

A Study of the Christ

Text

	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Jesus heals a Centurion's servant	8:5-13		7:1-10	
Widow of Nain's son is raised			7:11-17	
2 of John's disciples question Jesus	11:2-6		7:18-23	
Jesus commends John the Baptist	11:7-19		7:24-35	

Overriding Principles

- Faith is best illustrated in trustful obedience, but human faith is never without its moments of doubt.
- The great enemy, death, lacks its finality when confronted by the Christ.

Main Points

- Now when Jesus heard this, He marveled, and said to those who were following, "Truly I say to you, I have not found such great faith with anyone in Israel" (Matt. 8:10).
- And He came up and touched the coffin and said, "Young man, I say to you arise!" And the dead man sat up and began to speak. And Jesus gave him back to his mother (Lk. 7:14-15).
- And He answered and said to them, "Go and report to John what you have seen and heard; the blind receive sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have the Gospel preached to them" (Lk. 7:22).

Secondary Points of History, Culture, Words, and Grammar

- Centurions play a variety of important roles in the New Testament (i.e. Lk. 23:47; Acts 10:22; 22:26; 22:17-23; 24:23; 27:1, 43).

- A centurion was a somewhat like a cross between a captain and a sergeant, the most important practical position in the officer's core of the Roman army.
- A difference between Matthew and Luke's account of the centurion is that Matthew pictures him as speaking directly to Jesus while Luke has him speaking through Jewish elders. There is no contradiction, but rather an interesting contrast of cultures. In Hebrew culture, one representing another was often spoken of in terms that apply to one who sent the representative (i.e. Ex. 3:1-6; 20:1-17; Heb. 2:1-5; Acts 7:53; Heb. 1:1-2). Western culture, Luke wrote to a Greek audience, is more literal in such matters.
- In addition to the centurion, it is interesting to study the people Jesus especially noticed and called attention to (i.e. Matt. 9:20-22; 15:21-28; Mk. 12:41-44).
- Faith trusts (**Matt. 8:8-10**)!
- The Jews did not have a corner on the market of Godliness, a relationship with God is first a matter of the heart, mere outward ceremony cannot substitute for true faith (**Matt. 8:11-12**).
- Jesus is not, as God, an impersonal, untouchable man. He can be touched by our sorrows and He wants to touch us with His comfort (**Lk. 7:11-15**; cf. Heb. 4:14-16; Lk. 19:41-43).
- *Fear*, perhaps best understood as being like the loving respect or reverence a child has for a parent, is a necessary component if we are to sincerely give God glory (**Lk. 7:16**; cf. Isa. 6:1-8; Lk. 5:1-11; Eccl. 12:13).
- John had come to know that Jesus was the Messiah on the day that Jesus came to him to be baptized (Jn. 1:29-34). Yet, even John had moments while under duress when he needed reassurance (**Matt. 11:2-3**).
- Jesus deeds and words speak for themselves; He can be none other than God in flesh (**Matt. 11:4-5**).
- Jesus is not always what we expect, we must therefore be careful that in our weakness we do not find offense in the things He represents and demands (**Matt. 11:6**; **Lk. 7:23**).
- Gospel preaching is not for soft men (**Matt. 11:7-11**)!
- How is it that John the Baptizer had no man born of woman that excelled him, yet those *least* in the kingdom of heaven were greater than John? Commonly it is said that those in the church, the Messianic expression of kingdom, since they have a better situation, are superior to John (i.e. (Heb. 8:1-13, etc.). This may well be

true, however, might Jesus be contrasting the *born of woman* aspect of humanity with the *kingdom* citizenship possibility for humanity? The saved are always in God's kingdom, be it pre-messianic or the Kingdom of Christ (cf. I Cor. 15:20-28). Might Jesus be making a point about not trusting in personal goodness, but realizing that men have hope only in their being accepted by God in grace? Perhaps this explains **Matthew 11:12-13** by showing that a person cannot force his way into the kingdom, rather he must enter it by grace?

- John fulfilled the prophecies about the coming of E lijah, not that he was a reincarnated E lijah, but that both in prophetic simile and metaphor, he came as a man of E lijah's makeup (**Matt. 11:14**; Mal. 4:5; Matt. 17:10-13; Mk. 9:11-13; Lk. 1:7; Jn. 1:21).
- How revealing it is to know that the religious leaders of Jesus' day were the very ones to most completely reject God's saving message, while the common people were most prone to give God heed (**Lk. 7:29-30**).
- It is a sad fact that men, though created in God's image, are notorious for not listening to God, regardless of how He speaks (**Matt. 11:16-19**; note **Lk. 7:35**). The externals are often used as an excuse for why God is not entertained, but when externals change, the rejection continues. When all is considered, it is God who is clearly vindicated.

Relationship to the Church

- Christianity is a religion that both exists and thrives through faith, a trust in God that is clearly seen in the deeds of the saved.
- Among the people of God, comfort for those in distress is not an option.
- We must grow to feel the joys and sorrows of one another.
- Doubt is unavoidable, but it will, through faith, always find that God will provide.
- Greatness is in God, not in self.
- The tactics of men used to gain place and power in the church are unacceptable to God.
- Let us be on our guard that we do not require of God that He caters to our foolishness—He will not.
- Let us have a heart to accept God however He chooses to present the truths of His word.

- God's words and deeds speak for themselves; let them bring us comfort in time of doubt and distress.
- A realization of our sinfulness as opposed to an inflated sense of our importance is needed if we are to hear when God speaks.

Who is Jesus?

- He is the one who notices and complements the people who are in keeping with the holy character of God.
- **He cares!**
- He calls things what they are.
- He bids death to depart, and it does.
- He transformed everyday life into something special by bringing God into the work-a-day world of men and women.