

# THE MIRACLE WORKER AND TEACHER, IS CRITICIZED

Matthew 8:5-13, 11:2-30, 12:22-50; Mark 3:19-35; Luke 7:1-50; 8:19-21

## STRUCTURE

**Key-person:** Jesus

**Key-location:** The region of Capernaum

**Key-repetitions:**

- Faith: of the centurion (Lk 7:9), of John the Baptist, who expected answers from Jesus (Lk 7:18-20), of the sinful woman (Lk 7:50). Lack of faith: Simon the Pharisee (Lk 7:36-39), Pharisees who accused Jesus of being on the same team with the prince of demons (Mt 12:22-25), religious leaders who demanded a miracle (Mt 12:38-42), Jesus' mother and brothers (Mk 3:19-21).
- Miracles: the centurion's servant (Lk 7:10), the resurrection of the widow's son at Nain (Lk 7:11-15); many cures (Lk 7:21-23), the blind and mute demon-possessed man (Mt 12:22-23), Jesus refused to perform a miracle when religious leaders requested (Mt 12:38-39).
- Criticisms: John the Baptist called "demon-possessed" (Mt 11:18); Jesus accused of: improper conduct (Mt 11:19), incapable of forgiving prostitute (Lk 7:48), being on the same team with the prince of demons (Mt 12:24).
- Jesus accused: Simon the Pharisee (Lk 7:44-47), Pharisees who accused him of being on the same team with demons (Mt 12:26-29), Jewish religious leaders who asked for a miracle (Mt 12:38-42).

**Key-attitudes:**

- The respect the Jews had for the centurion who requested Jesus to cure his servant.
- The humility and the faith of the centurion.

- Jesus' admiration for the centurion's faith.
- The compassion Jesus felt for the widow in Nain.
- The fear felt by those who witnessed the youth's resurrection in Nain.
- The doubts John the Baptist felt about Jesus and the admiration Jesus felt for John.
- The selfish pride of Simon and his disrespect to Jesus.
- The love the sinful woman had for Jesus.
- The disbelief of Simon's guests that Jesus was able to forgive sins.
- Hostility of religious leaders toward Jesus.
- Sternness of Jesus when he accused religious leaders.
- The concern Jesus' family felt when they thought he was out of his mind.

**Initial-situation:**

During the second year of Jesus' ministry, his popularity with the people grew; however, religious leaders began their opposition. He selected twelve disciples and taught them the rules for his kingdom in the Sermon on the Mount. When they left the mountainside, they went to the city of Capernaum, and Jesus continued his ministry.

**Initial-problem:**

The centurion from Capernaum requested the Jewish leaders to ask Jesus to cure his servant.

**Final-situation:**

Crowds followed Jesus; however, religious leaders criticized him, and his family misunderstood him.

## BIBLE STORY

### Healing of the Centurion's Servant Lk 7:1-10; Mt 8:5-13

After the sermon on the mountainside, Jesus entered Capernaum. There a Roman centurion had a servant he loved; the man was sick, paralyzed and on his deathbed (Mt 8:5-6; Lk 7:1-3).

The centurion sent leaders of the Jewish community to ask Jesus to come and heal his servant. The leaders pleaded with Jesus, "This man deserves your help, because he loves our nation and has built our synagogue." So Jesus went with them (Lk 7:4-5).

Jesus was close to the house when the centurion sent friends to tell him, "Lord, don't trouble yourself. I don't deserve to have you come under my roof. I am not worthy to come to you. Just give the order, and my servant will be healed. I, too, am a man under orders. I have soldiers whom I order. I tell one, 'Go,' and he goes; I tell another, 'Come,' and he comes. I order my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it."

Jesus was amazed and told the crowd, "I haven't found such great faith in Israel." The messengers returned to the house and found the servant well (Lk 7:6-10).

### **Resurrection of a Widow's Son at Nain** Lk 7:11-17

Soon afterward, Jesus, and his disciples, accompanied by a large crowd entered the town named Nain. As Jesus approached the town gate, a funeral procession was coming out. The dead man was the only son of a widow. A large crowd from the town was with her. The Lord saw her, felt pity for her and said, "Don't cry."

Jesus walked over and touched the coffin. Jesus said, "Young man, I tell you, get up!" The dead man sat up and began talking. Jesus gave him back to his mother.

The crowd was filled with fear; then praised God saying, "A great prophet has appeared among us. God has come to help his people." News about Jesus spread throughout the surrounding country (Lk 7:11-17).

### **John the Baptist Inquired; Jesus Answered** Lk 7:18-35; Mt 11:2-19

The disciples of John the Baptist visited him in prison and told him about all the things Jesus was doing. John sent two of them to the Lord to ask the question, "Are you the one we have been expecting or should we expect someone else?"

John's disciples went to Jesus and said, "John the Baptist sent us to ask you, 'Are you the one we have been expecting, or should we expect someone else?'"

For the next few hours, Jesus cured many from diseases, sicknesses, evil spirits, and he gave sight to many blind people. Jesus then told the messengers, "Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, lepers are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor. Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of me."

John's messengers left and Jesus spoke to the crowd about John, "I tell you, John is greater than any man who has ever lived; yet the one who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he (Lk 7:18-28). All the Prophets and the Law of Moses prophesied until John. And if you are willing to accept it, John is the Elijah who was to come. (See *Mal 4:5*.) He who has ears, let him hear" (Mt 11:13-14).

The majority of the people had heard John's words and had been baptized by him. But the Pharisees and experts in the Law of Moses had not been baptized by John.

Jesus asked, "To what, then, can I compare the people of this generation? They are like children sitting in the marketplace and calling out to one another, 'We played wedding music for you, and you didn't dance; we sang a funeral song, and you didn't cry.'

"John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine, and you say, 'He has a demon.' The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and you say, 'Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.' Opinion polls don't count; wisdom is proved right by all her children" (Lk 7:29-35; Mt 11:16-19).

### **Jesus Invited the Weary and the Burdened to Come to Him** Mt 11:25-30

Jesus resumed talking to the crowd, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Mt 11:25-30). *A yoke is a wooden harness that fits over the shoulders of two animals and is attached to a piece of equipment they are to pull.*

### **At the House of Simon the Pharisee** Lk 7:36-50

A Pharisee named Simon invited Jesus to eat dinner with him. Jesus went to the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table. It was the Jewish custom to recline on couches with their heads near the table while eating. They propped themselves up on one elbow and stretched their feet out behind them. A woman prostitute lived in that town and learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house. She brought an alabaster jar full of expensive perfume. She stood behind him at his feet weeping; her tears fell on his feet. She wiped his feet with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them.

The Pharisee who had invited Jesus, saw this and said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would know that this is a sinful woman who is touching him" (Lk 7:36-39).

Jesus said, "Simon, I have something to tell you."

The Pharisee answered, "Tell me, teacher."

Jesus told a parable, "Two men owed money to a moneylender. One owed five hundred silver coins, and the other fifty. Neither had the money to pay him, so he canceled the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?"

Simon replied, "I suppose the one who had the bigger debt canceled."

Jesus said, "You judged correctly" (Lk 7:40-43).

Jesus faced the woman but spoke to Simon, "Look at this woman! I came into your house. You didn't give me water for my feet, but she washed my feet with her tears and dried them with her hair. You didn't greet me with a kiss, but she hasn't stopped kissing my feet. You didn't pour oil on my head, but she poured perfume on my feet. Her many sins have been forgiven, and great is her love. But he who has been forgiven little, loves little."

Then Jesus told her, "Your sins are forgiven."

The other guests said among themselves, "Who does he think he is, forgiving sins!"

Jesus told the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace" (Lk 7:44-50).

### **Blasphemous Accusation Against Jesus** Mt 12:22-37; Mk 3:22-30; Lk 11:14-26

Some people brought Jesus a demon-possessed man who was blind and mute. Jesus healed him, so that he could both talk and see. The astonished people said, "Could this be the Son of David?"

The Pharisees argued, "He drives out demons by Beelzebub, the prince of demons" (Mt 12:22-25; Lk 11:14-16).

Jesus told them, "A country divided into groups fighting a civil war is ruined. A family that fights one another will break up. If Satan fights against himself, how can his kingdom endure? You accuse me of driving out demons by Beelzebub. If I drive out demons by Beelzebub, whose power helps your followers drive them out? But if God's power helps me to drive out demons, then the kingdom of God has come to you (Lk 11:17-20).

"If a fully armed strong man guards his own house, his property is safe. But if a stronger man with superior weapons attacks, he will overpower the strong man, take away the weapons in which the man trusted and divide up the stolen property (Lk 11:21-23).

"I tell you, people can be forgiven of every sin and insult toward God, but they can not be forgiven for insulting the Holy Spirit. Anyone who insults the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who insults the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven (Mt 12:31-31).

## **Demand for a Miracle Mt12:38-42**

Then some of the Pharisees and teachers of the Law of Moses said to him, "Teacher, we want to see a miracle as evidence that God is in what you do."

Jesus answered, "A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a miracle! But none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. Just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the fish's belly, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the earth's grave" (Mt12:38-42).

## **Jesus' Mother and Brothers Came to Rescue Him Mk 3:31-35; Mt 12:46-50; Lk 8:19-21**

Crowds gathered around Jesus so constantly that he and his disciples were unable even to eat. When his family heard about this, they went to rescue him. They said, "He is out of his mind" (Mk 3:19-21).

A crowd was surrounding Jesus when his mother and brothers arrived. Standing outside, they sent a messenger to tell him, "Your mother and brothers are outside looking for you."

Jesus answered, "Who are my mother and my brothers?"

Then he looked at those seated in a circle around him and said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever obeys God's will is my brother and sister and mother" (Mk 3:31-35).

## **GENERIC DIALOGUE QUESTIONS**

1. What catches your attention in the story?
2. Is there anything in the story that is hard to understand?
3. Who are the main characters in the story?
4. What problems did the characters face?
5. How did the characters face their problems?
6. How have you faced similar problems?
7. Is there someone in the story who is similar to you or who is different from you?
8. What does the story tell about God?

## **SPECIFIC DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. What were some of the miracles that Jesus performed?
2. What criticisms were made against Jesus?
3. Who were some of the people who showed faith in Jesus, and who were some who showed lack of faith?
4. What accusations did Jesus make against the religious leaders?
5. What helps you to have faith in Jesus, and what hinders you from having faith in Jesus?

## **LIFE-LESSONS**

1. The person who recognizes that Jesus has authority will have his faith honored. Jesus admired the faith of the centurion and cured his servant (Mt 8:5-13, Lk 7:2-10). The elements that characterized the centurion's faith were:
  - Deep humility.
  - Trust in Christ's power over invisible forces that relate to humanity. The centurion compared Christ's ability to give orders to his own as a commander. He wanted Jesus to issue an order for the servant's illness to disappear.
  - Absolute trust in Christ's power, even from a distance. Just as the official's presence was not necessary to execute an order, he recognized that Christ could issue an order and execute it without being present.
2. Jesus is sovereign. He manifested that he has power over diseases when he cured the centurion's servant and others. He proved he has power over distance when he cured the servant without being present (Lk 7:1-10). He proved that he has power over death when he resurrected the widow's son in Nain (Lk 7:11-17).

3. Jesus has compassion for individuals who are suffering strong doubts and weak faith. He manifested patience with John the Baptist's doubts (Mt 11:2-19). Some people think that it is not spiritual to have doubts; they hide them and deny their existence. Jesus' disciples should not hide their anxieties, but tell them to him, so that they will be solved in the light of God's will.
4. Faith in Jesus results in salvation and forgiveness of sins. The sinful woman had faith in Jesus (Lk 7:50); therefore, her sins were forgiven (Lk 7:48) and she was saved (Lk 7:50).
5. Jesus is strong enough to overpower Satan (Mt 12:29). At his birth, Jesus disrupted Satan's power; in the desert, he resisted Satan's temptations; at his resurrection, Jesus took the power of death from Satan; eventually, Jesus will restrain Satan forever. (See Rev 20:10.)
6. The unpardonable sin is committed by a person who experiences proof that God is active and argues that such action was done by the devil. Such a person has a heart that is so hardened that he can't distinguish between the divine and diabolic. When Jesus healed a demon-possessed man, the Pharisees argued that Jesus drove out demons by being on the same team with the prince of demons (Mt 12:22-25). Jesus warned them of the danger of blasphemy against the Spirit, an unforgivable sin (Mt 12:30-33). (See Heb 6:4-6; 10:26-31.)