

LESSON IV.

THE CENTURION'S SERVANT HEALED

April 22, 1900

Luke 7: 1-10. Commit to memory vs. 9, 10. Read Matt. 9: 27-34; Mark: 2: 23 to 3: 19; John 5.

1 Now when he had ended all his sayings in the audience of the people, he entered into Capernaum.

2 And a certain centurion's servant, who was dear unto him, was sick, and ready to die.

3 And when he heard of Jesus, he sent unto him the elders of the Jews, beseeching him that he would come and heal his servant.

4 And when they came to Jesus, they besought him instantly, saying, That he was worthy for whom he should do this.

5 For he loveth our nation, and he hath built us a synagogue.

6 Then Jesus went with them. And when he was not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to him, saying unto him, Lord, trouble not thyself;

Revised Version.—1 After; 2 Ears; 3 At the point of death; 4 Concerning; 5 Omit the; 6 Asking; 7 Save; 8 Earnestly; 9 Is worthy that thou shouldst do this for him; 10 Himself built us our synagogue; 11 Come; 12 The word; 13 To this one; 14 Omit him about; 15 Multitude; 16 Omit that had been sick.

EXPLANATION

Connection—This Lesson, and perhaps the next five, should have preceded the last one, which the International Lesson Committee introduced earlier as an Easter Lesson. The healing of the centurion's servant was probably in the mid-summer of A.D. 28, several months before the raising of Jairus' daughter, and close after the Sermon on the Mount.

1, 2. His sayings; the Sermon on the Mount. In the audience; in the hearing of the people. Into Capernaum; His home, in so far as He had any home, after His rejection at Nazareth (Matt. 4: 13). A certain centurion's servant. A centurion was a commander of a hundred soldiers, a minor division of the Roman army. The centurions mentioned in the New Testament are a most interesting set of men. Matt. 27: 54; Acts 10: 1; Acts 27: 43, and the present passage. Servant; a slave. Dear unto him. He was a humane master. Slaves might be bought and sold like cattle. At a time when a slave was thought to have no rights, he treated his with affection. Was sick; of palsy, very ill, "grievously tormented." (Matt. 8: 6.)

3. Heard of Jesus; reports of Christ's previous miracles in Capernaum and elsewhere would be brought him (John 4: 46-52; Mark 1: 21-25). Elders of the Jews. Either the elders of the synagogue, as in last lesson, or perhaps the elders of the people, the magistrates of the town. (Deut. 19: 12.) He sent the elders instead of going himself, through modesty and a sense of unworthiness.

4. Instantly; urgently. Compare "Be instant in season." (2 Tim. 4: 2). He was worthy; because of what he had done. They inferred his character from his actions, as they go on to tell. The fact of Jewish elders pleading for a Gentile Roman shows the high estimation in which he was held.

for I am not worthy that thou shouldst enter under my roof.

7 Wherefore neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee: but say in a word, and my servant shall be healed.

8 For I also am a man set under authority, having under me soldiers, and I say unto one, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it.

9 When Jesus heard these things, he marvelled at him, and turned him about, and said unto the people that followed him, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.

10 And they that were sent, returning to the house, found the servant whole that had been sick.

5. Loveth our nation. This shows that the centurion was a Roman and Gentile. And himself built us our synagogue (Rev. Ver.); that is, at his own expense. Such favors were not uncommon by rich Gentile proselytes, as this centurion probably was. The ruins of a well-finished synagogue, which may be the one here referred to, has been found at Tell Hum, one of the supposed sites of Capernaum.

6. Not far from the house; which was evidently in another part of Capernaum. I am not worthy. As a Gentile who had learned to honor the God of the Jews, he revered this great Jewish teacher, and besides, the wonderful words and works of Jesus had made him feel, "He is truly from heaven." His own heart and life seemed vile and unworthy in comparison. (See Luke 5: 8.)

7. Neither . . . worthy to come. He felt himself unworthy either to go to Jesus or to have Jesus come to him. Say in a word. He had heard how Jesus had cured the nobleman's son by the power of a word (John 4: 46-54). My servant. Not the same word as in v. 2, but an endearing word, meaning "a boy."

8. I also am . . . under authority. The tribunes or chief captains (Acts 21: 31) were over him. Perhaps he thought that Jesus, too, was under authority, a prophet with power given Him from God. He did not yet know that He was Very God. I say unto one, etc. So, he reasons, can Jesus do. Let Him but speak the word, and invisible powers will wait upon His will.

9, 10. Marvelled; at his faith. In Mark 6: 6, Jesus wonders at unbelief. So great faith; that could believe in His power to heal at a distance from the sick. No, not in Israel; amongst God's people, where it might naturally have been looked for. Found the servant whole. Faith has its reward.