

LESSON 26

Scripture Passage: Luke 7:1-17; Matthew 8:5-13

BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

In Old Testament times, only the people of Israel were God's chosen ones to salvation. People from all the other nations were heathen idol-worshippers and were called unclean by the Israelites. That was God's plan for Old Testament times; but now the New Testament times had come and Jesus had begun to teach that God's salvation would be spread out for people from all nations. This was hard for both the Jews and the Gentiles to understand. Our lesson will tell more about it.

LESSON MATERIAL

Immediately after the sermon on the mount, Jesus healed the centurion's servant and raised the widow's son at Nain.

1. HEALING THE CENTURION'S SERVANT

- a. This centurion, captain of 100 Roman soldiers, was probably stationed in Capernaum (see Luke 7:1). Although he was a Gentile, he did not love their idols. His heart was in Israel. He loved its people and spent his money to build a synagogue in Capernaum. He also must have heard about the wonders Jesus spoke and did.
- b. Matthew tells that he asked Jesus to come and heal his servant, who was in great pain. Luke explains that the centurion himself did not come, but sent messengers to ask Jesus. The centurion knew that there was a division between the Jews and the Gentiles. He did not know that Jesus would heal that division. He was too humble and afraid to come himself; but he loved his servant so much he sent some Jews to ask Jesus the question. The Jews thought the centurion was a good man, and begged Jesus to come, vs. 4, 5.
- c. Jesus went with the messengers. Before they arrived, the centurion had second thoughts. It seemed to him that he was asking too bold a question of Jesus. How could he ask the Lord to come to a Gentile house? It was unfit, unclean according to Jewish rules. How could he ask the King of Israel to speak to anyone so unworthy as he? He was a Roman, a sinner, not good enough to stand next to Jesus. The centurion thought so little of himself that he sent friends the second time, too, instead of coming himself.
- d. These friends spoke a most beautiful message from the centurion to Jesus. The centurion believed in the *word* of Jesus. He knew that word had power, the power of the living God. If Jesus said the *word*, the servant would be better. The centurion explained that in the Roman army he was important. He had authority to command his soldiers to obey, vs. 8; and he made his authority to be a little picture of Jesus' great authority to command the spirit of healing to come over his servant.
- e. Jesus was amazed that He found such great faith in a Gentile, greater faith than He had found in Israel. The centurion had faith, not only that Jesus' word of power would heal his servant, but that Jesus' word of salvation would save him; for Jesus said (Matt. 8:11) that many (Gentiles) shall sit with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. The centurion was one of them. Each of us is one of them, too. Then Jesus spoke His word and the servant was healed the same hour.

2. RAISING THE WIDOW'S SON

- a. The next day Jesus went to the village of Nain, in the south part of Galilee (use map). It is the only time Nain is mentioned in Scripture. With His disciples and the throng of people that were following Him, Jesus met a funeral procession leaving the village at the gate. The dead were always buried outside the gates of cities in Israel.

- b. This meeting of the “much people” of the procession and the “much people” that followed Jesus did not just happen. God, in His wise council (plan) in eternity had willed this meeting to take place, so that Jesus might show His power in a special way to many people.
- c. A young man, the only son of a widow, had died. She had probably had to struggle to bring him up alone after his father died, and now she could not depend on him to help her as she grew older. It was a sad death. The Bible often speaks of the special sadness of an only son dying. Cf. Jer. 6:26; Zech. 12:10. Many people were mourning with her.
- d. Jesus knew her sadness and said, “Weep not.” Those two words were full of power, for Jesus was going to take the *cause* of her sadness away. He touched the open wicker coffin that was used in those days and the pall-bearers stood still. A sudden silence must have come over the crowd; and Jesus said, “Young man, I say unto thee, Arise.” vs. 14. The young man sat up and spoke.
- e. What great joy his mother must have had in her soul to have her son back; and how amazed the crowds of people were! The wonder of God’s grace that flashed down at Nain made them *fear*, for they saw with their own eyes the might and holiness of God. It made them *glorify* God, for they knew that it was performed by His power, vs. 16.
- f. We understand more than those multitudes did. We know that the young man had to die again, for Jesus had brought him back to this earth, not to heaven. Why did Jesus perform this miracle? To show that He truly was Immanuel, God with man: to show that He *is* life; to show that He *has power* over death. Compare the raising of this young man with the raising of the dead by the Old Testament prophets, Elijah and Elisha, I Kings 17:19-22; II Kings 4:34-37. They prayed, stretched themselves over the dead bodies, and begged God to give life. They had no power in themselves. Jesus took the young man’s hand and gave him life, out of Himself. That is the *sign* of the wonder: the sign of raising all His people from the power of sin and of death and the grave that sin brings with it, and bringing them to heaven, pure and holy. For He *is* the Resurrection.

POINT TO REMEMBER

The apostle John was here at Nain. He saw the God of life and death speaking through a human body, and He saw His power over sin and death. He was so amazed by that wonder that he later wrote: “we have seen with our eyes, we have looked upon, and our hands have handled the Word of life.” Every time we open His Book, we, too, are amazed by the wonders of our Word of life.

MEMORY WORK

“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life. . . declare we unto you,” I John 1:1, 3a.

RESOURCE MATERIAL

Trench, R.C., *Notes on the Parables and Miracles*, pp. 173-178; 187-190.