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9-13-2020  
A ROMAN CENTURION

There are two different gospel accounts which tell of a Roman Centurion who had a very sick servant. He desired that Jesus would heal the servant. The stories are given in Matthew 8:5-13 and Luke 7:1-20. There is a notable difference in the two accounts. Matthew says the Centurion went to Jesus. Luke says the Centurion sent messengers to Jesus. We will look closely at Luke's account of it with messengers sent as ambassadors on behalf of the Centurion. His account goes into greater detail of the story than does Matthew's.

If our U.S. President sends a message to another country's ruler via an ambassador, it is the same legally as if our President had gone and personally delivered it himself. In that sense, the messengers in Luke would be the same as when Matthew said the Centurion went to Jesus. The ambassadors, messengers, were the same as if the very man himself had appeared, although he did not.

In Luke's version it says in verse 2 that the servant was on his death bed. Verse 3 says the Centurion sent elders of the Jews to ask Jesus to come and heal his servant. In verses 4 and 5 the Jews spoke highly of him to Jesus saying he was a very worthy man despite being a hated Roman officer. The Centurion's relationship was such that he had even built them a synagogue for worship. Jesus went with them.

In verses 6-8 it tells us that as Jesus grew near to the house, the Centurion sent more ambassadors, his friends, with a new message to Jesus. His message was (and I paraphrase it), *"Lord, I didn't feel worthy to go to you myself, nor do I feel worthy for you even to enter my house. I understand authority. I speak a word to my soldiers, and it gets done. If you just say the word, my servant will be healed."* Jesus marveled at such great faith, a faith he had not yet found among any of the Jews. Jesus honored his faith from a distance, and the servant was instantly healed.

The Centurion obviously had a deep respect for the Jews and their God, which was remarkable for one who grew up in a pagan environment. He clearly knew about Jesus and His miracle working power. He knew there was a divine anointing. He trusted in Jesus by faith. He clearly believed, but due to his pagan upbringing, he felt unworthy to even be in Jesus' presence.

The centurion's love for his valued servant prompted him to put his full faith in Jesus. Notice that Jesus did not see the servant, anoint him with oil, lay hands on him, or even speak face to face. From a distance, he spoke the word; the word went forth and accomplished its' work.

We have that same authority to speak a word and see it accomplished. There is no limit in distance. Prayer is not limited by distance, nor is faith. We have the same authority as Jesus did. We do it in His name and shall do even greater works than He did. (John 14:12-14). We must have faith, believe it, speak it, and take it to be "a done deal." The Centurion displayed that kind of faith, and so should we.