

# Luke Chapter 7

The chapter is easily divided into the following four sections:

1 to 10 [The healing of the centurion's servant](#)

11 to 18 [The raising of the widow of Nain's son](#)

19 to 35 [The Lord's dealing with John the Baptist](#)

36 to 50 [The woman of the city who was a sinner](#)

Before looking at each section in particular, it is good to see how these four events are linked together in a dispensational way. In the first miracle, we have a servant who is ready to die, then healed at a distance by the Lord Jesus. We can see here perhaps a picture of this present church age in which the Lord works from heaven. This incident is followed by the raising of the widow's son. Here is a picture of the Jewish nation, now dead, but raised again to life by the physical appearing of the Lord Himself. Then we are re-introduced to John the Baptist, and we remember John's preaching regarding the coming kingdom. John's ministry was to bring Israel to a state of repentance, when they were ready to meet their Messiah. The gospel of the kingdom will be preached again. Finally, we have an example of the kind of person who will be saved in that day – not the proud Pharisee, but the repentant sinner coming to His feet.

## 1. The healing of the centurion's servant verses 1 to 10

### 1.1. The miracles done in Capernaum

1 Now when he had ended all his sayings in the audience of the people, he entered into Capernaum.

The events of Luke chapter 7 follow on after the Lord had delivered what we call "The sermon on the mount". It was spoken in the region nearby. This is what Luke calls, "All His sayings" in verse 1. Then He enters into Capernaum. This was a city frequently visited by the Lord Jesus, especially at the beginning of His public ministry. The men of the city were privileged to hear much of His teaching and to witness many of His miracles. It was a city in which the Lord sometimes resided. He came and dwelt in Capernaum

Matthew 4:13

And leaving Nazareth, he came and **dwelt in Capernaum**, which is upon the sea coast

It was in Capernaum that men asked the Lord about paying the tribute money. He sends Peter to the sea, and there he catches **the fish with the coin in its mouth**.

Matthew 17:24

And when they were come to Capernaum, they that received tribute money came to Peter, and said, Doth not your master pay tribute?

It was in Capernaum that the Lord did the first miracle recorded by Mark, the

casting out of the demon from the man in the synagogue

Mark 1:21

21 And they went into Capernaum; and straightway on the sabbath day he entered into the synagogue, and taught.

22 And they were astonished at his doctrine: for he **taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes.**

23 And there was in their synagogue **a man with an unclean spirit;** and he cried out,

24 Saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God.

25 And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him.

Immediately after this, the Lord left the synagogue and entered into the home of Peter. There He healed **Peter's mother in law** from her fever.

Verse 34 then tells us how the city gathered outside the door and He healed many of their diseases.

34 **And he healed many that were sick** of divers diseases, and cast out many devils; and suffered not the devils to speak, because they knew him.

Mark records another miracle in chapter 2:1 – the healing of the man let down through the roof by his four friends.

1 And again he entered into Capernaum after some days; and it was noised that he was in the house.

2 And straightway many were gathered together, insomuch that there was no room to receive them, no, not so much as about the door: and he preached the word unto them.

3 And they come unto him, bringing **one sick of the palsy, which was borne of four.**

He entered again into the synagogue and there He healed the man with the withered hand, as recorded in Mark chapter 3:1

1 And he entered again into the synagogue; and there was a man there which had a **withered hand.**

Capernaum was probably the home town of at least five of the twelve disciples – Peter and Andrew, James and John, and Levi otherwise known to us as Matthew. Few places on earth were more favoured than Capernaum, where so many very public miracles were done. Luke chapter 7 therefore records but one of many miracles done by the Lord in this most favoured city. Of the six miracles listed above, three were very public – two in the synagogue, and one in the house where many saw the paralysed man being lowered into the room

One would have thought that all the city would have believed in Him but the Lord laments over them in Luke chapter 10. Privilege brings with it responsibility, and the Lord condemns the city for its unfaithfulness.

Luke 10:

15 And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted to heaven, shalt be thrust down to hell.

Instead of bringing the people of Capernaum to faith and humility, it seems that the miracles of the Lord only produced unbelief and pride. Hence the Lord forewarns of a day of judgment for this privileged town. We can contrast this with the response of the citizens of Nain who declared after seeing just one miracle that God had visited His people, and with the citizens of Bethany, who having witnessed the raising of Lazarus, came into Jerusalem with the disciples proclaiming the arrival of the king.

We, in our day, can no doubt see parallels with this favoured land of hours. The gospel has been preached for almost five hundred years, the bible has been available to men in their own language for over four hundred years. Do we give Britain up then? Only the Lord can pronounce judgment, and even He went back repeatedly to Capernaum and did all these miracles. He gave them plenty of opportunity to repent, and so must we with Britain.

## **1.2. The centurions of the New Testament**

2 And a certain centurion's servant, who was dear unto him, was sick, and ready to die.

Here we read of the first of five centurions that we meet in our bible. One might have expected these Romans to be hard and cruel, to be particularly hateful of the Jews. We find rather that the bible has something good to say about each one of them.

We shall consider the centurion of Luke 7 in just a moment.

The second centurion is found at Calvary. No doubt he carried out his gruesome task with ruthless efficiency. But as he stood beside the cross, he heard the Lord cry out with a loud voice and dismiss His spirit. Amazing things happened – the earth did quake, rocks were rent. This was no ordinary man – no man has power in the day of his death neither has he power to retain his spirit. Add to this, these supernatural events and what he heard said at the Cross about Jesus being the Son of God and the King of the Jews, even though it was in derision, the centurion confessed, "This was the Son of God". "This was a righteous man".

The third centurion is found in Acts 10, the man called Cornelius, generally regarded as the first Gentile to be saved. Here is a man who is a genuine seeker of the truth of God. He sends messengers to Joppa to bring Peter back to his house, and there he hears and believes the gospel and receives the Spirit.

In Acts 22 and 23, we read of the chief captain and the centurion who together rescued Paul in the temple in chapter 22 and in the Sanhedrim in chapter 23. The chief captain even sends Paul under a military escort to Caesarea, thus saving him from the plot of the Jews. When Paul got to Caesarea, the centurion allowed Paul the liberty to receive visitors.

Finally in Acts 27, we read of Paul's voyage to Rome which almost ended in disaster. The centurion in charge of Paul and the other prisoners obviously had a high regard for Paul. He took his word that the sailors must stay in the boat or they could not be saved. He commanded his soldiers to cut free the lifeboats, naturally speaking their best chance of survival. The soldiers then

wanted to kill all the prisoners but the centurion forbade them that he might save Paul. If Paul had faith in God - I believe God - then the centurion believed Paul and saved him from death. When they did eventually reach Rome, the centurion delivered his prisoners to the captain of the guard, all except Paul whom he left under guard in his own hired house, from whence Paul was able to invite the Jews.

### **1.3. The personal touches of Luke**

Although all four gospel writers were inspired by the Holy Spirit to record the life and times of the Lord Jesus, we can still see how the Spirit still allowed the personal interests of each writer to come through. Luke is described by Paul as "the beloved physician" so obviously he would be interested in the physical condition of those whom the Lord healed. I can almost hear him ask whoever told him about the centurion's servant, "Just how ill was the man?" "Very ill" was the reply, hence Luke says here, he "was sick, and ready to die". The comment on the man's state of health is unique to Luke. In this gospel, the Lord meets a leper. Just how bad was his leprosy? Luke tells us, "He was full of leprosy". Simon Peter's mother in law lay sick of a fever. How bad was her fever? Luke again says it was a "great fever". What about the man in the synagogue with the withered hand. Only Luke tells us that his **right** hand was withered. What about the high priest's servant in Gethsemane whose ear Peter cut off? "Which ear was it", might well Luke have asked. He tells us in his gospel, "Whose right ear Peter cut off". Even when God uses and directs men, he allows their natural personality to shine through. It is the same with us. We are all being fashioned into the likeness of the Son of God, but we still retain our natural characteristics.

### **1.4. The love of the centurion**

This centurion was a most unusual man. There were two things that he loved which we might find rather unusual for a Roman. He loved his servant, which was most unusual for a master at that time. He was so concerned that he sent the Jews to the Lord Jesus to plead for Him to come and heal him. When he sent his second message, Luke tells us he sent his friends - not Jews, not servants, but friends. He found it easy to make friends.

Secondly, he loved the nation of the Jews and to prove it, he had built them a synagogue. It was perhaps in this very synagogue that the Lord healed the man with the withered hand, looking round him with anger, because of the hardness of their hearts.

### **1.5. His humility, his respect for the Lord, and his faith**

In their plea to the Lord, the Jews said, "He is worthy" but see what the centurion thought about himself:

I am not worthy that thou shouldest enter under my roof:

Wherefore neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee:

Twice over, he is saying "I am not worthy". Contrast this with the men of Capernaum who had exalted themselves to heaven (See chapter 10).

We see also his respect for the Lord. He compares the Lord with himself – a man under authority. The preposition “under” is most commonly translated as “of”. He was a man of authority. This authority had been conferred upon him by another. He used his authority to command his soldiers and his servants. He recognised this ordained authority in the Lord Jesus, and knew all the Lord had to do was to give the command and it would be done.

The Lord is so impressed by this, that He stopped and spoke to those who followed Him, “I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel”. The only other person in the gospels who is credited with great faith is the woman of Canaan who came to the Lord pleading on behalf of her daughter. She too was marked by humility and by faith. She was prepared to take the place of a little dog, waiting for crumbs from the master’s table. Her request was answered, not by the physical presence of the Lord, but by His word spoken at a distance. Both this woman and the centurion are typical of the Gentiles who would walk by faith and not by sight.

## **2. The raising of the widow of Nain’s son - 11 to 18**

11 And it came to pass the day after, that he went into a city called Nain; and many of his disciples went with him, and much people.

The Lord now moves on to another city – called Nain. There He meets a sad procession. It is the funeral of a young man, the only son of a widow. What a tragic scene. Who would care for this widow who had lost first her husband, then her only son. The Lord had compassion on her and stopped the procession by touching the bier.

The Lord’s miracles were more than just displays of divine power – they were the evidence of divine compassion. The Lord had sympathy with men in their condition, and that compassion moved Him to act with healing. Thus He had compassion upon the 5,000, upon the two beggars of Jericho, and upon the leper.

The Lord raised three people from the dead. There seems to be an order of hopelessness as we go through the gospels. The daughter of Jairus had just died when He went into the house and raised her. The widow of Nain’s son had perhaps died earlier that day. Several hours had past between his death and his funeral. But in John chapter 11, the Lord raises Lazarus after four days. He could have arrived in Bethany after 2 days, but He waited still two more days before setting off to Bethany. Was it, as some were perhaps beginning to think a lack of love? Surely after 4 days, even He was powerless. But He arrived late to show the glory of God, that where death was concerned, He was the master of it. He reminds one of Elijah on mount Carmel when he challenges the prophets of Baal to call upon their God to light the fire upon the altar. The prophets failed after much activity and zeal. What about Elijah’s God? Elijah built his altar with a trench round about it. Into the trench, the servants poured twelve barrels of water. To light the fire at all was improbable. To light a fire drenched in water was impossible. Elijah’s God was able. So too was the Lord and master of Martha and Mary.

In our chapter here, the Lord raised the young man and delivered him to his mother. It is a lovely picture of the day of rapture. We shall not only meet Him

but we shall meet again our loved ones who have gone before. We shall be caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air.

How did the men of Nain react to this miracle?

And there came a fear on all: and they glorified God, saying, That a great prophet is risen up among us; and, That God hath visited his people.

How unlike Jerusalem, of which the Lord said, "Thou knewest not the day of thy visitation".

### **3. The Lord's dealing with John the Baptist – verses 19 to 35**

Rumours of the Lord's miracles spread throughout the region. They were heard by the disciples of John the Baptist, who reported them to John. The last we heard of John was in chapter 3 when he was shut up in a prison cell by Herod. We do not know how has passed since then. Perhaps several months have elapsed. How does John react to this news. Instead of being encouraged by it, he sends his disciples to the Lord with a question.

"Art Thou he that should come or look we for another?"

Is this the same man that baptised the Lord in Jordan? –was it not he that heard the voice of God speaking from heaven? That saw the Spirit descending like a dove to abide on Him? Could even John have doubts? So it seems. We must not belittle the stress that dire circumstances can bring a believer to. Mental or physical illness or drastically reduced circumstances can all have their effect. Happy is the man or woman who has never doubted his or her salvation.

The Lord could simply have replied to John's disciples, "Yes I am". Instead He seems to be saying to John's disciples, "Just stand aside and watch".

21 And in that same hour he cured many of their infirmities and plagues, and of evil spirits; and unto many that were blind he gave sight.

22 Then Jesus answering said unto them, Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached.

23 And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me.

It was a busy hour for the Saviour – He cured many. Actions speak louder than words – deeds are more easily remembered than words. What a wonderful report the disciples had when they went back to see John. John would remember the words of Isaiah in chapter 61 regarding the work of the Messiah. And had not the Lord quoted these very words when He outlined His ministry to the men of Nazareth in the synagogue?

Verse 23 is an extra little word of comfort just for John's sake. "And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me.

So John was a bit down, of that there could be no doubt. Quite apart from his present circumstances, doubts were beginning to arise. Was not he the herald of the king? Had he not been sent to prepare the people for the coming king and His kingdom? Was he not himself the subject of Old Testament prophecy?

Had he not seen the Spirit descending upon the Lord like a dove, and God speaking to him of His delight in His Son?

John is compared in the bible with Elijah. There are many similarities. Both men gave tough uncompromising messages to get the attention of the people. Yet both men had doubts. Elijah fled from Jezebel into the wilderness. There he pleaded with God, "Take away my life". There he moaned, "I only am left" to do the will of God.

So why then was John in prison? Had he been mistaken about this Jesus? Soon his doubts would be removed when his disciples returned.

But the Lord does not leave the matter there. Many might have heard the Lord's conversation with John's disciples. Was John the Baptist now wavering? The Lord is quick to defend His servant in a public manner. John might need a personal word of comfort, but the Lord defends him publicly. It is a good principle for us. We should make it a rule never to criticise a fellow believer before the world. We should always be ready to bring out their strong points rather than expose their weaknesses. What is said in private need not be said in public. We see the same principle in how the Lord dealt with Peter during his process of recovery. The Lord had a private meeting with Peter, over which a veil has been drawn. But then in John 21, the Lord has a very public meeting with Peter when He commends His servant to care for His sheep.

In Luke chapter 7, the Lord defends his servant John by asking three questions. What went ye out to see? Was it a reed shaken with the wind? Was it someone who would bend in the face of adversity? Not so. Was it a man clothed in soft raiment? To find such, one must look into king's palaces. John was a man dressed in rough clothes to match the character of his message. Was it to see a prophet? Yea rather, more than a prophet. This was a man who himself was the subject of prophecy, and the Lord quotes the very scripture from Malachi.

27 This is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.

Among those born of women, there was no greater prophet than John. One might have thought that honour would have gone to Isaiah or to Daniel. So in what sense could John be described as greater than these men? John had the distinct honour, not of writing about the Messiah, but of being able to stand in front of Him and say to men, "Behold the Lamb of God".

But what did the Lord mean when He said that he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than John? It certainly does not refer to John's moral character, nor his zeal for divine things, nor his courage in standing up to Herod. But it does contrast John's position under the Law with what the simplest child of God has now in grace. We have been blessed with every kind of spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ. Ephesians chapter 1 lists 8 of these blessings – we are redeemed, forgiven, accepted in the beloved etc.

In the remainder of this section, the Lord now illustrates the contradictory way that the Pharisees regarded Himself and John. John came neither eating nor drinking, and the Pharisees said, "He hath a demon". The Lord came eating and drinking, and they said of Him, "A winebibber and a gluttonous man". They

were as variable and as unpredictable as children playing in the marketplace.

#### **4. The woman of the city who was a sinner Verses 36 to 50**

The Lord is now invited into the home of one of these Pharisees for a meal. Soon, however, they are joined by an uninvited and unwelcome guest.

37 And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment,

38 And stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment.

We read only twice in the gospels, once it is this woman in Capernaum – the other occasion is in Gethsemane when Judas betrayed the Lord with a kiss. What a contrast between the two.

Here is a woman with a wicked and well known reputation. One assumes that she was a harlot and infamously so. Simon said within himself (without saying a word) how he regarded the Lord and this woman:

If he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him: for she is a sinner.

The Lord however could read the mind of Simon and hence He goes on to tell the story of two debtors, one owing a huge sum, the other a small sum. When neither was able to repay the debt, the master freely forgave them both. This, of course, is what God does with sinners, both big sinners and small sinners. "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God".

In verse 44, the Lord turns the attention again upon the woman. Was it the case that He did not know the character of this woman, as Simon assumed? Far from it.

Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.

The Lord knew exactly what this woman had done- her sins were many. He knew likewise about the character of the woman in John chapter 4 – the woman by the well. In response, the Samaritan woman called Him a prophet. But He was more than a prophet – He was God, for who but God had the power to forgive sins?

It is interesting that prior to this comment, there is not a word passed between the Lord and the woman. We do not hear her say, "Lord, forgive me". We do not hear Him say, "Thy sins be forgiven thee". But in her heart, she knew she could turn to Him for that forgiveness, and that He without a word being spoken had forgiven her. It was the beginning of a bond between a sinner saved by grace and the Lord who saved her, a bond that every believer is very conscious of.

We should not be surprised to read of this event in the gospel of Luke. It is truly the gospel of the grace of God. It is in Luke that we read of the dying thief, of Zacchaeus, of the paralysed man let down through the roof by his



friends. It is the gospel with its parables speaking of God's grace. We read of the lost coin, the lost sheep, and the lost son. We read of the good Samaritan, and of the invitation from the great supper, "Come, for all things are now ready".

The woman is also seen as an example of a worshipper. She loved much for much had been forgiven her. Mary of Bethany loved Him for His words and for the raising of Lazarus. Mary Magdalene loved Him for casting out the demons, and for all that she had come to know of Him as she and others followed Him from Galilee all the way to the Cross.