

JESUS HEALS A CENTURION'S SERVANT: RECEIVING AND REJECTING MEN MATHEW 08: 05-13

Introduction

This is a great passage showing that Jesus is definitely the Messiah (v. 13). He has the Messianic power to receive men (vv. 10-11) and to reject men (v. 12). He can receive any man who truly trusts Him, no matter how far away the man may be or how many barriers may seem to stand in the way. As Messiah, He also has the power to reject the unbelieving (v. 12).

Note the deep emotion felt by Jesus throughout this experience. He was aroused to make the statements He made and to prove His Messianic power (vv. 5-7, 10-13). Mathew's apparent purpose in recording this miracle was to show that Jesus did possess the Messianic power to do two things.

1. Jesus possessed the power to receive any man, regardless of the barrier. He could span every conceivable barrier.
 - a. The ideological barrier: the centurion was a man *rejected*, despised, and hated by the Jews (See *Centurion*, Acts 23:23); yet Jesus could reach him and meet his need. He had the power to span and to overcome the ideas and prejudices that divided man against man, neighbour against neighbour, race against race, nation against nation, employee against employer, child against parent, wife against husband.
 - b. The physical barriers: the centurion's servant was desperately ill and some miles away, yet Jesus could reach the servant. His power could span all the physical barriers, no matter how far away or how severe the condition.

Jesus Heals a Centurion's Servant: Receiving and Rejecting Men

c. The spiritual barrier: the centurion was a Gentile, considered by the Jews to be lost spiritually, an alien and an enemy to the people of God. But Jesus had the power to reach the man, to pierce the spiritual barriers of his soul and save him. Jesus can reach the soul of any man who will believe in Him, no matter how lost or how alien or how much of an enemy to God he has been.

2. Jesus possessed the power to reject any man, even those who professed to be children of the kingdom, that is, the religious (v. 12).

The great faith of the centurion aroused Jesus to show the above. Jesus strongly demonstrated that He receives any man who truly believes, but He rejects those who do not believe, no matter who they are.

- I. Jesus' great power was aroused to receive the rejected (vv. 5-9).
- II. Jesus' great power was aroused to embrace believers of every nationality (vv. 10-11).
- III. Jesus' great power will reject the unbelieving (v. 12).
- IV. Jesus' great power proved His Messiahship (v. 13).

ACTS 23: 23 CENTURION

Centurion is an officer in the Roman armed forces. He commanded about one hundred soldiers. To the Jew, the centurion had three things against him: he was bitterly hated because he was non-Jewish, a Gentile; he was of the nation that had conquered Palestine, Rome; and he was of the armed and occupying force. Every time a centurion is mentioned in the New Testament it is with honour.

1. There was the centurion who had great faith in the power of Jesus (Mt. 8:5).
2. There was the centurion who recognized Jesus hanging on the cross as the Son of God (Mt. 27:54).
3. There was the centurion, Cornelius, who was the first Gentile convert to the Christian church (Acts 10:22).
4. There was the centurion who recognized that Paul was a Roman citizen and rescued him from the rioting mob (Acts 23:17-23).
5. There was the centurion who took steps to deliver Paul from being murdered after being informed of the Jews' plan (Acts 24:23).
6. There was the centurion whom Felix ordered to escort and look after Paul (Acts 24:23).
7. There was the centurion who escorted Paul on his last journey to Rome. He treated Paul with great courtesy and accepted him as the leader when the storm struck the ship (Acts 27:43).

The structure of the Roman military was built around the Roman legion which consisted of 6000 men.

=> The Roman legion was divided into cohorts: each cohort had 600 soldiers. This means there were ten cohorts in each legion.

=> The cohort was divided into centuries. Each century had 100 men and was led by a centurion. The centurions were the backbone of the Roman legions. They were the leaders in closest contact with the men; therefore, they were the officers upon whom the top brass depended so heavily. □

I. *Mathew 08:05–09 The Centurion's Humility Arouses Jesus' Power*

Jesus' great power was aroused to receive the rejected.

1. Jesus' power was aroused by the centurion's humility. The man's humility is seen in two most unusual acts.
 - a. He was a Gentile and a Roman officer, yet he came to a Jew for help. Approaching a Jew was socially unacceptable and unheard of for a Gentile but being an officer of Rome made it worse. Jesus knew that the centurion had great courage and humility to approach Him for help.
 - b. The centurion came to Jesus as "Lord," acknowledging His superior being and Messiahship. He approached Him as the One who could meet his need. Note several things.

=> He *knew and confessed* that he had a need, a need that other men could not meet. Knowing and confessing are both essential when a person really wants a need to be met.

=> He knew where to go and to whom to go in order to have his need met. He was willing to do all he could to have his need met. He then trusted Jesus to satisfy his need. "The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit." (Psa. 34:18).

Isa 57:15 For this is what the high and lofty One says - he who lives forever, whose name is holy: "I live in a high and holy place, but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite."

Isa 66:2 "Has not my hand made all these things, and so they came into being?" declares the LORD. "This is the one I esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word."

Jesus' response to the centurion's cry for help was forceful: "I will." These words declare that Jesus will span and overcome all the barriers and divisions of men to meet a man's need (Mt. 8:5-13). He will meet the need of anyone who truly trusts Him: master or servant, noble or common, parent or child, rich or poor, man or woman, sinner or saint, doomed or saved, helpless or capable, hopeless or assured. Jesus has no favourites. He does not favour one person over another.

Acts 10:34-35 *Then Peter began to speak: "I now realize how true it is that God does not show favouritism but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right."*

Rom 10:12 *For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile - the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him.*

1 Pet 1:17 *Since you call on a Father who judges each man's work impartially, live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear.*

Thought 1. The greatest of men must approach Jesus *begging*, totally dependent upon Him. There is no other way. Position, power, fame, wealth, and social acceptability must be laid aside. Our thoughts cannot be focused on self and social acceptability, but only upon Christ and His power if we wish Him to meet our need.

Thought 2. Our thoughts - what our minds are upon - reveal the sincerity of our hearts when approaching Jesus.

- 1) If our thoughts are focused on self and social acceptability, then our sincerity is weak and lacking. Jesus knows we care more for this world than for Him.
- 2) If our thoughts are focused on Him and His power, then Jesus knows that we are really depending upon Him to help us, regardless of what others may think or say.

Thought 3. "I will." Note that the emphasis is on the *Lord Himself*, on who He is, not on His coming to the centurion's home. It is the Lord Himself who will meet the soldier's need.

2. Jesus' power was aroused by the centurion's sense of unworthiness. The centurion did not say, "My servant is not worthy to have you come"; but he said, "I do not deserve to have you come under my roof." A sense of *personal unworthiness* gripped him. Jesus Christ is the Sovereign Lord. He is the One who alone has the power to meet our need. Therefore, we have to confess our inadequacy and unworthiness to have the Lord help us.

Mat 23:12 *"For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted".*

Rom 12:3 *For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you.*

James 4:6 *But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble".*

James 4:10 *Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.*

Psa 34:18 *The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.*

Psa 138:6 *Though the LORD is on high, he looks upon the lowly, but the proud he knows from afar.*

Thought 1. Socially, the greater proclaimed his inferiority to the lesser. Society considered the centurion greater than the poor preacher from Nazareth. But the centurion humbly confessed a deep unworthiness

before Christ. He saw something of God in Christ, something that caused him to humble himself before Christ.

- 1) We are to see God in Christ.
- 2) We are to see value in every man, the value that God puts upon even the poorest and unacceptable. We are to humble ourselves before all, no matter how it may hurt.

Phil 2:3-4 *Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.*

3. Jesus' power was aroused by the centurion's love - his love for a slave. The centurion was pouring out his heart for another person (intercessory prayer). In the eyes of society the person should have been meaningless to him, yet the man meant much to him. He loved this *meaningless* person, this slave.

Thought 1. What a lesson for us! The great need is for intercessory prayer and love for all, no matter who they are and what others may think.

Mat 22:39 *“And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’”*

John 15:12 *“My command is this: ‘Love each other as I have loved you.’”*

Rom 12:9 *Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good.*

1 Th 3:12 *May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you.*

James 2:8 *If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, “Love your neighbour as yourself,” you are doing right.*

Thought 2. The believer is to love. He is not only to love those close to him, but he is to love all. The centurion loved a slave. Our love can be measured by the centurion's love.

- 1) How much do we carry the needs of our loved ones to the Lord?
- 2) How much do we carry the needs of slaves, those alien to us, to the Lord?
- 3) How much do we look after and care for those of our own household, whether aged and disabled parents or children or spouse? (See *Care and Love for Slave, Intercession*, Mt. 8:8).

4. Jesus' power was aroused by the centurion's great faith (See *Faith*, Mt. 8:8-10). The centurion believed in the great power of Jesus to span and to overcome all barriers - even the barrier of space and time. What great faith!

Thought 1. The centurion's faith was great because it was a personal faith in Jesus (See *Faith*, Mt. 8:8-10)...

- in Jesus' supreme authority and power.
- in Jesus as Sovereign Lord over all: all men and all nature. Note this included himself, a soldier of Rome, the conquering nation; it included space and time and the physical corruption of disease (Jer. 23:23-24). He believed Jesus to be Lord over both the kingdom of nature and the kingdom of heaven.

MATHEW 08: 08

CARE AND LOVE FOR SLAVE, INTERCESSION

This is the only recorded time a person came to Jesus on behalf of a slave or servant. There were several times when parents brought children (Mt. 9:18-34; Lk. 7:11-18; Jn. 4:46-54), and friends brought friends (Lk. 18:26), but this soldier and officer brought his servant. Note that the slave, being sick with palsy, would have been completely helpless and useless to the centurion. He was disabled for his work, yet the centurion took care of him. He had not *rejected* him, sent him to some other home, or put him under someone else's care. He had personally *received* the slave with open arms and was looking after him. This was bound to have affected Jesus dramatically.

Jesus used this occasion to strongly demonstrate a much needed lesson: He receives any man who truly believes and rejects any man who does not believe, no matter who he is. □

MATHEW 08: 08–10 FAITH

The centurion illustrated perfectly what faith is (Heb. 11:6).

1. It is believing that *Christ is*: that He is sovereign Lord. All power is subject to Him (Heb. 11:6; see Mt.8:6).
2. It is believing that “Christ rewards those who earnestly seek Him” (Heb. 11:6; see Mt. 8:8-9).

Note that the centurion had diligently sought Christ, believing Christ could meet his need. Many believers so seek the Lord, but what made the centurion's faith so much greater was his belief that the

Word of Christ was all that was needed. Christ did not have to be present for the need to be met. As a centurion, he had authority over men. All he had to do was issue an order, and it was carried out whether he was present or not. He was a sovereign commander. He was saying, “How much more are you, O' Lord. But just say the word, and my need will be met.” Forceful - powerful: a great lesson on faith for all.

Heb 11:6 *And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.*

Mat 28:18 *Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.”*

Psa 37:05 *Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him and he will do this.*

Psa 118:8 *It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in man.*

Isa 26:04 *Trust in the LORD forever, for the LORD, the LORD, is the Rock eternal.*

Isa 55:06 *Seek the LORD while he may be found; call on him while he is near.* □

II. *Mathew 08: 10–11 The Great Power of Jesus Christ*

Jesus' great power was aroused to embrace believers of every nationality.

1. Jesus' power to embrace the Roman centurion. Jesus *opened* His heart and arms and *embraced* the centurion. This He did despite the fact

that the man was despised and rejected as a Gentile. (Imagine. He was not just a Gentile, but a Roman and a soldier, a citizen and soldier of the nation that enslaved the Jews.) Jesus not only received the centurion, He commended him for his faith. Note: He did not commend him for who he was nor for what he had done as a soldier.

Thought 1. True belief is a rare thing. Not many believe, yet belief in Jesus Christ is one of the greatest qualities of human life - a quality ignored, neglected, and in some cases denied.

Thought 2. There are times when recognition and commendation are to be given. But again, note for what: it is for spiritual strength. However, caution should always be exercised lest the temptation of pride and self-importance set in.

Thought 3. What Jesus is after is faith. Note His emotion over faith: He marvelled. He was aroused to blurt out that He shall embrace all who come by faith, no matter who they are or from where they come.

2. Jesus' power to embrace the "many" from every place, from all nations (See *Conversion of Gentiles*, Mt. 8:11).

Mat 22:9 "Go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find."

John 7:37 On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink."

Rom 10:12 For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile - the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him.

1 Tim 2:4 Who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.

Rev 22:17 The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life.

Thought 1. Who are to be saved? The centurion's faith stirred deep emotion within Christ, emotion so strong that He claimed several things.

- 1) Many will come - just as the centurion had come - by faith (Gal. 3:14; Eph. 2:8-9; see Rom. 4:11-12, 16).
- 2) Many will come - just as the centurion had come - from everywhere, the east and the west (Rev. 7:9; 21:24; see Mt. 24:3).
- 3) Many will sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in heaven (Heb. 2:10).

MATHEW 08: 11 CONVERSION OF GENTILES

"I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven." **Mathew 08:11**

Jesus used the centurion's great faith to predict a great revival among Gentiles in the future. We, of course, are in the midst of this great Gentile conversion, the Gentile conversion so clearly predicted by our Lord on the memorable day of the centurion's conversion.

1. The centurion had something unusual. He had whatever had given Abraham and Isaac and Jacob their entrance into heaven. *He had faith.* He was a Gentile, not a son of Abraham by birth, but he had just become a son of Abraham by faith (Rom. 4:11-12. See *Jews, the Seed of Abraham*, Rom. 4:1-25.)

2. The centurion was to do something unusual. He was to "take his place" with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in heaven. Jesus was saying that salvation shall come to the Gentiles (Rom. 9:25-33; 10:12-21; Gal. 3:13-14).
3. The centurion was an illustration, a foreshadowing of the coming conversion of the Gentiles (Rom. 9:25-33; Rom. 10:12-21). □

ROMANS 04:01–25

JEW, THE SEED OR OFFSPRING OF ABRAHAM

Abraham held a unique position in the Jewish nation, for he was the founder of the nation. He was the man whom God had challenged to be a witness to the other nations of the world - a witness to the only living and true God. God had appeared to Abraham and challenged him to leave his home, his friends, his employment, and his country. God made two great promises if Abraham would follow God unquestionably: Abraham would become the father of a new nation, and all nations of the earth would be blessed by his seed or offspring (Gen. 12:1-5; 13:14-17; 15:1-7; 17:1-8, 15-19; 22:15-18; 26:2-5, 24; 28:13-15; 35:9-12).

Scripture says Abraham did as God requested. He went out not knowing where he went (Heb. 11:8). He completely and unquestionably trusted God and took God at His word.

Now note: it was not Abraham's keeping of the law that pleased God. In fact, the law had not yet been given (Gal. 3:17). What pleased God and what caused God to justify Abraham was Abraham doing

as God had said. Abraham simply *believed* the promise of God that God would give him a new life - *in* a new nation - *with* a new people.

Note several things.

1. Abraham and his "seed" or "offspring" were the only ones to whom God gave the promises. This is emphatically stated (Rom. 4:13-25; Gal. 3:6-16, 26, 29).
2. Only a promise was given to Abraham (Rom. 4:13-21; Gal. 3:14, 18-21, 29). No other information whatsoever was given. God did not identify the country nor tell Abraham where he was to go. Neither did God tell Abraham when his wife (Sarah) would bear the seed (the male child) from whom the promised nation would be born. God made a simple promise, and all Abraham had to go on was that simple promise, that is, the sheer Word of God.
3. Only one condition was attached to the promise. Abraham had to believe God. No works whatsoever were involved.
4. Abraham did believe God (Gen. 12:4-5; Rom. 4:3, 11-22; Gal. 3:6; Heb. 11:8f).
5. Abraham was *counted righteous* because he believed God (Rom. 4:3-5, 9-13, 19-22; Gal. 3:6; see Gen. 15:6). God did not count him righteous because of who he was or what he had done. He simply believed God. Therefore, God took his faith and *counted* his faith as righteousness (Rom. 4:1-3).
6. The proof that Abraham really believed God was that he did what God had said. His faith *preceded* his obedience. He believed God and then he obeyed God. If he had not believed God, he would not have left his home or his employment. He would not have

left his familiar surroundings and meaningful relationships and personal attachments. The fact that he did as God asked was evidence that he believed the promise of God.

7. The man who believes God is the man who receives the promises of God (Rom. 4:5-12, 16-17, 23-25; Gal. 3:7-9, 14, 22, 26, 29). Paul argues that neither heritage nor nationality, neither merit nor works, neither the law nor the rules of the law have anything to do with the promises of God (Gal.3:6-7). The true children of Abraham are those who believe God - any person of any nation. In fact, God's promise that a nation would be born to Abraham and "his seed (offspring)" was the promise of an eternal nation. This eternal nation is to be of another world, of another dimension of being: the spiritual dimension, a dimension just as real as the physical dimension. But it is to have one distinction: every citizen is to be a believer - one who has believed God and His Word. This is exactly what this passage is saying: "They who believe are the children of Abraham, the children of God's promise. They are to be blessed along with faithful Abraham. They are to be the citizens of God's Kingdom, of 'the new heavens and the new earth.' (See Heb. 11:8-18; 2 Pet. 3:10-14.) □

III. *Mathew 08:12 Judgment of Unbelievers*

Jesus' great power shall reject the unbelieving. The judgment of unbelievers is to be terrible. Note: Jesus predicted that the Jews who persist in unbelief shall perish. They are rejected by God, despite the fact they had been chosen to be the children of God and had been given so many privileges (See *Israel, God's Special People*, Jn. 4:22; Rom. 9:1-33; 10:1-21).

1. There will be *darkness*: a region, a place, a habitation, a home of pitch black that forbids any sight whatsoever. A place without light, without gleam or hope of any light whatsoever. It is a place of utter darkness in which one lives completely incapacitated, helpless, and hopeless.

It is far away from the splendour and glory and brightness of God's presence. It is being cast into the gloom and blackness of the outer world. It is misery, the misery of a lost soul.

Mat 8:12 "But the subjects of the kingdom will be thrown outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Mat 22:13 "Then the king told the attendants, 'Tie him hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'"

2 Pet 2:17 These men are springs without water and mists driven by a storm. Blackest darkness is reserved for them.

Jude 1:6 And the angels who did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their own home - these he has kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for judgment on the great Day.

Job 18:5 The lamp of the wicked is snuffed out; the flame of his fire stops burning.

Prov 20:20 If a man curses his father or mother, his lamp will be snuffed out in pitch darkness.

2. There will be *weeping*: grief, loud grief, mourning, groaning, wailing, floods and floods of tears.

3. There will be *gnashing of teeth* (brugmos): grinding; biting in hostility and bitterness and indignation; spitefully snapping the teeth. It is rage, fury and despair because nothing can be done. A person's state is permanently determined.

Mat 8:12 *"But the subjects of the kingdom will be thrown outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."*

Mat 13:42 *"They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."*

Mat 24:51 *"He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth".*

Mat 25:30 *'And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'*

Psa 112:10 *The wicked man will see and be vexed, he will gnash his teeth and waste away; the longings of the wicked will come to nothing.*

Thought 1. Entrance into heaven is based upon one thing and one thing only: faith in Christ. Heritage, godly parents and children, religious profession, baptism, and church membership - all are useless without faith. Without faith, man has only the judgment of God to look forward to.

JOHN 04: 22 ISRAEL – GOD'S SPECIAL PEOPLE

"You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews."

John 04:22

Why did Jesus Christ come to the Jewish nation and come to earth as a Jew? Very simply stated, the Jews were God's special people. They had been born by a special act of God. It all started long, long ago. God had wanted four things.

1. He wanted a people who would love Him supremely and give Him their first loyalty. (See Gen. 17:7; Isa. 43:10.)
2. He wanted a people who would witness to all other nations that He and He alone was the one true and living God. (See Gen. 12:3; 22:18; Acts 13:26, 47.)
3. He wanted a people through whom He could send the promised Seed, the Saviour and Messiah, Jesus Christ, to all men everywhere. (See Gen. 3:15; 17:7; 22:18; Gal. 3:16; Jn. 4:22.)
4. He wanted a people through whom He could send His written Word, the Holy Bible, and preserve it for all generations. (Rom. 9:4-5; 1 Pet. 2:10-12.)

In searching the earth for such a people, God could find none (Rom. 1:18-32). God could do only one thing. He had to find one man and through him begin a new people, a new nation.

1. God found and chose Abraham and through him established the Jewish nation. (Gen. 12:1-5; 13:14-17; 15:1-7; 17:1-8, 15-19; 22:16-18; 26:2-5, 24; 28:13-15; 31:13; 35:9-12.) God chose one man and challenged him to worship God supremely. If that man would worship God supremely, then God would cause a special people to be born of his seed. That man was Abraham. Abraham was the first Jew (Gen. 12:1-4; Gal. 3:16). In the Old Testament

the Jews and their land (Palestine) were continually pointed to as the very special people and land of God. They were called...

=> God's treasured possession (Exo. 19:5; Deu. 7:6; 14:2; 26:18; Psa. 135:4).

=> the LORD's portion (Deu. 32:9).

=> the LORD's land (Lev. 25:23; Jer. 2:7; 16:18; Hos. 9:3).

=> the holy land (Zec. 2:12).

However, the Jewish nation failed to obey God supremely. The whole plot of the Old Testament centres around God's pleading and dealing with the Jews. Again and again, He gave the nation the opportunity to obey Him. He dealt with them in mercy and in judgment, but at every turn they refused to heed His pleading.

2. God chose the family of David. (see *Jesus Christ, King of Israel*, Jn 1:49). God had no choice but to make another move, so He chose one faithful family within the Jewish nation and gave to that family one great promise. The family was that of King David, and the promise was that of the Messiah, God's great King, God's very own Son. God's Son was to come through the line of David and establish an eternal nation of people who would love God supremely. However, the Jewish nation again failed God. They misinterpreted God's Word - the prophecies of His coming.
 - a. The Jews misinterpreted God's Word by saying the seed of Abraham included only the Jewish nation. In their minds, God had no children except the children of the Jewish nation. The Bible says explicitly that the seed of Abraham is Christ, and the

special people of God are those individuals within all nations who worship God supremely (Gal. 3:16).

- b. The Jews misinterpreted God's Word by saying that the eternal kingdom promised to David was the Jewish nation and the Jewish nation only. They expected Israel to be established as an earthly nation forever and all other nations to be subservient to Israel. But again, God's promise was not that narrow, nor was it that prejudiced. The Bible says there is not, and never has been, any respect of persons with God (Deu. 10:17; 2 Chr. 19:7; Job. 34:19; Acts 10:34; Rom. 2:11; Gal. 2:6; Eph. 6:9 ; Col. 3:25; 1 Pet. 1:17). God did say that Christ was to come from the Davidic line, but He also said that He was going to establish an eternal nation made up of people everywhere who would love God supremely (Rom. 2:28-29).

By misinterpreting God's promises, the Jews failed to be the missionaries to the world that God had chosen them to be. They became earthly bound and materialistic minded. They twisted the idea of the promised Messiah to fit their own schemes. They conceived of Him as One who was to establish an earthly kingdom for the Jewish nation alone. They failed to see that God was speaking...

- of an eternal kingdom of righteousness.
- of a kingdom that is of another dimension entirely - the dimension of the spiritual.
- of a new heaven and a new earth that would give each person an eternal life beyond just one earthly generation.

3. God had no choice but to make a third move. This He did by sending His own Son into the world through the Jewish nation. God sent Him so that the world through Him might be saved (Jn. 3:16-19). However, man rejected God's Son and crucified Him. This act - the killing of God's Son - was the final blow. When man slew the only Son of God, the whole world *was* involved. Both Jew and Gentile were represented symbolically in the Jewish religionists and the Roman authorities. They both actually did the plotting, sentencing, and execution. If the world were ever to be saved, it was now perfectly clear that God had to make every move Himself.

This He did once-for-all. In His eternal purpose and plan for man's salvation, God took the sins of all men and laid them upon His Son while He was being slain upon the cross. He allowed His Son to bear the sins of the world (1 Pet. 2:24). Then He took His Son and raised Him from the dead - never to die again. He did what man had always failed to do: in His Son's resurrection God began to build a lasting kingdom of righteousness, a new nation that is presently being made up of men from all earthly nations who desire and are willing to follow Jesus Christ supremely. He is calling out and forming a new people who have genuinely been born again - spiritually. These new born people shall live eternally - beyond just one earthly generation. These people are identified as His church, as a body of people who genuinely believe and follow Him. They are destined to be the inhabitants of the new heavens and earth. Believers become God's new community, new society, new race, new nation of people. They become His church,

His new creation - spiritually and supernaturally born again - who comprise the true family of God (Lk. 8:21; Eph. 2:11-18; 4:17-19.)

Eph 2:18-22 *For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit. Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief corner-stone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.*

God, acting solely upon His own through the death and resurrection of His Son, has fulfilled His promises to both Abraham and David. All the people of the nations of the world now have the opportunity to become children of God, the special people of God. □

IV. Mathew 08:13 Jesus Christ, Messiahship

Jesus' great power proves His Messiahship. His great power to meet the centurion's request proved His unlimited power as Messiah.

Thought 1. Jesus often encourages us when we seek Him on behalf of others. He so encouraged the centurion.

Thought 2. As we believe, so it shall happen to us. These were the words of Jesus to the centurion. It is almost like a blank check: the amount we receive depends on our faith in Him. ■