

A HARMONY OF THE GOSPELS
XLVI. Christ's Sanction Of Respect For His Divine Authority
(Matthew 8:5-13; Luke 7:1-10)

I. Introduction

- A. Peter A. Bien claimed that Jesus was “a human being . . . not a unique Son of God,” and Unitarian minister F. Forrester Church held “that Jesus was . . . divine precisely to the extent that we are divine” (Josh Simon, “Who Was Jesus?”, Life, December 1994, p. 71). Obviously, these men did not hold Jesus to be the Creator God.
- B. Christ's healing of a centurion's servant in Matthew 8:5-13 and Luke 7:1-10 reveals Jesus's sanction of the centurion's recognition of His great divine authority. We view the event for our insight and edification:

II. Christ's Sanction Of Respect For His Divine Authority, Matthew 8:5-13; Luke 7:1-10.

- A. We know from Luke 7:1-3 and 6-7 that the centurion who sought Christ to heal his servant was **not** a proselyte to Judaism, for a proselyte would have no reason not to approach Christ directly, nor would he hesitate to have Christ enter his home (J. Dwight Pentecost, The Words and Works of Jesus Christ, 1991, p. 190, citing Alfred Edersheim, The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, 1912, vol. 1, p. 546) This centurion was a Gentile, and troops like him were recruited from the Samaritans and Gentiles of Caesarea, *Ibid.*
- B. Nevertheless, this centurion loved Israel, and he had funded and built the synagogue at Capernaum, the remains of which exist to this day and testify to the centurion's financial liberality due to its evident “rich and elaborate carvings of cornices and entablatures, of capitals and niches,” *Ibid.*; Luke 7:5.
- C. The centurion heard of Jesus' miracles, so he sent of the Hebrew people in Capernaum to Jesus to beg Him to come and heal his servant who was ill and near death, Luke 7:1-3. The Hebrew elders told Jesus that this centurion was worthy to be helped due to his love for Israel and for his liberality in building their synagogue, so Jesus started to go with them to heal the centurion's servant, Luke 7:6a.
- D. The centurion had evidently heard how Jesus had helped publicans and sinners of the Hebrew people, so he decided to risk asking Jesus to help him with his servant though the centurion was a Gentile and not even a proselyte to Judaism (*Ibid.*, Pentecost, p. 190-191, citing Edersheim, vol. 1, p. 547).
- E. However, when Jesus was not far from the centurion's house, the centurion sent some friends out to Jesus, telling Him not to trouble Himself to come any further since he felt unworthy for Jesus to enter his house, Luke 7:6b. The centurion explained that as a military man, he understood the chain of command that existed between Jesus and him since he himself as part of a military chain of command took or gave orders without the need for the commanding officer to be present, Luke 7:7-8. The centurion recognized Jesus' great authority simply to give the command even from a distance and for God or the angels of God to obey His order and to minister to heal the centurion's servant.
- F. Christ responded to this message by turning around and addressing the Hebrew people who were following Him, stating that He had not found such great faith in all Israel, Luke 7:9.
- G. Matthew's account adds Christ's claim that many Gentiles would come from the east and west and sit down to dine with Israel's resurrected patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven for their faith in Christ and His divine identity and hence authority, but that many Hebrew people would be cast out into outer darkness where there would be weeping and gnashing of teeth in great regret for having failed to believe in Christ and His authority as the Son of God, Matthew 8:11-12.
- H. Jesus then informed the friends of the centurion to go their way back to the centurion's house, and as the centurion had believed, that the healing he had requested would occur, Matthew 8:13a. They returned, and found that the centurion's servant had been healed the very moment of Jesus spoke the word, Matthew 8:13b.

Lesson: *Though the centurion was an uncircumcised Gentile to whose home he could not properly have Jesus as an Orthodox Hebrew even enter, the centurion in great faith in Jesus and His authority from God merely sought Christ's command for the centurion's servant to be healed, and Jesus healed him. Jesus also noted that though many Hebrew people would be cast into outer darkness with weeping and gnashing of teeth for having rejected Him, many Gentiles like this centurion would come from the east and west and fellowship with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in His Messianic Kingdom for their faith in Christ and recognition of His authority as the Son of God.*

Application: *(1) May we recognize that Jesus viewed Himself as God with full divine authority, that we might believe in Him to be saved. (2) May we believers realize that the Word of God bears God's full divine authority and hence obey it, knowing that we will give a full account of our response to the Lord's Word when we meet Him.*