

# He said 'I am a man under authority'

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**By Dave Havir**

BIG SANDY, Texas—Sometimes people ask me: What do you think about people using the example of the centurion of Matthew 8 and Luke 7 to support their decision to remain in a religious governmental structure whose preaching includes some heresy?

Here is what I tell them. I believe people have the right to choose to remain in a religious governmental structure. But they shouldn't use the example of the centurion to justify their decision.

Sometimes people ask me: What do you think about people using the example of the centurion to support their decision to seek out a new religious governmental structure for their loyalty?

Here is what I say:

I believe people have the right to seek out a new religious governmental structure. But they shouldn't use the example of the centurion to justify their decision.

(For the record, I understand that people should not choose evil over good. But I realize people have the right to choose the environment in which they will seek to obey God.)

The purpose of this article is to review the real lesson of the centurion who amazed Jesus.

## **Commander approached Jesus**

After the Sermon on the Mount Jesus entered Capernaum (Matthew 8:5). A centurion approached Him and told Him about a servant who was lying at home with the palsy (verse 6). The commander of 100 soldiers in the Roman army described his servant as suffering grievous torment.

Luke's account gives a few details about the Jews' affection for the centurion. The elders of the Jews besought Jesus to heal the servant (Luke 7:3). Why were the Jews so concerned about the servant of this Roman officer? This centurion built a synagogue for the Jews (verse 5).

Going back to Matthew's account, we see that Jesus offered to go to the servant and heal him (Matthew 8:7).

But the centurion resisted that idea (verses 8-9).

- First, he told Jesus he was not worthy for Jesus to travel to his house.
- Second, he told Jesus that Jesus' speaking the command would be sufficient for his servant to be healed.

To support this concept the centurion made the comment that is often misapplied to support religious governmental structures: "For I am a man under authority."

### **Remember the context**

What was the context of the quote?

- The context was the centurion's acknowledgment that the word of the Lord was powerful. The centurion used an example to support his belief in the power and authority of Jesus.
- The centurion knew the power of being over people. When the centurion told a soldier under him to go, that soldier would go. When the centurion told a soldier under him to come, that soldier would come. When the centurion told a soldier under him to do something, that soldier would do it.
- This officer was *not* using this example of his military experience to show that people should be *over* people in a religious sense in a religious structure.
- This officer was *not* using this example of his military experience to show that people should be *under* people in a religious sense in a religious structure.
- The centurion was showing his recognition of the power, authority and stature of Jesus Christ!

### **Jesus marveled**

When Jesus heard the comment, He marveled (verse 10).

Then He told those who followed Him: I have not found such faith, not even in Israel.

The Roman soldier showed an approach that Jesus admired. Jesus was *not* admiring the notion of a religious class system. He was admiring this man's faith in the word (and authority) of the Lord.

The amazing quotes do not end there. Jesus said more.

- Jesus said: Many shall come from the east and west and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the Kingdom of Heaven (verse 11).
- Jesus said: The children of the Kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness, and there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth (verse 12).
- Jesus said: As you have believed, so it will be done unto you (verse 13).

The servant was healed.

**A saint under authority**

Many people who attempt to follow Christ will be surprised when they discover that they have had a misguided concept about "God's government on earth."

The centurion was a man under authority. Each of Jesus' followers should also be a saint under authority.

The centurion proved he wanted to be under Jesus' authority. Is that what you are proving?