

FOLLOW ME

The Gospel of Matthew Part 1

WEEK 8 - THE FAITH OF A ROMAN OFFICER OVERVIEW

Throughout the gospel of Matthew, we see the kingdom of God conflicting with and even offending the powers of this world; specifically, the power of Rome. Which is why it is a stunning reversal to see a Roman centurion placing his faith in Jesus's authority and power to heal his servant. Perhaps even more shocking is how Jesus describes this man's faith, as greater than that of many Israelites! In this powerful moment we get a hint that the kingdom of God belongs not just to Israel, but to all the nations of the world.

*When Jesus heard this, he was amazed. Turning to those who were following him, he said,
"I tell you the truth, I haven't seen faith like this in all Israel!"*

Matthew 8:10

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Does comparing the Roman Empire to a fictional empire, like the one in Star Wars, help you picture what life was like in Jesus' time? Why or why not? Can you think of any other images that would help people today comprehend the significance of the Roman Empire in daily life?
2. Read Matthew 8:5-9.
 - a. Why was it surprising that a Roman officer came to Jesus to ask for help for his servant?
 - b. How can we tell that the officer's faith is sincere?
 - c. What does this passage show us about authority? (see also Matthew 7:29, 9:6, and 28:18)
3. Read Matthew 8:10-13.
 - a. Why do you think Jesus said this to his followers?
 - b. How does this story give us an example of the mission of God being fulfilled? (see Isaiah 25:3, 6-8)
4. Based on what we have learned about Matthew, why do you think Matthew included this story in his gospel?
5. Read Ephesians 3:20. How much faith do you have in the authority of Christ? Barry asked, "Do you pray with confidence that God can do the impossible? In your life circumstances, in your community, in our nation? Or do you kind of believe in your heart of hearts that things are never really going to change?" Do you have confidence that God will do more than you ask? Share your thoughts with your group.
6. Is everyone welcome at *your* table? Do you make room in your heart and in your life for people who are not like you? If so, how? If not, how could you make room? What could you do to invite people not like you to God's table?

RESOURCES

www.gracechurch.us/matthew