

Cornelius the Centurion

From Gabara Jesus went to the estate of the officer Zorobabel near Capharnaum. The two lepers whom at His last visit to Capharnaum He had healed, here presented themselves to return Him thanks. The steward, the domestics, and the cured son of Zorobabel also were here. They had already been baptized. Jesus taught and cured many sick. In the dusk of the evening, after His disciples had separated and gone to their respective families, Jesus proceeded along the valley of Capharnaum to the house of His Mother. All the holy women were here assembled, and there was great joy. Mary and the women renewed their petition to Jesus that He would cross to the other side of the lake early next morning because the committee of the Pharisees was so irritated against Him. Jesus calmed their fears. Mary interceded for the sick slave of the Centurion Cornelius, who was, she said, a very good man. Although a pagan, he had, through affection for the Jews, built them a synagogue. She begged Him likewise to cure the sick daughter of Jairus, the Elder of the synagogue, who lived in a little village not far from Capharnaum.



When Jesus next morning, with some of the disciples, was going to the residence of the pagan officer Cornelius, which stood on a height to the north of Capharnaum, He was met in the neighborhood of Peter's house by the two Jews whom Cornelius had once before sent to Him. They again begged Him to have pity on his servant, for Cornelius, they said, deserved the favor. He was a friend of the Jews and had built them a synagogue, reckoning it at the same time an honor to be allowed to do so. Jesus responded that He was even then on His way to Cornelius', and He directed them to dispatch a messenger in haste to announce His coming. Before reaching Capharnaum, Jesus took, just to the right of the gate, the road running between the city and the ramparts and passed the hovel of a leper living in the city wall. A short distance farther on brought Cornelius' house in sight. Upon receiving the message sent by Jesus, Cornelius had left it as if to get a glimpse of Him. He knelt down and, esteeming himself unworthy to approach Him or to speak with Him personally, hurried off a messenger with these words: "The Centurion bids me say to Thee, 'Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter under my roof! Speak but one word, and my servant shall be healed. For if I, who am only a humble man dependent upon my superior, say to my

servant: Do this! Do that! and he does it, how much easier will it be for Thee to command Thy servant to be healed and that he should be so!' When these words were delivered to Jesus by Cornelius' messenger, He turned to those standing around and said: "Verily, I say unto ye, I have not found such faith in Israel! Know ye then! Many shall come from the east and the west and shall take place with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in Heaven; and many of the children of God's kingdom, the Israelites, shall be cast out into exterior darkness where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth!" Then, turning to the servant of the Centurion, He said: "Go, and as thou hast believed, so be it done to thee!" The messenger bore the words to the kneeling Centurion, who inclined to the earth, arose, and hastened back to the house.

As he entered, he encountered his servant, who was coming to meet him, enveloped in a mantle, his head bound in a scarf. He was not a native of the country, as was indicated by his yellowish-brown complexion.

Jesus immediately turned back to Capharnaum. As He was again passing the leper's hut, the leper himself came out and threw himself down before Him. "Lord," he said, "if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean." Jesus replied: "Stretch forth thy hands!" He touched them and said: "I do will it. Be thou clean!" and the leprosy fell from the man. Jesus commanded him to present himself to the priests for inspection, to make the offering prescribed by the Law, and to speak to none other of his cure. The man went to the pharisaical priests and submitted himself to their examination as to whether he was cured or not. They became enraged, examined him rigorously, but were forced to acknowledge him cured. They had so lively a dispute with him that they almost drove him from their presence.

Jesus turned off into the street that led into the heart of the city, and for about an hour cured numbers of sick that had been brought together, also some possessed. Most of the sick were lying near a well, around which stood little huts. After that Jesus, with several of the disciples, left the city and went to a little vale beyond Magdalum not far from Damma. There they found a public inn, at which were Maroni, the widow of Naim, and the pagan Lais of Naim and her two daughters, Sabia and Athalia, both of whom Jesus, when at Meroz, had from a distance delivered from the devil. Maroni, the widow of Naim, now came beseeching Jesus to go to her son Martial, a boy of twelve years, who was so ill that she feared to find him dead on her return. Jesus told her to go home in peace, that He would follow her—but when, He did not say. Maroni had brought with her presents for the inn. She immediately hurried back home with her servant. She had about nine hours

to travel. She was a wealthy woman and very good, a mother to all the poor children in Naim.

Bartholomew also had arrived bringing with him Joses, the little son of his widowed sister, perhaps to be baptized. Thomas too was there and with him Jephthe, the little cured son of Achias, the Centurion of Giskala. Achias himself was not present, but Judas Iscariot had come from Meroz. Lais and her two daughters had already embraced Judaism in Naim and renounced idolatry before the Jewish priests. At this ceremony a kind of baptism was performed by the priests which, however, consisted only of a sprinkling with water and other purifications. In such cases, the Jews baptized women, but the Baptism of Jesus and of John was not conferred upon females before Pentecost.

All the future Apostles were now in Capharnaum, with the exception of Matthias. A great many of Jesus' disciples and relatives, among the latter many women related to Him by blood, were present. Of the number was Mary Heli, Mary's elder sister. She was now perhaps seventy years old, and together with her second husband, Obed, had come bringing an ass laden with presents to Mary. She dwelt at Japha, a little place an hour at most from Nazareth, where Zebedee once lived and where his sons were born. She was greatly rejoiced at seeing again her three sons, James, Sadoch, and Heliacim, all disciples of John. This James was as old as Andrew. He is the same that with two other disciples, Cephas and John, once disputed with Paul on the subject of Jewish circumcision. After Jesus' death he became a priest, and was one of the oldest and most distinguished of the seventy disciples. Later he accompanied James the Greater to Spain, to the islands, into Cyprus, and into the idolatrous countries bordering the confines of Judea. Not this James, but James the Lesser, the son of Alpheus and Mary Cleophas, became the first Bishop of Jerusalem.