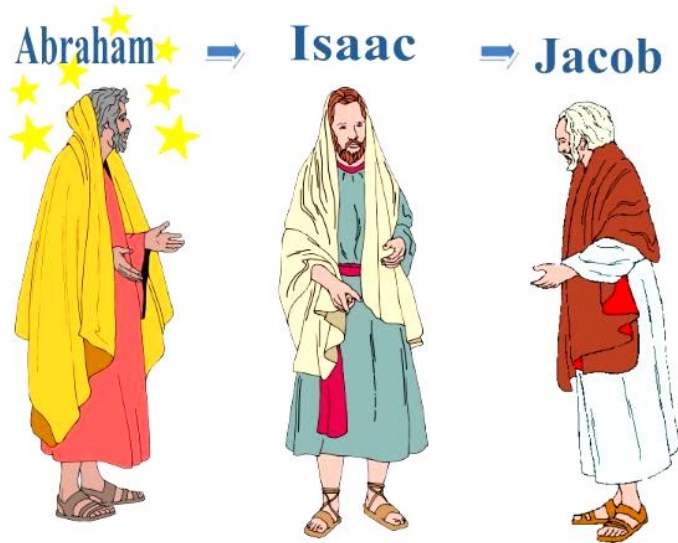
**33 - Abraham** – The name “Abraham” is translated from the Greek word “Ἀβραάμ” or “Abraam”. Translated literally, it means “father of a multitude”. Abraham is known as “the father of the covenant”. The two are eternally connected. The covenant Abraham made with God promised him three things if he would do all the things God commanded him. They are;

1. **“And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.”** (Genesis 12:2-3).
2. **“Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto the Lord, who appeared unto him.”** (Genesis 13:7).
3. **“For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever. And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered.”** (Genesis 14:15-16).

The three promises are symbolic blessings of a much larger blessing. Modern day prophets and apostles have helped us understand the eternal perspective of Abraham’s blessings. They are as follows;

1. A great nation refers to a nation of **priesthood** holders, who will bless the whole earth with the power of God.
2. A promised land refers to the Kingdom of God, or Celestial inheritance. It is a promise of **exaltation**; living with God as God lives.
3. A seed that exceeds the stars of the sky and the dust of the earth represents all the children of the covenant. All who are willing to follow God and enter into the covenant to do so are adopted into Abraham’s family. They become his children. Through the power of heaven, the children of God are sealed to together to form **an eternal family without end**.

Consequently, Abraham is the father of a covenant wherewith mankind is adopted into the family of God. This makes Abraham the father of children without end. **“How little His Jewish hearers understood the meaning of that which Jehovah had of old time said to Abraham: ‘as many as receive this Gospel shall be called after thy name, and shall be accounted thy seed, and shall rise up and bless thee, as their father’.”** (The Life and Teachings of Jesus Christ: From the Transfiguration through the Triumphal Entry, Volume 2, Edited by Richard Neitzel Holzapfel and Thomas A. Wayment, page 308).



**34 - Isaac** – The name “Isaac” is translated from the Greek word “Ἰσαάκ” or “Isaak”. Translated literally, it means “to laugh”. Isaac was the son of Abraham. He was the first born, and often symbolizes the Son of God. Like Jesus, he followed his father even when he was asked to lay down his life. Unlike Jesus, Isaac was not required to give his life as God provided a sacrifice which took his place. The whole scene represents the role Jesus would play in mortality. Like Abraham, Isaac entered into a covenant with God and became an heir to the blessings of his father.

**35 - Jacob** – The name “Jacob” is translated from the Greek word “Ἰακώβ” or “Iakōb”. Translated literally, it means “heel-catcher or supplanter”. Jacob was the second son of his father Isaac. His older brother sold his birthright to Jacob to meet his earthly needs. Jacob symbolizes the fact that all faithful souls can become heirs of the Abrahamic covenant. Through Jacob’s sons came the twelve tribes of Israel which represent all of God’s covenant children. When we are baptized by the authority of God, we are adopted into the tribes and the house of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

**36 - kingdom of heaven** – The word “kingdom” is translated from the Greek word “βασιλεία” or “basileia”. It means royal power, kingship, dominion or rule. It is also used to mean a kingdom or the territory subject to the rule of a king. The word “heaven” is translated from the Greek word “βασίλειά” or “basileia”. It means the vaulted expanse of the sky with all things visible in it. It is also used to reference the region above the sidereal heavens, the seat of order of things eternal and consummately perfect where God dwells and other heavenly beings. The term represents Celestial Kingdom. It represents exaltation and eternal life. The kingdom of heaven on earth is the structure God has authorized to being His children home to Him in Celestial worlds. We know it as the Church of Jesus Christ.

There is some question as to why Matthew records Jesus’ words regarding the kingdom of God and the patriarch’s; Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. **“If we keep in view the historical object of St. Matthew, as primarily addressing himself to Jewish, while St. Luke wrote more especially for Gentile readers, we arrive, at least, at one remarkable outcome of the variations in their narratives. Strange to say, the Judæan Gospel gives the pro-Gentile, the Gentile narrative the pro-Jewish, presentation of the event.”** (The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, Volume 1, Alfred Edersheim, page 544). The Gentiles would have had no understanding or appreciation for the Patriarchs, and readily accepted the church as the kingdom of God on earth. The Jews however needed a small history lesson to connect the dots.

**37 - children of the kingdom** – The word “children” is translated from the Greek word “υἱός” or “huios”. It means a son, and generally used of the offspring of men. It is rarely used of animals. In a wider sense, it is used of a descendant. The Codex Sinaiticus translates “children” as “sons”. (Codex Sinaiticus: The H.T. Anderson New Testament, Translated by Henry Tompkins Anderson, Matthew, Chapter 8, Verse 12, page 22). **“I.E., the rightful heirs. Similar phrases are found in Jewish literature.”** (Matthew: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, W.F. Albright and C.S. Mann, page 93).





This passage poses some confusion to the scholar. A student of the gospel knows that the children of the kingdom are those that inherit the blessings promised to Abraham. The Book of Mormon teaches, “For behold, I say unto you that as many of the Gentiles as will repent are the covenant people of the Lord; and as many of the Jews as will not repent shall be cast off; for the Lord covenanteth with none save it be with them that repent and believe in his Son, who is the Holy One of Israel.” (2nd Nephi 30:2). The confusion lies in the fact that Matthew clearly states, “the children of the kingdom shall be cast of into outer darkness”. This does not fit with the doctrines that have been revealed from Heaven. Elder McConkie sheds some light on the matter. He wrote that the translation in Matthew is incorrect. The translation is “**Not children of the kingdom, as the King James Version has it, but children or followers of the devil. All who do not follow Christ and keep his commandments are so classified. Children of the kingdom are faithful members of the Church who adhere to the standards of the kingdom. They are followers or disciples of the Master, having accepted the doctrines and obeyed the ordinances of the Church or kingdom.**” (The Doctrinal New Testament Commentary, Volume 1: The Gospels, Bruce R. McConkie, page 258).

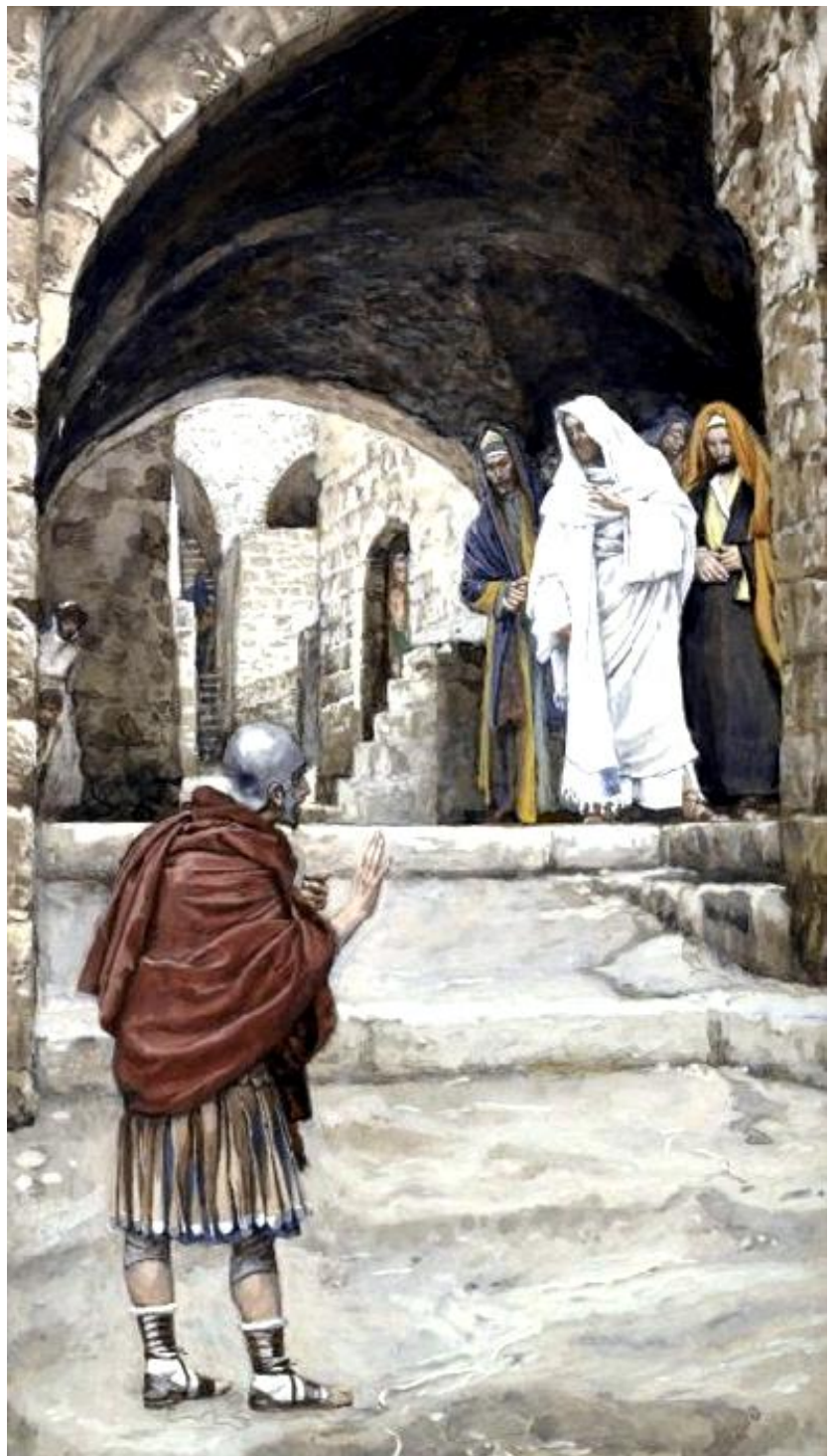
The term “children of the devil” was common among the ancient Jews in reference to evil and wicked men. “To use Rabbinic terms, the former were ‘children of Gehinnom,’ but Israel ‘children of the Kingdom,’ or, in strictly Rabbinic language, ‘royal children,’ ‘children of God,’ ‘of heaven,’ ‘children of the upper chamber,’ and ‘of the world to come.’ In fact, in their view, God had first sat down on His throne as King, when the hymn of deliverance was raised by Israel – the people which took upon itself that yoke of the Law which all other nations of the world had rejected.” (The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, Volume 1, Alfred Edersheim, page 551). What would then happen if the “children of the kingdom” were to fall? There are many who suppose that Matthew is referring to the “children of the kingdom” who have broken their covenants and rejected their God. They then become cast out. Gehinnom it should be remembered was a location outside of Jerusalem where the sewage and waste of the city was taken and burned. Such refuse was considered unclean by the Jews, and therefore Gehinnom was a forbidden place for the clean. The refuse burned there day and night, with a stench that warned of its existence.

Edersheim explains, “When our Lord consigned the unbelieving to ‘outer darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth, he once more used Jewish language, only with opposite application of it. Gehinnom – of which the entrance, marked by ever-ascending smoke, was in the valley of Hinnom, between two palm trees – lay beyond ‘the mountains of darkness.’ It was a place of darkness, to which, in the day of the Lord, the Gentiles would be consigned. On the other hand, the merit of circumcision would in the day of the Messiah deliver Jewish sinners from Gehinnom. It seems a moot question, whether the expression ‘outer darkness’ may not have been intended to designate – besides the darkness outside the lighted house of the Father, and even beyond the darkness of Gehinnom – a place of hopeless, endless night.” (The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, Volume 1, Alfred Edersheim, page 550).

**38 - cast out** – The term “cast out” is translated from the Greek word “ἐκβάλλω” or “ekballō”. It means to cast out, drive out, or to send out. It also means to be expelled or banished from society or from a family. The Codex Sinaiticus translated the term “cast out” as “go forth” (Codex Sinaiticus: The H.T. Anderson New Testament, Translated by Henry Tompkins Anderson, Matthew, Chapter 8, Verse 12, page 22).

As children of the kingdom are heirs to exaltation and dwelling in God’s presence again, they must live in such a manner as to be worthy of their inheritance. The Lord taught that they “**shall be holy, or the Lord your God will not dwell therein.**” (Doctrine and Covenants 124:24). Holiness is achieved as we strive to be like Christ, and allow His grace to wash away our sins through the process of repentance. The Lord taught, “**For I the Lord cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance.**” (Doctrine and Covenants 1:31). The opposite of holy is unclean, “**and no unclean thing can enter into his kingdom; therefore nothing entereth into his rest save it be those who have washed their garments in my blood, because of their faith, and the repentance of all their sins, and their faithfulness unto the end.**” (3rd Nephi 27:19).

Anyone who is not made holy through Jesus, must be cast out from the Father’s presence. We might assume that just those who fail to enter covenants with the Lord fit in this category, but there is something worse. Barclay taught, “**Still worse, he says that many of the sons of the kingdom will be shut out. A son is an heir; therefore the son of the kingdom is the man who is to inherit the kingdom, for the son is always heir; but the Jews are to lose their inheritance. Always in Jewish thought “the inheritance of sinners is darkness” (Wisdom of Solomon 15:11). The rabbis had a saying, ‘The sinners in Gehenna (Greek #1067) will be covered with darkness.’ To the Jew the extraordinary and the shattering thing about all this was that the Gentile, whom he expected to be absolutely shut out, was to be a guest at the Messianic banquet, and the Jew, whom he expected to be welcomed with open arms, is to be shut out in the outer darkness. The tables were to be turned, and all expectations were to be reversed.**” (The Gospel of Matthew, Volume 1, The Daily Study Bible Series - Revised Edition, William Barclay, pages 309-310)





**39 - outer darkness** – The word “outer” is translated from the Greek word “ἐξώτερος” or “exōteros”. It means outer. The word “darkness” is translated from the Greek word “σκότος” or “skotos”. It means darkness. It can be used metaphorically of ignorance respecting divine things and human duties, and the accompanying ungodliness and immorality, together with their consequent misery in hell. The Codex Sinaiticus translates the term “outer darkness” as simply “darkness” (Codex Sinaiticus: The H.T. Anderson New Testament, Translated by Henry Tompkins Anderson, Matthew, Chapter 8, Verse 12, page 22). Darkness symbolizes **“Primordial Chaos; the powers of chaos; the Devil; the Prince of Darkness; spiritual darkness; captivity.”** (An Illustrated Encyclopedia of Traditional Symbols, J.C. Cooper, page 50)

The term “Outer Darkness” is not found in the King James Version of the Old Testament. Neither is the term “Outer Darkness” found in the Dead Sea Scrolls. The New Testament uses the term three times, and one of them is this passage. The other two uses are confined to Matthew; Matthew 22:13 and Matthew 25:30. The other gospel writers don’t use the term. It may be that Matthew uses the term because his audience is the Jews, and they may have understood the term where other cultures wouldn’t. Regardless, it is not a common term in the Bible.

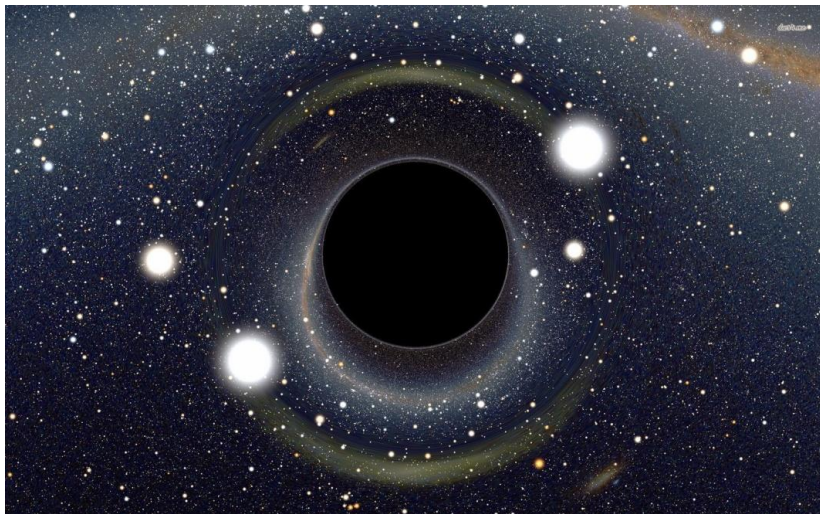
The term “outer darkness” is used once in the Book of Mormon and twice in the Doctrine and Covenants. It is absent in the Pearl of Great Price.

The Doctrine and Covenants gives us some clues as to the doctrine associated with outer darkness. In a revelation given to Joseph Smith, the Lord explains that the gospel has been sent forth to save the saints and condemn the wicked. At the end of the revelation, the Lord declares, **“Behold, and lo, there are none to deliver you; for ye obeyed not my voice when I called to you out of the heavens; ye believed not my servants, and when they were sent unto you ye received them not. Wherefore, they sealed up the testimony and bound up the law, and ye were delivered over unto darkness. These shall go away into outer darkness, where there is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth.”** (Doctrine and Covenants 133:72). From this passage, we learn that those who are cast into outer darkness have been called and chosen by God, and then disobeyed the Lord’s command. They are individuals who received angelic messengers, and chose not to believe. They have testimonies of the everlasting gospel, and have been sealed up to eternal life and sinned against that knowledge.

Many would equate outer darkness with the concept of hell. Of course the various Christian denominations have a very different concept of hell than the restored Church of Jesus Christ. Most of the Christian world believes that our existence in the next life will be confined to two or three places; Heaven, Hell, and in some case purgatory. They have developed an apostate view of the eternities. Basically, all good people go to heaven and all bad people go to hell. Some denominations have adopted a concept of purgatory; a place where people who are in between heaven and hell go. Those in purgatory atone for their sins until they have paid enough to qualify for heaven.

In reality, the Lord has prepared an inheritance for nearly all of his children. In fact, He would like all to obtain a fullness of inheritance, but allows us a freedom to choose. Only those who blatantly refuse to follow God will be denied a place of eternal glory. God has revealed that the term heaven refers to three eternal kingdoms, each with a varying degree of His inheritance. Within those kingdoms are many levels or degrees allowing a place for each and every human being having lived on the earth. The highest kingdom of heaven is called the Celestial Kingdom. This kingdom is where God lives. It is reserved for individuals who have entered into and kept sacred covenants. They are the valiant followers of Jesus. There are many degrees within this kingdom. The next kingdom is the Terrestrial Kingdom. It is reserved for individuals who believed in Jesus and lived good lives, but were not valiant in accepting covenants and honoring them. These are good people who failed to fully commit themselves to God. Finally, there is the Telestial Kingdom. It too is a kingdom of glory. It is reserved for individuals who were not valiant in following Jesus and they acted contrary to the commandments of God. They are not honorable and consist of liars, thieves, murders, adulterers, and various sinners. They knew that their actions were wrong. To all these, God has prepared an inheritance of glory proportionate to their righteousness through Jesus. One might classify any kingdom of glory as heaven, though I would define heaven as only the kingdom where God lives. I suppose that is a matter of perspective.

Elder Orson Hyde taught, **“Here are homes for all grades of spirits, from the faithful martyr to Christ’s kingdom and Gospel, whose glory is represented by the sun in the firmament, to the wicked tares, who will be sent away into outer darkness, upon some planet destined to roll in endless night. “In my Father’s house are many mansions.” There is one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars. One star differs from another star in glory; so also is the resurrection of the dead. The children of this world who love darkness rather than light, will find themselves, finally, to be inhabitants of those planets that move in outer darkness; having a home adapted to their disposition and character.”** (Journal of Discourses, Volume 05, Orson Hyde, March 8, 1857, page 72).



There is a final place, reserved for those who have intentionally rejected God after have a full knowledge of Him. This place is referred to as “Outer Darkness”. The Doctrine and Covenants teaches that those who reject God, with full knowledge shall be **“cast down to the regions of darkness.”** (Doctrine and Covenants 77:8). Elder Orson Pratt taught, **“And then shall it come to pass, that the spirits of the wicked, yea, who are evil; for behold, they have no part nor portion of the Spirit of the Lord; for behold, they choose evil works rather than good; therefore the spirit of the devil did enter into them, and take possession of their house; and these shall be cast out into outer darkness; there shall be weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth; and this because of their own iniquity; being led captive by the will of the devil. Now this is the state of the souls of the wicked; yea, in darkness, and in a state of awful, fearful, looking for the fiery indignation of the wrath of God upon them; thus they remain in this state, as well as the righteous in paradise, until the time of their resurrection.”** (Journal of Discourses, Volume 16, Orson Pratt, December 28, 1873, page 332).





### The kind of people who will be cast into Outer Darkness

When our Father in Heaven had His firstborn present His plan for our progression, it entailed our ability to choose. In order to progress, we needed to be able to act for ourselves. Learning to choose good over evil was necessary to become like our Father. After the plan was presented, the power to choose became increasingly evident. Many supported the plan and considered the risk of choosing to follow considering all that we had to gain. However, there was a sizable group of our spiritual brothers and sisters that struggled with the idea. After much debate, which was serious enough to be called a war, a third of the host of heaven decided to reject the plan and rebel against all of God's commands. Our Father in Heaven gave them all the knowledge and time necessary to make an informed decision. Every effort was made to help them choose the correct path. They were led by a spirit named Lucifer. They refused to follow God. Their refusal resulted in them being "cast out" from the presence of God. They became known as "perdition". The Doctrine and Covenants teaches, **"Thus saith the Lord concerning all those who know my power, and have been made partakers thereof, and suffered themselves through the power of the devil to be overcome, and to deny the truth and defy my power— They are they who are the sons of perdition, of whom I say that it had been better for them never to have been born; For they are vessels of wrath, doomed to suffer the wrath of God, with the devil and his angels in eternity; Concerning**

**whom I have said there is no forgiveness in this world nor in the world to come— Having denied the Holy Spirit after having received it, and having denied the Only Begotten Son of the Father, having crucified him unto themselves and put him to an open shame. These are they who shall go away into the lake of fire and brimstone, with the devil and his angels— And the only ones on whom the second death shall have any power."** (Doctrine and Covenants 76:31-37).

Those who chose to come to earth earned the blessing of mortal bodies. With these bodies of flesh, we are afforded more decisions and opportunities to progress. Because the retention of perfect knowledge would make sins unforgivable, and the control over our temporal bodies would naturally result in sins as we learned to place our physical body in submission to our spirits, the Lord placed a veil of forgetfulness over our memories. Only sin against a perfect knowledge can result in becoming "perdition". Elder Thatcher taught, **"There is but one class of human beings whom God hath decreed shall endure eternal punishment, utter and everlasting condemnation, and they are the 'sons of perdition.'** How few, thank God, will be their numbers and, correspondingly how fruitless and barren after all will be the efforts of Satan to frustrate the designs of the Almighty in his glorious plan of human redemption!" (Journal of Discourses, Volume 26, Moses Thatcher, April 13, 1885, page 210).

Lucifer, who we know as Satan or the Devil, continues his efforts to destroy the Father's plan of salvation. He and his followers are seeking to lead all of God's children to become sons and daughters of perdition, like unto them. He does this by leading us to sin, with hopes that we will become so entrenched in bad behavior that we will choose disobedience even after we receive perfect knowledge. This is why the veil of forgetfulness is so crucial to the plan.

### There are two kinds of outer darkness

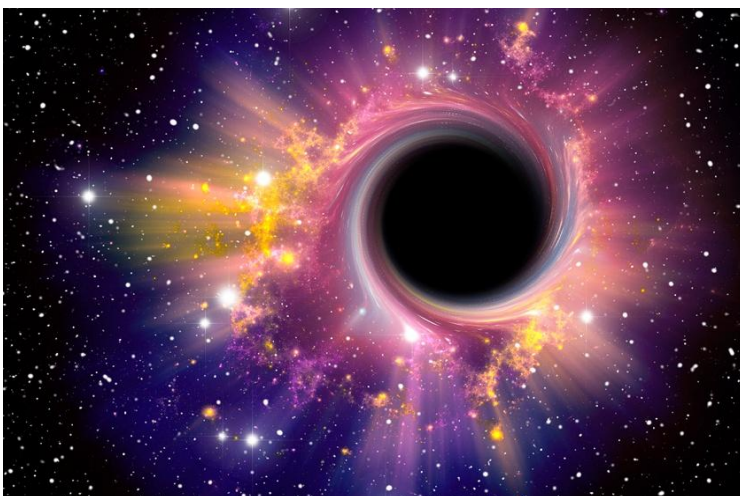
In our Father's infinite wisdom, He has created two states referred to as "Outer Darkness". We have already discussed the most common reference to outer darkness, but there is another that is less referred to. Both states have something in common. They are reserved for sinners who have not repented, and they are absent from Father's presence. The first "Outer Darkness" is also called "Spiritual Prison". It is reserved for those spirits who have died in their sins. It is a state of extended probation, while they await judgment. During this time, spirits who lacked a perfect knowledge have additional time to prepare to meet God. Elder Hyde taught, **"The hypocritical professor, the liar, the adulterer,**



**the profane swearer, with all who hold to a religion without Prophets and Apostles, without inspiration and miracles, without revelation, prophecy, keys, and powers to bind on earth and in heaven, after the call is made upon them by the messengers of the true religion, will be damned and sent away into outer darkness, even into prison, where they will gnaw their tongues for pain. In this prison they must remain until they have paid the utmost farthing."** (Journal of Discourses, Volume 05, Orson Hyde, March 8, 1857, page 72).

### Why will men reject?

It is hard to believe that anyone would knowingly reject the plans that God has for our progression. It is obvious that there are spirits willing to make those decisions, as is evidenced in the war in heaven. The problem lies in our base desires. Once our heart gets set on the things of the flesh, rejecting God seems to make sense. When we become carnal in nature, God's laws become increasingly contrary to our thoughts. Orson Pratt used the doctrine of Polygamy to illustrate the fact that the faithful will be accepting of God's law at any cost. He said, **"We are told that many shall come from the east and from the west, and shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, ancient polygamists, the latter with his four wives, and will be counted worthy to be saved therein; while many who profess to be the children of the**





kingdom, will be cast into outer darkness, where there is weeping and wailing, and gnashing of teeth. This is what Jesus says, consequently I do not think that those who have formed the idea that only the monogamic system of marriage is accepted of the Almighty, will feel in those days as they do now. I do not think that class of persons will be ashamed, if they have the privilege of coming forth in the morning of the first resurrection, of entering into that holy city, even if they see the names of Jacob's polygamic children upon its gates. There may be some so delicate in their feelings as to say – 'O, no, Lord, I don't want to go in at that gate, the people are polygamists, I would like you to take me to some other place.' They go to the next gate, and the next, until they have been to each one, and they all are polygamic. Then the inquiry may be – 'Is there not some other city where the people are not polygamists?' 'Oh, yes, there are plenty of places, but outside of this city there are dogs, sorcerers, whoremongers, adulterers, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie. Do you want to associate with them?' 'Well, I think their society will be a little more pleasant than that of those old polygamists?' " (Journal of Discourses, Volume 16, Orson Pratt, August 31, 1883, pages 183-184).

Sin has a unique way of providing a different veil over our minds. The Lord placed a veil of forgetfulness to protect our eternal souls. Satan uses sin to veil our minds from righteousness. The more we sin, the more difficult it is to recognize right from wrong. President Wilford Woodruff taught, "But there is a veil over their eyes, because of their works of evil; and the day will come when all peoples will mourn who take a stand against the kingdom of God, the Zion of God, the Church of God, and the Lord's anointed; unless they repent they will, when they pass into the other world, go into outer darkness, where there is weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth. It is impossible, however, for the Saints of God to inherit a celestial kingdom without their being tried as to whether they will abide in the covenants of the Lord or not." (Journal of Discourses, Volume 23, Wilford Woodruff, December 10 1882, page 328).

#### We currently live in a kind of outer darkness.

Outer darkness can be a symbolic expression, with literal consequences. Symbolically, righteousness is illustrated by "light". God is the provider of all light. There is no light besides Him. Light, or righteousness, is the source of all power, goodness, and creation. When we sin, which is symbolized by darkness, we remove our self from the influence of light. Sin results in our separation from God; i.e. being cast out into darkness.

Anciently, the wedding feast started in the evening. Each guest was required to have an invitation. It symbolized the worthiness of the guest to be in attendance at the banquet. Each guest was required to bring a lamp with oil to the feast. The lamps, all lit, created a magnificently bright room. A guest who was found without a lamp or an invitation was cast out into the darkness. The Jews called it "outer darkness". The groom, who we know is figuratively Jesus, comes to the wedding to enter into a covenant with His faithful wife, who represents us. This covenant was to be done in righteousness, or in the presence of light.

When Adam and Even transgressed, they were no longer qualified to live in the presence of God. Their banishment from the Garden of Eden could be classified as being cast out into outer darkness. President Joseph F. Smith wrote, "When Adam partook of the forbidden fruit he was cast out from the presence of God into outer darkness; that is, he was shut out from the presence of his glory and the privilege of his society, which was spiritual death. This was the first death; this indeed was death; for he was shut out from the presence of God, and ever since Adam's posterity have been suffering the penalty of this spiritual death, which is banishment from his presence and the society of holy beings." (Journal of Discourses, Volume 19, Joseph F. Smith, April 11, 1878, page 265-266).



#### There is a space reserved to redeem

The outer darkness experienced after mortality is often called spirit prison. It exists here on earth and is part of the spirit world. In this state, our spirits are separated from their physical bodies and wait for the day of resurrection and judgment. During this time, the righteous spirits who have died preach the gospel to those in this state of outer darkness. Because most of them died in their sins, and without a knowledge of the gospel "they will not know what is coming – what will befall them, like all prisoners guilty of crime. But after many days they shall be visited by the servants of God, as Jesus visited the antediluvians with a message: the door of their prison will be thrown open, after they have been sufficiently long confined; and if they repent, they can be redeemed; but if they will not repent, they will be taken from thence and cast into outer darkness." (Journal of Discourses, Volume 07, Orson Pratt, August 28, 1859, page 87). The later "outer darkness" is a place of permanent separation from God.

There are two obscure quotes, one from Orson Pratt and another from Erastus Snow, that would indicate that "the sons and daughters of perdition" will not even be afforded spirit prison, but condemned to the eternal fate of outer darkness after death. Elder Pratt taught, "Those who will not give heed to the law of the Gospel have no claim on this first resurrection, and their bodies must sleep through all these long centuries that are to intervene between the time of their death and the end of the earth. Where will their spirits be all that time? Not in any glory; they cannot inherit a glory until their punishment is past. They are not permitted to enter into prison. A great many people, and perhaps some of the Latter-day Saints, have supposed that these characters will go into prison. I do not know of any revelation anywhere intimating that any one of this class of persons will ever be put in prison. Where do they go? To another place altogether different from a prison. A prison is designed for those who never heard the Gospel here in the flesh, but yet have committed a few sins without the knowledge of the revealed law, and who have to be beaten with few stripes in prison. But those persons who hear the Gospel, as the nations of the present dispensation are doing, can not go to prison, it is not their place. They fall below a prison, into outer darkness or hell, where there will be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth. There



they have to remain with the devil and his angels in torment and misery until the final end, then they come forth. Can they come where God and Christ dwell? No, worlds without end they cannot come there. Can they go into the presence of the heathen where the glory is that of the moon? No, they cannot even come there. When they are delivered from the power of Satan and endless death and brought forth, where do they go? If they do not go into the presence of God the Father, if they are not counted worthy to enter into the terrestrial world among the heathen, where will they go? God has provided mansions for them according to their works here in this world. Having suffered the vengeance of eternal fire for the space of a thousand years and upwards, and suffered the extreme penalty of the law of God, they can now be brought forth to inherit a place where they can be administered unto by terrestrial beings and by Angels holding the Priesthood, and where they can receive the Holy Ghost.” (Journal of Discourses, Volume 15, Orson Pratt, January 19, 1873, pages 323-324).



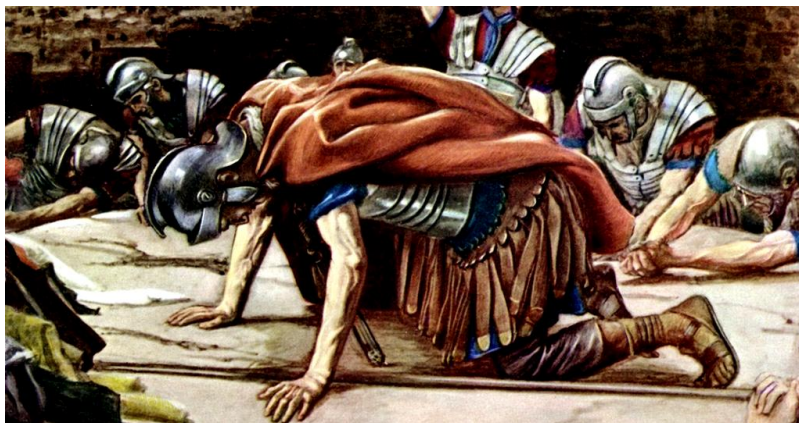
Elder Snow taught, “And when they die and go hence, they will wake up in the spirit world, finding themselves as dark as they were in the natural world. He who is filthy, then will be filthy still, and he who refused to be enlightened, will be found to be in darkness still, yea, in outer darkness, because he despised the light and fought against it, because his deeds were evil; he finds association with kindred spirits who like himself refused to obey, refused to put forth their hands and partake, and rejected the proffered gifts of heaven. Their punishment is that of ceaseless remorse, fully conscious of blessings cast off and rejected, which blessings others are permitted to enjoy, but which they are not, because of their sins and transgressions, and their own neglect of the means of grace. Their torment is the torment of the damned, and it is like the smoke that ascends up forever and ever; among them is found weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth, to use the language of the Scripture. But for what? For blessings lost, for opportunities gone, for privileges ignored, for the means of grace, for glory and exaltation once within their reach, which they, in their pride, would not receive; for being deprived of the presence of God and the Lamb, and the holy angels and the sanctified ones, and of the keys of immortality and eternal life and everlasting increase vouch-safed to the obedient, while they are doomed to perpetual darkness, which they have chosen in lieu of the blessings of the faithful, and in which condition they will live to prey upon each other and to work out the same evil passions which they delighted to indulge in while in the flesh; the devil, who deluded them, will rejoice over their downfall, and will reign over them until, peradventure, the time shall come when the long-suffering and mercy of an indulgent Father” (Journal of Discourses, Volume 20, Erastus Snow, April 6, 1879, pages 182-187).

#### Where is Outer Darkness?

We know that spirit prison is on earth. Outer Darkness, the final residence of perdition, is not on earth. It is located on a designated sphere that has not yet been revealed to man. Orson Hyde taught, “Is it possible, then, that there are worlds reserved in eternal night, in an eternal eclipse, rolling in the shade? What is their use? They are the homes of them that love darkness rather than light; and it shall be said unto them, Depart, ye cursed, into outer darkness. There are planets that revolve in eternal darkness, that you who love darkness rather than light may go and find your own home. There is a place prepared for every body, no matter what their character. Says the Saviour, ‘I go to prepare a place for you.’ There is a place for every person. There is a place for every body that comes into this Valley, if they can only find it. So there is a place in yonder world for every person; but to him that overcometh will I give power over the nations, and he shall be a pillar in the Temple of my God, and go no more out.” (Journal of Discourses, Volume 01, Orson Hyde, October 6, 1853, page 130).

#### When will men be condemned to Outer Darkness?

The great and final judgment will determine the final state of those who are classified as “perdition. Elder Hyde taught, “...in the last days there is to be a gathering together of the people. They will be gathered by the peculiar attraction that will prevail at the time when they are not weighed down with mortal tabernacles, but released from this cumbrous clay, their immortal spirits will be gathered around the throne of God, there to receive a welcome into the everlasting glory prepared for the righteous; or to



hear the dreadful sentence – Depart, ye cursed, into outer darkness, where there is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth!” (Journal of Discourses, Volume 02, Orson Hyde, October 8, 1854, page 61). The day of judgment will not occur until after the resurrection. One might question why the mortal sons and daughters of perdition will receive resurrected glorified bodies when they have totally rebelled against the Lord. They receive resurrected bodies as a consequence of choosing to come to earth. Since God is faithful, He will not deny them the bodies that they chose to receive. Orson Pratt taught, “Will the spirits of men, before they receive their resurrected body, return into the presence of God? Yes. Read what Alma said to his son Corianton on this subject, describing the state of the spirit between the time of death and the resurrection. He says – ‘It has been made known to me by an angel that the spirits of all men, as soon as they are dead, whether wicked or righteous, shall return home to that God who gave them life;’ that is, they back into his presence. The wicked, however, are again cast out into outer darkness, the light of the countenance of their Lord is again withdrawn from them, a veil

is let down between them and their Father and God. But how is it with the righteous? When they go back and behold the face of their Father they will continue in the light of his countenance, and have the privilege of seeing him.” (Journal of Discourses, Volume 16, Orson Pratt, January 24 1874, page 365).

#### The power of the condemned over the righteous.

Martin Luther King, Jr. once said, “Darkness cannot drive out darkness: only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate: only love can do that.” This statement has more truth than maybe Dr. King ever understood. The wicked gain no power from their choices. They gain no freedom or advantage. Contrary to their belief, the wicked become increasingly restricted by their own actions. Elder Orson Pratt taught, “Herein is the freedom of the righteous, and the victory they obtain, for in the name of Jesus they can command these fallen angels, and they are compelled to yield obedience. But how is it with the wicked? They have not learned to command these evil doers, they have not placed themselves in a position here in this life to do so; they cannot cast out devils. Why? Because they are wicked and corrupt, and when they meet with the devil or any of the fallen angels, they are immediately enslaved and brought into captivity to them, and that is the worst kind of slavery; and according to what I have read here, the spirit of the devil enters into their house. What house? The spiritual house, for they have not got bodies of flesh and bones yet, the resurrection has not taken place yet, and that spirit, that spiritual body, becomes subject to the devil, and he enters their house, and they are cast out into outer darkness, and are in captivity to the devil, and are his slaves, until the resurrection, when their bodies and spirits will be reunited.” (Journal of Discourses, Volume 16, Orson Pratt, December 28, 1873, page 333).



- 40 - weeping** – The word “weeping” is translated from the Greek word “κλαυθμός” or “klauthmos”. It means weeping, or lamentation. Weeping symbolizes **“Grief and mourning”** (An Illustrated Encyclopedia of Traditional Symbols, J.C. Cooper, page 190).

Weeping is a common theme in scripture, often associated with sin and the consequence of sin. In warning the wicked Israelites, Isaiah recorded, **“Behold, my servants shall sing for joy of heart, but ye shall cry for sorrow of heart, and shall howl for vexation of spirit.”** (Isaiah 65:14). They would cry because their sins bring about severe consequences. It might be recalled that they refused to listen to Isaiah and consequently were invaded by and take captive by the Assyrians. The Assyrians were cruel and brutal invaders. Surely many were led away in tears and sorrow.

The pattern of choices and consequences are attached to eternal law. The Lord taught, **“I, the Lord, am bound when ye do what I say; but when ye do not what I say, ye have no promise.”** (Doctrine and Covenants 82:10). The promises of the Lord refer to all the blessings He bestows upon man, and ultimately refers to the promises made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Those that choose not to follow the Lord’s commandments, cannot lay claim on the associated blessings. The Book of Mormon taught, **“And then shall it come to pass, that the spirits of the wicked, yea, who are evil—for behold, they have no part nor portion of the Spirit of the Lord; for behold, they chose evil works rather than good; therefore the spirit of the devil did enter into them, and take possession of their house—and these shall be cast out into outer darkness; there shall be weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth, and this because of their own iniquity, being led captive by the will of the devil.”** (Alma 40:13).

One might only imagine the horrible anguish that will be associated with eternal condemnation. There will be no ability to progress, no family relationships, no joy or happiness. There will be an eternity to contemplate what may have been and what was lost. Orson Pratt taught, **“We are also told that another portion of spirits, another class of them that return home to God, after leaving this mortal tabernacle, are cast out, are sent off again, and are not permitted to stay at home, but are cast out into outer darkness, where there is weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth. Now there must be some intense suffering, some intense misery in connection with the wicked class of spirits in order to cause them to weep and to wail. We might now inquire, what is the cause of this intense suffering and misery? Is it the action of the elements upon the spirit? Is it the materials of nature, operating from without upon it, that causes this distress, this weeping, wailing, mourning, and lamentation? It may be in some measure; it may help to produce the misery and the wretchedness; but there is something connected with the spirit itself that no doubt produces this weeping, wailing, and mourning. What is this something? It is memory, and remorse of conscience; a memory of what they have once done, a memory of their disobedience. Do you not suppose the spirits can have power to remember in that world as well as in this? Yes, they certainly can.”** (Journal of Discourses, Volume 02, Orson Pratt, October 15, 1854, page 239).

- 41 - gnashing of teeth** – The word “gnashing” is translated from the Greek word “βρυγμός” or “brygmōs”. It means snarling or growling; in the sense of biting. It is often used to denote extreme anguish and utter despair of men consigned to eternal punishment in hell. The word “teeth” is translated from the Greek word “ὄδους” or “odous”. It means a tooth. Teeth symbolize **“attack; defiance; and enmity”** (An Illustrated Encyclopedia of Traditional Symbols, J.C. Cooper, page 169). The term “gnashing of teeth” is not found in the Dead Sea Scrolls. It is however mentioned in ancient Rabbinical writings. The Rabbis used the term **“weeping and the gnashing of teeth”**. In Rabbinic thought the former was connected with sorrow, the latter almost always with anger – not, as generally supposed, with anguish.” (The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, Volume 1, Alfred Edersheim, page 550).

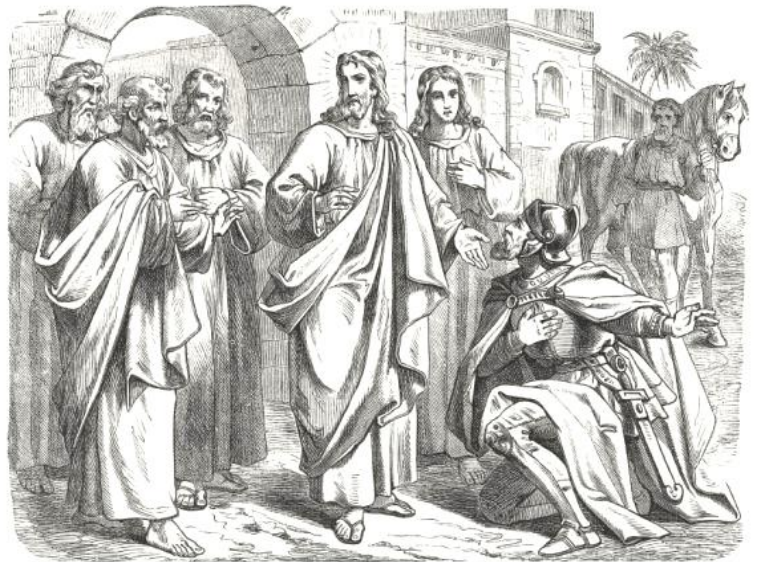
God has no desire for His children to suffer. In fact, His plan was designed around the provision of a Savior. Jesus came to earth to redeem mankind from suffering and anguish. To partake of His gift, we must submit to His terms. His terms require that we repent, and follow Him. Brigham Young taught, **“And surely every man must repent or suffer; for I, God, am endless: wherefore I revoke not the judgments which I shall pass; but woes shall go forth, weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth, – yea, to those who are found on my left hand: nevertheless, it is not written that there shall be no end to this torment; but it is written, Endless torment.”** (Journal of Discourses, Volume 6, Brigham Young, August 15, 1852, page 287).

- 42 - go thy way** – The phrase “go thy way” is translated from the Greek word “ὑπάγω” or “hypagō”. It means to lead under, bring under, or to go away. The Codex Sinaiticus translates the phrase “go thy way” as “go”. (Codex Sinaiticus: The H.T. Anderson New Testament, Translated by Henry Tompkins Anderson, Matthew, Chapter 8, Verse 13, page 22).

- 43 - thou hast believed** – The phrase “thou hast believed” is translated from the Greek word “πιστεύω” or “pisteuō”. It means to think to be true, to be persuaded of, to credit, place confidence in or to entrust a thing to one. This is an acknowledgement, by Jesus, that the centurion had faith enough to have a miracle performed on his behalf.

- 44 - be it done unto thee** – The phrase “be it done” is translated from the Greek word “γίνωμαι” or “ginomai”. It means to become, i.e. to come into existence, begin to be, or receive being. **“The Gentile centurion believed. He did not need proof of evidence of Christ’s power. He trusted fully in it and, consequently, received the blessing he had desperately sought. We must ask ourselves: ‘Are we like the Israelites, who needed to see everything right before them, or can we trust like the faithful centurion? ... If we really believe, seeing is not all there is to believing.”** (Miracles of the New Testament: A Guide to the Symbolic Messages, Alonzo L. Gaskill, page 100).

- 45 - the selfsame hour** – The word “selfsame” is translated from the Greek word “ἐκεῖνος” or “ekeinos”. It means he, she, it,





etc. The Codex Sinaiticus translates the phrase “in the selfsame hour” as “in that hour”. (Codex Sinaiticus: The H.T. Anderson New Testament, Translated by Henry Tompkins Anderson, Matthew, Chapter 8, Verse 13, page 22). We assume that the Centurion’s servant was healed within 60 minutes of the Savior’s declaration, if not immediately.

**46 - ended all his sayings** – The word “sayings” is translated from the Greek word “ῥῆμα” or “rhēma”. It means that which is or has been uttered by a living voice, speech or a discourse. The Codex Sinaiticus translated the term “ended all his sayings” as “finished all his sayings”. (Codex Sinaiticus: The H.T. Anderson New Testament, Translated by Henry Tompkins Anderson, Luke, Chapter 7, Verse 1, page 116). **“Literally, ‘had brought to completion (eplerosen) all his words in the hearing of the people.’...This variant, however, is a copyist’s harmonization, making the conclusion of the sermon on the plain resemble that of the Matthean sermon.”** (The Gospel according to Luke I-IX: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, page 651).

**47 - the audience of the people** – The word “audience” is translated from the Greek word “ἀκοή” or “akoe”. It means the sense or hearing, the ear, a thing hear or instruction. The Codex Sinaiticus translated the phrase “the audience of the people” as “the ears of the people”. (Codex Sinaiticus: The H.T. Anderson New Testament, Translated by Henry Tompkins Anderson, Luke, Chapter 7, Verse 1, page 116).

**48 - a certain** – The word “certain” is translated from the Greek word “τις” or “tis”. It means a certain, or a certain time.

**49 - dear unto him** – The word “dear” is translated from the Greek word “ἐντιμος” or “entimos”. It means held in honor, prized or precious. **“Literally, ‘who was valuable to him.’ This is probably a Lucan redactional addition, since entimos is used by Luke alone among the evangelists.”** (The Gospel according to Luke I-IX: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, page 651).

**50 - ready to die** – The word “ready” is translated from the Greek word “μέλλω” or “mellō”. It means to be about, intend, have in mind, or to be on the point of doing something. The word “die” is translated from the Greek word “τελευτάω” or “teleutaō”. It means to finish, bring to an end, or close. The Codex Sinaiticus translated the term “ready to die” as “about to die”. (Codex Sinaiticus: The H.T. Anderson New Testament, Translated by Henry Tompkins Anderson, Luke, Chapter 7, Verse 2, page 116).

**51 - he sent unto him** – The word “sent” is translated from the Greek word “ἀποστέλλω” or “apostellō”. It means to send away, dismiss, or to order one to go to an appointed place.



Matthew and Luke differ in their explanation regarding how the Centurion approached Jesus. Luke proposes that the centurion started by contacting the Elders of the city of Capernaum, while Matthew indicates that he contacted Jesus directly. It probably makes little difference in the storyline; however, it is worth looking at. According to Luke, the Centurion had a good relationship with the town elders. He had financed the construction of beautiful synagogue for the city. It would make sense that the centurion would use his relationship with the Jews to approach a famous Rabbi. Fitzmyer wrote, **“Hearing about Jesus, the centurion sent some Jewish elders to him to ask him to come and save his servant.”** (The Gospel according to Luke I-IX: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, page 647). Farrar indicates that the Centurion may have been looking for the town elders to pull strings for him. Farrar wrote, **“He was met by a deputation of Jewish elders – probably the batlanim of the chief synagogue – to intercede with Him on behalf of a centurion, whose faithful and beloved slave lay in agony and peril of paralytic seizure.”** (The Story of a Beautiful Life: Farrar’s Life of Christ, The New 20th Century Edition, 1900, Canon Farrar, D.D., F.R.S., page 185).

**52 - the elders of the Jews** – The word “elders” is translated from the Greek word “πρεσβύτερος” or “presbyteros”. It means elder, as in age or a term of rank or office. **“Presbyterous means here not merely ‘old men’, but ‘elders,’ i.e. a special group of Jewish community leaders in Capernaum. They are sent to Jesus, a Jew, by a Gentile who respects Jewish customs. The phrase reveals the non-Jewish character of the author who writes.”** (The Gospel according to Luke I-IX: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, page 651).



Jewish towns at the time of Jesus were centered around the synagogue. The town typically elected a president of the synagogue from the adult males of the town. Men were not considered to be adults until 30 years of age. In addition to the president of the synagogue, the people generally elected additional men to form a town counsel. They were, by Rabbinical tradition, to be men of good reputation, honorable, and praiseworthy. Edersheim wrote, **“Lastly, there were also in every place what we may call municipal authorities, under the presidency of a mayor—the representatives of the ‘elders’—an institution so frequently mentioned in Scripture, and deeply rooted in Jewish society. Perhaps these may be referred to in Luke 7:3, as sent by the centurion of Capernaum to intercede for him with the Lord.”** (Sketches of Jewish Social Life, Alfred Edersheim, page 53).

The fascinating part of this story is the relationship between the Jewish leaders and the Roman Centurion. They were generally not fond of each other. **“If the Jews despised the gentiles, the**

**gentiles hated the Jews. Anti-semitism is not a new thing. The Romans called the Jews a filthy race; they spoke of Judaism as a barbarous superstition; they spoke of the Jewish hatred of mankind; they accused the Jews of worshipping an ass’s head and annually sacrificing a gentile stranger to their God. True, many of the gentiles, weary of the many gods and loose morals of paganism, had accepted the Jewish doctrine of the one God and the austere Jewish ethic. But the whole atmosphere of this story implies a close bond of friendship between this centurion and the Jews.”** (The Gospel of Luke, The Daily Study Bible Series - Revised Edition, William Barclay, page 85). The Jews not only agreed to approach Jesus on his behalf, but brought Jesus to him. Elder McConkie wrote, **“Jesus and the Jewish elders – plus the select group upon whom his countenance shone – started their journey to the home of the centurion.”** (The Mortal Messiah: Volume 2, Collector’s Edition, Bruce R. McConkie, page 122). This was important to the story because it provided Jewish witnesses to the miracle, and allowed Jesus to point out the apostate condition of the Jews.

**53 - besought** – The word “besought” is translated from the Greek word “παρακαλέω” or “parakaleō”. It means to call to one’s side, call for, or to summon. The Codex Sinaiticus translates the word “besought” as “asked” (Codex Sinaiticus: The H.T. Anderson New Testament, Translated by Henry Tompkins Anderson, Luke, Chapter 7, Verse 4, page 116).

**54 - instantly** – The word “instantly” is translated from the Greek word “σπουδαίως” or “spoudaios”. It means hastily, with hast, diligently, or earnestly. The Codex Sinaiticus translated the term “instantly” as “earnestly” (Codex Sinaiticus: The H.T. Anderson New Testament, Translated by Henry Tompkins Anderson, Luke, Chapter 7, Verse 4, page 116). Most scholars prefer the word “earnestly” in the translation.



**55 - loveth our nation** – The word “loveth” is translated from the Greek word “ἀγαπάω” or “agapaō”. It means to welcome, to entertain, to be found of or to love dearly. The word “nation” is translated from the Greek word “ἔθνος” or “ethnos”. It means a multitude, company, tribe, nation or people group. **“Literally, ‘he loves our nation.’ Though these words may suggest that the centurion was a ‘God-fearer’, they need not be so pressed; Josephus records a rather similar estimate of Alexander the Great, ‘he honored our nation’.”** (The Gospel according to Luke I-IX: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, page 652).

**56 - built us a synagogue** – The word “built” is translated from the Greek word “οἰκοδομέω” or “oikodomeō”. It means to build a house, or erect a building. The Codex Sinaiticus translated the phrase “built us a synagogue” as “built for us the synagogue.” (Codex Sinaiticus: The H.T. Anderson New Testament, Translated by Henry Tompkins Anderson, Luke, Chapter 7, Verse 5, page 116).

The ruins of the synagogue of Capernaum are believed to be one of the oldest synagogues in the world. The current ruins are from the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, though its foundation is from the time of Jesus in the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE. The main room of the synagogue measures 80 feet by 61 feet. This would have been a very large structure for a small town like Capernaum. Amazingly, archeologist have discovered an inscription somewhat verifying the information in this chapter. **“An inscription recording the erection by a Gentile of a proseuche, ‘a (Jewish) place of prayer,’ is known.”** (The Gospel according to Luke I-IX: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, page 652). There is evidence that the Centurion built the synagogue. **“Amazingly, he had paid for the building of their synagogue, and had the reputation among the Jews of being a good and just man even though he was a Roman.”** (The Days of the Living Christ, Volume 1, W. Cleon Skousen, page 314).



**“The site of the ancient Capernaum had till comparatively recently been unknown. But its identification with the modern Tell Hum is now so satisfactory, that few would care to question it. What is even more interesting, the very ruins of that synagogue which the good centurion built have been brought to light; and, as if to make doubt impossible, its architecture is evidently that of the Herodian period.”** (Sketches of Jewish Social Life, Alfred Edersheim, page 143). Though there is no evidence that the Centurion lived in Capernaum, it was common for Roman troops to establish their stronghold near the synagogue. The synagogue was the center of Jewish religion, but it was



also the political and social center of the city. Roman typically wanted to keep close eyes on the various towns, and therefore the synagogue was a place of focus. The Roman fort in Jerusalem was adjacent to the Temple. Josephus records, “In Caesarea, the procurator’s residence, was the so-called ‘Italian Cohort’ (Acts 10.1), and these troops no doubt were part of the procurator’s escort on his customary appearance in Jerusalem at Passover time. From Rome, too, returned most of the ‘freedmen’, who had been taken prisoner in Pompey’s wars and then given their freedom (Philo, Leg. ad Cat. 155). They appear as attached to the synagogue mentioned in Acts 6.9 (the so-called ‘synagogue of the Libertines’, see p. 66), in which with its attendant guest house the Jewish pilgrims from Rome no doubt found shelter (Acts 2.10).” (Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus: An investigation into Economic and Social Conditions during the New Testament period, Joachim Jeremias, pages 63-64).

If the Centurion lived in Capernaum, it would make sense that he established his residence next to the synagogue. Regardless, **“It was no unusual thing for one man to build a synagogue at his own expense. If, as in this case, a Gentile built the sacred edifice, the Jews had no scruples in receiving the gift, even if he did not become a proselyte, as some suppose this centurion to have been. They held that the holiness of the place consisted, not so much in the building, as in**

**its being set apart and dedicated to holy uses.”** (Manners and Customs of the Bible, James M. Freeman, page 413). Whatever the traditions and customs may have been, it is evident that the Centurion built the synagogue and the Jews gladly accepted it. **“Of its builder, the good centurion, Canon Williams thus writes: ‘In what spirit the large-hearted Roman soldier had made his offering, the rich and elaborate carvings of cornices and entablatures, of columns and capitals, and niches, still attest.’ As for the ruler of that same synagogue, we know that it was Jairus, whose cry of anguish and of faith brought Jesus to his house to speak the life-giving ‘Talitha cumi’ over the one only daughter, just bursting into womanhood, who lay dead in that chamber, while the crowd outside and the hired minstrels made shrill, discordant mourning.”** (Sketches of Jewish Social Life, Alfred Edersheim, page 144).

**57 - not far from the house** – The word “house” is translated from the Greek word “οἶκος” or “oikia”. It means a house. We assume that we are referring to the centurion’s home. **“They approached Jesus and urged him strongly, ‘He deserves to be granted this by you, for he is well disposed toward our nation and has built us the synagogue. When he was still a little way off from the house, the centurion sent some friends to say to him, ‘Sir, trouble yourself no more, for I do not deserve to have you come in under my roof. This is why I did not even resume to approach you in person...’”** (The Gospel according to Luke I-IX: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, page 647).

**58 - sent friends** – The word “friends” is translated from the Greek word “φίλος” or “philos”. It means a friend, to be friendly with or wish well. It can also be used of associates and companions. We do not know if the friends were Roman, Jewish, servants or Elders. **“The centurion was almost certainly a Gentile, though he may have been a God-fearer,**



and therefore presumably reluctant to bring the sufferer to one whom he knew only as a Jewish healer. In the synoptic gospels the only occasion on which Jesus himself went to see the sick is in the case of Jairus' daughter." (Matthew: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, W.F. Albright and C.S. Mann, page 92). It appears that Jesus was willing; however, the centurion knew enough about Jewish Law to know that he was unclean. The centurion sent friends to Jesus to respectfully protect Jesus from his ritual impurity.

**59 - trouble not thyself** – The word "trouble" is translated from the Greek word "σκούλλω" or "skyllō". It means to skin, flay, rend, mangle, vex, trouble of annoy.

**60 - they were sent** – The phrase "they were sent" is translated from the Greek word "πέμπω" or "pempō". It means to send.

**61 - returning to the house** – The word "returning" is translated from the Greek word "ὑποστρέφω" or "hypostréphō". It means to turn back, to turn about, or to return.

**62 - whole** – The word "whole" is translated from the Greek word "ὑγιαίνω" or "hygiainō". It means to be sound, to be well, or to be in good health. The Codex Sinaiticus translates the phrase "the servant whole that had been sick" as "found the servant well." (Codex Sinaiticus: The H.T. Anderson New Testament, Translated by Henry Tompkins Anderson, Luke, Chapter 7, Verse 10, page 116).

Since the study of medicine and medical care was almost non-existent at the time of Jesus, the Jews relied on the supernatural for healing. Often magical talisman and herbal potions were used in healings, with little effect. They believed that illness was a punishment for sin. Therefore, recovery must be the will of God. **"The Rabbis considered, in one sense, every recovery from sickness as a 'miracle'. Said they: 'Greater is the miracle that occurs when a sick person escapes from a perilous disease than that which happened when Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah escaped from the fiery furnace. (Nedearim, 41 a).'"** (Studies in Pharisaism and the Gospels, first series, Cambridge, I. Abrahams, page 112).

It is believed that the entire episode concludes with reference to Isaiah 53:4-5, which speak Messianically. It states that the Messiah "carried our sorrows" and "with his stripes we are healed" or made whole. **"The Greek words (lambanein and bastazein) can be understood as Jesus' taking away, carrying away, the afflictions of the person healed, or as taking, carrying vicariously those afflictions."** (Matthew: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, W.F. Albright and C.S. Mann, page 94).

