

## INTERNATIONAL BIBLE LESSONS.

## FOURTH QUARTER: STUDIES IN THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW.

A. D. 28.]

## LESSON I. THE CENTURION'S FAITH.

[Oct. 2.]

Matt. 8: 5-13.

[Commit to memory verses 8-10.]

THE WAY OVER.



5 And when Je'sus was entered into Ca-per-na-um there came unto him a centurion, beseeching him,  
6 And saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented.  
7 And Je'sus saith unto him, I will come and heal him.

8 The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof; but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed.

9 For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth;

and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it.

10 When Je'sus heard it, he marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.

11 And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with A-bra-ham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven;

12 But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

13 And Je'sus said unto the centurion, Go thy way: and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee. And his servant was healed in the self-same hour.

## General Statement.

After the Sermon on the Mount, the Saviour descended to the plain, and then led his followers to Capernaum, on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, the city which was his home during his Galilean ministry. Here he was met by a delegation of the elders from the synagogue, who besought him to come and heal a youth, who, though a slave, was beloved by his master, a Roman captain. We may wonder at the interest of these Jews in behalf of a Gentile, and a representative of the hated race which held its yoke over Israel. But it is explained in another gospel, where we learn that this centurion was a "proselyte of the gate," that is, a seeker after God, who had forsaken the worship of idols. He loved the people of Israel, for he found among them the knowledge of God; and he had shown his love by building for them a synagogue for worship, at his own expense. Hence he had endeared himself to the religious Jews of Capernaum, and they readily

bore his request that Jesus would come and heal his favorite servant. The Saviour was above all the petty distinctions of church or of race, and he at once granted the petition, and turned his steps toward the centurion's house. On the way he was met by another delegation, bearing the message that he need not come, for the Gentile's house was not worthy for him to enter; and it was not needful, since by a word he could heal the sick; for (said the Roman), "I too am a commissioned officer, and have authority. I know what it is to command and be obeyed." He saw in Jesus one who was the representative of the power of the Highest, able to command invisible hosts. The Saviour wondered at such faith, which not even Israel could show, and declared that here was a foretaste of many from the Gentile world who should find a place in the kingdom of God.

## Explanatory and Practical Notes.

verse 5. And when Jesus. He had just come from the mount of the sermon, and was followed by great multitudes of people. Into Capernaum. One of the principal cities on the Sea of Galilee, situated on its north western border. It was the home of several of the disciples, and of Jesus during most of his ministry. Yet comparatively few of its people accepted Christ, and he addressed to Capernaum some of his sharpest rebukes. It has passed away so completely that its very site is uncertain. Opinions differ between the location at Tell Ham and Khan Minyeh.

There came unto him. The account in Luke informs us that this man did not come in person, but sent to Jesus through the elders of the Jews; and that moreover he had shown his love for the Jewish people by building them a synagogue. It is possible that the ruins of the ancient synagogue at Tell Ham may be the one referred to, Luke 7: 5. A centurion. A Roman military captain, commanding a hundred soldiers. It is noticeable that every centurion to whom reference is made in the New Testament receives an honorable mention. The centurion at the cross of Christ gave testimony to his divinity: the centurion Cornelius was the first Gentile member of the Christian Church; and the centurion Julius was a considerate friend to his prisoner Paul. The Roman soldiers were the first to bring the Gospel to Great Britain; and in every age bright illustrations of Christianity have been found in the profession of arms. (1) He who will can be a Christian in any circumstances.

6. Saying, Lord. The title "Lord" was used out of respect, but did not necessarily convey a full recognition of Jesus as the Messiah. My servant. Literally, "boy," as a servant is often termed, though probably the reference was to a young person, beloved by his master. The servants in that age were mostly slaves. (2) We should feel an interest in our servants and employees, and regard their physical, mental, moral, and spiritual well-being. Sick of the palsy. The disease may have been either paralysis, or lock-jaw, since both were included under the same name in

ancient times. Grievously tormented. Suffering acute pain.

7. Jesus saith to him. Sending his message by the interceding elders. I will come and heal him. Literally, "Coming, I will heal him." The healing took place while the Saviour was on the way, and in advance of his coming. The love of Christ dies faster than his feet walk.

8. The centurion answered. Through a second company of his friends, who went to meet Jesus and bore the message. Luke 7: 6. I am not worthy. He knew that Jesus was a Jew, and would contract ceremonial defilement by entering a Gentile house; but, more than this, he recognized in Jesus a divine being, perhaps greater than a prophet, endowed with miraculous power; and he felt himself as a sinner unfit to be in his presence. See a similar feeling on the part of a disciple, Luke 5: 8. (3) The clearer our insight, the greater will be our consciousness of our own unworthiness. Speak the word. Gentile though he was, he recognized the divine power of Jesus far more clearly than did the Jews with all their superior enlightenment. My servant shall be healed. A word from the good Physician, and the work of transformation will be wrought. (4) Note that all Christ's miracles or the body are symbols of his mightier spiritual working.

9. For I am. Rev. Ver., "For I also am." The word also is essential to the interpretation, for it shows the comparison in the centurion's mind between the Saviour and himself. A man under authority. He recognized the fact that as he himself was a commissioned officer of the greatest empire of earth, and possessed authority, so Jesus bore a commission from the King of heaven, and could give his commands. Having soldiers under me. As there were soldiers and servants to execute his bidding, though he was only a subordinate, how much more must there be invisible agents to do the will of Jesus, the messenger and representative of the Most High! I say to this man. The centurion needed not to do: he had but to speak, such