

Authority, Faith and Compassion
Matthew 8:1, 5-13; Luke 7:1-17

Authority

Last week we completed our year long study of the Sermon on the Mount as we examined Matthew's comment about the response of the people to it - "*the crowds were amazed at His teaching; for He was teaching them as one having authority, and not as their scribes.*" In both Matthew and Luke this is followed by accounts that demonstrate Jesus' authority to teach in such a manner. This is true even though Matthew and Luke differ in the manner in which they give an account of Jesus' life. Remember that Luke specifically states that he carefully investigated everything from the beginning and was writing out in consecutive order for Theophilus, the Greek man to whom he was sending his account. Because Luke is chronological, I have used it as the outline for our study of the life of Christ in this series. Matthew is thematic and so expands or contracts stories and moves them around in his general chronology as they best fit the theme he is emphasizing.

In Matthew 8 & 9, he documents the reasons that Jesus could teach with such authority. Jesus has authority over disease (Matthew 8:1-17), nature (Matthew 8:23-27), the supernatural (Matthew 8:28-34), sin (Matthew 9:1-8), and even death (Matthew 9:18-26). Matthew also documents the response of the people to all of these signs and miracles demonstrating that the unbelieving heart is not moved by what it can see, hear, feel and touch.

Luke also demonstrates that Jesus has authority to teach by recounting two specific incidents that occur sequentially proving Jesus' power over disease and death. Luke then turns the focus on Jesus' fulfillment of prophecies concerning the Messiah's ability to cause the blind to see, the lame to walk, lepers to be cleansed, the deaf to hear, the dead raised back to life and the poor having the gospel preached to them in response to the question from John the Baptist about whether Jesus was the Expected One or not.

In short, both Matthew and Luke back up what Jesus teaches in the Sermon on the Mount and the Sermon on the Plain respectively by demonstrating that Jesus can do only what God can do and therefore has the authority to teach in the manner that He does.

Matthew 8:1 picks up the narrative from Matthew 4:23-25 which states that Jesus was "*going about in all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness among the people.*" and "*great multitudes followed Him from Galilee and Decapolis and Jerusalem and Judea and from beyond the Jordan.*" These were the crowds that Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount. Matthew 8:1 tells us that "*when He had come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed Him.*" The crowds are still following Him after the Sermon. There is no doubt that though His teachings were stinging rebukes to the scribes and Pharisees, they gave hope to the common people and so He was still attractive to the multitudes.

Matthew recounts three stories of Jesus' authority over disease in Matthew 8:1-17. Two of these, the healing of the leper and the healing of Peter's mother-in-law, we have already examined because they took place soon after Jesus had moved to Capernaum and before the Sermon on the Mount. Matthew does not put these in chronological order because his purpose is to demonstrate Jesus' authority, not to report on a sequence of events. These three examples are significant not only in the disease that was cured and manner in which the healing took place, but also in who received the healing. Jesus can heal with a touch, as He did with the leper and Peter's mother-in-law, or at a distance as he did with the centurion's slave. He can heal upon the request of the person afflicted, as did the leper, by the

intervention of another, as did the centurion for his slave, or Peter for his mother-in-law. He can heal diseases that have afflicted its victim for a long time, such as the leper, or are recent as with the other two. The disease could be deadly, such as the centurion's slave, chronic, such as with the leper, or just temporarily debilitating, as the fever of Peter's mother-in-law. The disease may or may not have been contagious to others. These three examples demonstrate Jesus could heal any disease. The healing in each of these cases takes place immediately. These examples also show God's compassion to those looked down upon by religious society. Jesus healed the leper who was considered incurably unclean, yet Jesus touched him and made him clean without become unclean himself. Gentiles were considered outside the community of faith and it was defiling to enter their homes, yet Jesus agreed to go to the centurion's home and heal his slave. Women had a second class status in that culture, yet Jesus quickly responded to heal Peter's mother-in-law. Matthew demonstrates his point. Jesus' ability to cure diseases demonstrated he also had authority to teach. The religious leaders were not happy with Jesus, but what common person would not want to follow a man with both such power and compassion? The multitudes were following Jesus.

The Centurion's Servant: Faith - Matthew 8:5-13; Luke 7:1-10

Luke 7:1 picks up the chronology after Jesus taught the Sermon on the Plain (Luke 6). "*When He had completed all His discourse in the hearing of the people, He went to Capernaum.*" This was an important city in the early part of Jesus' ministry. The second sign that Jesus performed after He had come out of Judea to Galilee was healing the son of the royal official of Capernaum (John 4:46-54). It was soon after this that Jesus settled there during His Galilean ministry. It was in Capernaum that Jesus cast out a demon and healed Peter's mother-in-law resulting in all those in the city who had any that were sick coming to Him that evening. Jesus healed them of their various diseases and cast out many demons (Luke 4:31-41). With this as a background it is easy to understand the actions of the centurion recorded in Luke 7:2-10.

² *And a centurion's slave, who was highly regarded by him, was sick and about to die.* ³ *When he heard about Jesus, he sent some Jewish elders asking Him to come and save the life of his slave.* ⁴ *When they came to Jesus, they earnestly implored Him, saying, "He is worthy for You to grant this to him;* ⁵ *for he loves our nation and it was he who built us our synagogue."* Stop there for a moment and let me point out some things before we continue the story.

First, a centurion is a military officer, in this case probably part of Herod Antipas's forces since Roman military was not stationed in Galilee before 44 A.D. The title comes from his position of being in charge of 100 men. This would be about the equivalent of a Company commander, a Captain, in our own military. Centurions were well respected men. Polybius commented that they were chosen by merit and remarkable not so much for their daring and courage as for their deliberation, constancy and strength of mind. They were usually well paid and would serve for a long time. A centurion in an outpost such as existed in Capernaum would have many more responsibilities than just military actions by his men. He would also have to oversee the king's interests in that region. This would include enforcement of the laws and community relations. A good centurion in this position would become very familiar with the people of the area and their customs. It was not uncommon for centurions in such outposts to adopt the customs and religion of the local people since for a pagan adding the worship of the local gods to his pantheon of gods would be considered beneficial in more ways than one.

This centurion understands Judaism well enough to know the importance of a synagogue to them. The cynical view is that he built their synagogue in order to gain their favor and make them indebted to him which in turn would make his job a lot easier. From a cynical view the Jewish elders would then have interceded on his behalf to acknowledge their benefactor's generosity and to encourage him to continue to be favorable toward them. However, the character of the centurion seems to be contrary to such a cynical view as does the enthusiastic manner in which the Jewish elders intercede.

Next, I want you to notice the first character quality demonstrated by this centurion. His slave is sick and he wants him to be healed. That in itself would not be remarkable because even in Roman antiquity it was advised to care for sick slaves as a way to prolong their usefulness to their master. But that purely pragmatic motive is replaced by the fact that Luke states that this master “highly regarded” his slave. He was *e[ntimoV / entimos*, precious, esteemed. In addition, Matthew has him refer to his slave as his *pai:V / pais*, a term for a child that could be used for a personal slave and implies kindly regard. Luke uses this same term a little later in his narrative (7:7). The centurion genuinely cared for his slave. He is very concerned because according to Matthew the slave is lying paralyzed and greatly tormented. He cannot walk and is in pain so great it is described as extreme torture. Luke states that he was so sick he was about to die.

Since this centurion would certainly have known about the many miracles Jesus had performed earlier in Capernaum, it is not surprising that he would seek Jesus’ help for his very sick slave when he heard Jesus had returned to Capernaum. Since Jesus had healed so many others, then perhaps Jesus would be compassionate and merciful enough to heal this sick slave.

At this point I need to make you aware that there is a major difference between Matthew and Luke’s account. Luke is detailed that this Gentile centurion sends a delegation of Jewish elders that go to Jesus and intercede on his behalf. That fits Luke’s purpose for remember he is writing to Theophilus, a Greek man. Luke is not only demonstrating in this story that Jesus’ has authority to heal, but also showing Jesus’ response to humble Gentiles. As will be seen later in the narrative, this centurion has a delegation intercede for him because he feels unworthy to come to Jesus himself. The centurion is a very humble man though he is in a position of authority. Showing that God extends His grace to humble Gentiles is an important point for Luke to make.

Matthew condenses the story because that point is not important for him to make since he is writing to Jews and is focused on Jesus’ authority as explained so well by this man’s explanation of his faith. Matthew condenses his accounts in other places in this section as well (Matthew 9:2-8; 18-26). In addition, what a man says through his agents may be attributed to the man himself, so it is not uncommon to have such an abbreviation of a dialogue. Such delegates would often memorize and quote verbatim the message given to them and so could speak in the first person. The linguist Richard Trench stated that *“this is an exchange of persons, of which all historical narrations, and all the language of common life, is full.”*

Luke 7:3 makes it clear that the centurion sent the Jewish elders to speak to Jesus on his behalf. The particular word for sent here is *ajposte;llw / apostello* from which derives the title apostle which is someone sent as the representative. But notice in verse 4 that they did not just come and simply repeat the centurions’ request that Jesus come and save the life of his slave. They “earnestly implored” Jesus to come. They are eager and diligent in pleading and appealing to Jesus to come claiming that the man was worthy of Jesus to do this pointing out that the centurion “loves our nation.” The fact that he had built their synagogue is tacked on as proof of that love and his worthiness. The actions and pleading of these Jewish elders are far beyond the quid pro quo of the cynical view. They demonstrate great respect and even friendship with the centurion even though he is a Gentile. That reflects on the character of the centurion. The picture painted here is that he was a God-fearer, and though the text makes no statement about it, he was also possibly a proselyte to Judaism.

Matthew 8:7 records that Jesus responded saying, *“I will come and heal him.”* The story then continues in Luke 7:6, *“Now Jesus started on His way with them; and when He was not far from the house, the centurion sent friends, saying to Him, ‘Lord, do not trouble Yourself further, for I am not worthy for You to come under my roof;’ for this reason I did not even consider myself worthy to come to You, but just say the word, and my servant will be healed.”* ⁸ *“For I also am a man placed under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to this one, ‘Go!’ and he goes, and to another, ‘Come!’ and he comes, and to my slave, ‘Do this!’ and he does it.”* ⁹ *Now when Jesus heard this, He marveled at him,*

and turned and said to the crowd that was following Him, "I say to you, not even in Israel have I found such great faith." ¹⁰ When those who had been sent returned to the house, they found the slave in good health.

Combining both accounts, it appears that Jesus' answer that He would come and heal the slave was relayed to the centurion who then sent another delegation to Jesus which met Him not far from the centurion's house. The centurion's message is one of great humility and great faith.

First, the fact that the centurion viewed himself as unworthy for Jesus to come into his home or even to meet him in person demonstrates an incredible understanding of Jewish culture as well as personal humility. As the chief military officer in the area, the centurion was in the worldly position of authority and so it would be more natural for him to be proud and demanding. He is not. He is the opposite. He clearly understood that the common view of pious Jews was that it was defiling to enter the home of a Gentile. There seems to be some surprise that Jesus would actually come to his home and He does not want to subject Jesus to defilement.

Second, it also appears that he understood Jesus' holiness while being under conviction of his own sinfulness since he views himself as unworthy to come to Jesus personally. This also reveals that though He obviously knew a lot about Jesus, he did not understand the central message of the gospel that Jesus was preaching. Jesus came with good news for sinners that they could be forgiven and made right with God, and though He was sent primarily to the house of Israel, the gospel also extends to Gentiles.

The centurion's grasp of faith and the authority that belonged to Jesus is incredible even if he was already aware that Jesus had healed the royal official's son from a distance. The centurion firmly believes and states that Jesus could heal his servant by just saying the word. He then explains his own understanding of authority based on being a centurion who could just give the command and the task would be carried out. A medical doctor might be able to send others on his behalf to find out the symptoms, come back so the problem could be diagnosed, then send instructions on how to cure the problem, but that is not what the centurion is alluding to. The centurion's belief is that Jesus has supernatural power and authority over disease so that He simply needed to give the command and the servant would be healed without medical intervention.

That is great faith and it causes Jesus to marvel, to be amazed. There are only two times Jesus is recorded at marveling at people. The first is in Mark 6:6 when He marvels at the unbelief of the people of Nazareth, but here He marvels at the great faith of this centurion. Jesus uses it to instruct the crowd that was following Him stating that He had not found anyone even in Israel that had such great faith. That is a commendation of the centurion, but a sad commentary on the state of the people of Israel. They had seen the miracles Jesus had done and heard Him teach, but none of them demonstrated a faith as great as this Gentile who had only heard about Jesus from others. Since Matthew was writing to Jews, his account continues on with Jesus' rebuke of them in Matthew 8:11-12, *"And I say to you, that many shall come from east and west, and recline at the table with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven; but the sons of the kingdom shall be cast out into the outer darkness; in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."* Those coming from the east and west refers to the Gentiles that would be included in the kingdom. That is good news for most of us here since we are Gentiles. At the same time there would also be those who were "sons of the kingdom," a reference to Jews, that trusted their ancestry rather than God, and so would be cast out much to their dismay and sorrow as illustrated by their weeping and gnashing of teeth.

The accounts conclude that Jesus gave the command (Matthew 8:13) and when the centurion's friends returned to his house, the slave was in good health (Luke 7:10).

The Widow's Son: Compassion - Luke 7:11-17

Luke 7:11-17 continues with the next miracle Jesus performed, *"Soon afterwards He went to a city called Nain; and His disciples were going along with Him, accompanied by a large crowd."* This next

event occurs without much time gap, perhaps a day or two later. Jesus is traveling with His disciples and a large crowd is still following Him. They enter the city of Nain which is about a 30 mile journey from Capernaum. It is six miles SSE of Nazareth on the slopes of the Hill of Moreh on the east side of the Valley of Jezreel. The fact that a large crowd is still following Jesus after so long of a journey demonstrates His fame among the people.

The story continues in verse 12, *As he drew near to the gate of the town, behold, a man who had died was being carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow, and a considerable crowd from the town was with her. 13 And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her and said to her, "Do not weep."*

As Jesus is coming into Nain, He comes upon a truly sad scene near its gate. A large group of people are coming out of the town in a funeral procession. In a typical funeral procession of that time, there would be lots of wailing and crying and often flutes playing dirges so it would have been easy for Jesus to know what was coming even before He saw the procession.

Burial customs of that society were carried out quickly. As soon as it was known someone had died, the wailers would come and the cacophony would begin and would not end until the person was buried. As one commentator put it, if you were not crying because of grief because of the death, the noise would make you weep. Because they did not embalm the body, a person who died was usually buried that day or the very next day if they died in the evening. The body would be washed and spices would be sprinkled on it. Those in mourning would not wash and might tear their clothes, wear sackcloth and put ashes on their head. They would often walk barefoot, allow their hair to fall loose and may or may not wear a veil. The person would be buried in their clothes or wrapped in burial clothes. The body would be carried on a bier, often just wood planks attached to poles, to the burial site with the family walking close by.

In this funeral procession the mother of the man who had died was alone for she was a widow and had no other sons. This was a double tragedy because not only did she have the grief that her son had died, but as a widow without other sons, the family line would end and she would be put in a perilous financial position. There were few opportunities in that society for a woman to earn a living for herself. The large crowd in the funeral procession showed that there was much sympathy for her.

When Jesus sees her, He has compassion on her. If she had been in front of the bier, He would have met her first. No one has asked Jesus to do anything. Out of His own initiative Jesus goes up to her and tells her not to weep. That would be a very strange thing to say if He did not plan to do something about the situation for she had every reason to weep. Her husband was dead. Now her son was dead. She was full of grief, and life for her was going to become very difficult. She had little or no hope. But she had never met Jesus before and He had a plan.

Luke 7:14a, *Then he came up and touched the bier, and the bearers stood still.* Certainly the pall bearers would stop and stand still at this even though Jesus did not say anything. To touch a corpse or anything associated with a corpse would make you ceremonially unclean for seven days and therefore exclude from much of Jewish social life during that time. Usually, only close family and friends would do this, but here Jesus comes, a stranger to them, and obviously someone of great importance indicated by the large crowd accompanying Him, and He touches the bier and stops the funeral procession. He shows no fear of becoming unclean. If the people were surprised then, they are shocked at what occurs next.

Luke 7:14b-15, *And He said, "Young man, I say to you, arise." 15 And the dead man sat up and began to speak, and Jesus gave him to his mother.*

This is the first incidence recorded of Jesus raising someone from the dead. The Scriptures record that He later raised Jairus' daughter (Luke 8:41-56) and Lazarus (John 11:1-44) from the dead. Whether He also raised others is not recorded, but as John 21:25 points out, there is many other things Jesus did that are not written. In all three recorded cases, Jesus raises the dead by simply commanding it. Only in

the case of Jairus' daughter does He even touch the body, and then only her hand as He speaks to her. It should also be noted that all three times Jesus raised the dead it was out of compassion for those left behind and not for the one who had died. In this incident it was compassion for the widow. *The dead man sat up and began to speak* which proved he was now alive, and Jesus gave him back to his mother.

The shock of seeing a dead man restored to life caused the people watching to initially be gripped by fear, but then they recovered enough to begin glorifying God saying, "*A great prophet has arisen among us!*" and, "*God has visited His people!*" It was obvious to all that this was a work of God for only God could raise the dead. They also recognize that Jesus is at least a great prophet for he has done what only Elijah (1 Kings 17:17ff) and Elisha (2 Kings 4:18ff) have done before. The news about what Jesus had done spread quickly throughout the area and in Judea.

Conclusions

Matthew and Luke accomplish their purposes. The man that can heal the sick and raise the dead by simply commanding it to happen also has authority to proclaim God's instructions to people on how He wants them to live. Jesus taught with authority because He has the authority to do so from God.

The story of the centurion also reveals the true nature of faith. Many people refuse to believe unless they see it themselves. That is the position of the proud. The centurion believed without seeing, for like us, he only heard the reports of others. That is the response of the humble. Many say they believe, but they put all sort of restrictions on how God can do something. That has become increasingly common even in what is supposed to be the evangelical church. They read the Bible and then try to explain away the miracles clearly described in the text in everything from Creation itself to calming seas to walking on water to healing the sick to raising the dead. They want to limit God to processes they themselves think they can understand. The centurion believed Jesus had the authority to do anything He commanded including the miraculous. What is the nature of your faith? Do you put restrictions on God or do you believe He can do anything He wants anyway He wants in keeping with His own nature and promises?

A final lesson is in the story of the widow. In a sense, every human that has not yet met Jesus would be in a state of grief and hopelessness if they would acknowledge reality. They may even be surrounded by family and friends, be financially secure and live life like it was one big party, but reality is very different from that. Death forces upon us the reality that life on this earth is short and no one has any hope for eternity based on their own resources. Without Jesus, you must face God alone and give an account of your life to your holy and righteous Creator. Your very deeds will condemn you to the second death of the lake of eternal fire. With Jesus you have an advocate that has already paid the penalty of your sin so that He can forgive you and give you eternal life. Are you in a funeral procession headed toward eternal damnation, or have you met Jesus and received the eternal life He offers to all that believe in Him?

Sermon Notes: *Authority, Faith and Compassion*
Matthew 8:1, 5-13; Luke 7:1-17

Authority

Jesus taught as one with _____, and not as the scribes

Luke is writing a gospel account that is _____ for a Greek man named Theophilus

Matthew's account is writing a _____ account for a Jewish audience and is only loosely chronological

Matthew and Luke both demonstrate Jesus' authority to _____ by showing His authority to do miracles

Jesus has been doing miracles and _____ in Galilee and He returns to Capernaum with a large crowd

Matthew 8:1-17 gives three stories of Jesus' authority to _____, two occur prior to the Sermon on the Mount

Jesus can _____ anyone of any disease by any manner He desires

Religious leaders are stung by Jesus' teaching, but He gives hope to the _____ people who follow Him

The Centurion's Servant: Faith - Matthew 8:5-13; Luke 7:1-10

_____ was an important city in Jesus' early ministry - He did many miracles there

The centurion is a _____ officer over 100 men, probably in the army of Herod Antipas

Centurions in charge of an outpost would also be responsible for keeping law and _____ relations

It was not uncommon for centurions to adopt the customs and _____ of the people where they were posted

This centurion highly _____ his very sick slave and is genuinely concerned for him

Luke gives more _____ because he is also showing Jesus' response to humble Gentile

Matthew _____ his account focusing on Jesus' authority and the man's faith

What a man says through his agents may be _____ to the man himself

The centurion sends (ajposte;llw / apostello) Jewish elders to Jesus as his _____

They "earnestly implored" Jesus citing him as _____ since he loves Israel proven by building a synagogue

Matthew 8:7; Luke 7:6-10 - Jesus responds that He will _____ and heal the servant

The centurion saw himself as _____ for Jesus to come to his home and risk defilement

The centurion was _____ and convicted of his sinfulness and so unworthy to personally meet Jesus

He understood _____ from his own experience and had great faith in Jesus to command and heal

Jesus marvels at the centurion's _____ while lamenting its lack among those in Israel

Matthew 8:11-12 includes Jesus' _____ of the Jews because of their lack of faith

The Widow's Son: Compassion - Luke 7:11-17

_____ is a 30 mile trip from Capernaum, six miles SSE of Nazareth, on the east side of the Valley of Jezreel

As Jesus is about to enter Nain, He encounters a large _____ procession coming out of Nain

Jews carried out _____ quickly with lots of wailing and many visible signs of grief

This was a funeral for the only son of a _____ mother - a double tragedy that put her in financial danger

Jesus has _____ on her and on His own initiative goes up to her and tells her not to weep

Jesus _____ the bier which surprises everyone and stops the funeral procession

Luke 7:14b-15 - Jesus calls the young man back to _____ - the first of three recorded resurrection by Jesus

The shock of seeing the man restored to life causes _____ and then praise to God for sending a great prophet

Conclusions

Matthew & Luke demonstrate Jesus' authority to teach by the _____ He performs

The story of the centurion also reveals the true nature of _____ - the humble believe without having to see

True faith does not _____ God - He does what He wants how He wants according to His nature & promises

The true human condition apart of Jesus is one of _____ heading to the first and second death

Jesus grants forgiveness and gives _____ to those who believe in Him

KIDS KORNER

Parents, you are responsible to apply God's Word to your children's lives. Here is some help.

Young Children - draw a picture about something you hear during the sermon. Explain your picture(s) to your parents at lunch. **Older Children** - Do one or more of the following: 1) Write down all the verses mentioned in the sermon and look them up later. 2) Count how many times Jesus is mentioned in the sermon. Talk with your parents about Jesus' authority and what it means to have faith in Him.

THINK ABOUT IT!

Questions to consider in discussing the sermon with others. To whom is Matthew writing and what is his methodology for his gospel account? To whom is Luke writing and what is his methodology for his gospel account? Why do both give accounts of Jesus performing miracles after their presentation of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount and Sermon on the Plain respectively? What was the importance of Capernaum in Jesus' early ministry? What had already occurred there prior to Jesus return there in Luke 7:1? Why was there a large multitude of people following Jesus? What is a centurion? What would have been the importance of the centurion stationed in Capernaum? What indicates the centurion genuinely cared about his sick slave? What would cause the centurion to seek Jesus' help to heal him? Why does Matthew present the centurion as coming to Jesus himself while Luke states that it was Jewish elders sent by the centurion that came to Jesus? How do the differences in these two accounts harmonize? What indicates that the Jewish elders are not just performing a quid pro quo for the centurion? What did the centurion do that demonstrated that he loved the Jewish nation? Why would the centurion think he was unworthy for Jesus to come to his home? Why would the centurion think he was unworthy to meet Jesus personally? What was the centurion's understanding of authority based on his own life? How did he believe that applied to Jesus? Why did Jesus conclude that the centurion had great faith and why did that cause Him to marvel? Why does Matthew 8:11-12, but not Luke, record Jesus rebuke to the Jews? Where is Nain? How long would it take to get there from Capernaum? Why is there still a large multitude following Jesus? Describe the common burial and funeral customs of the Jews at that time? Why was the funeral of this young man a double tragedy for his mother? What prompted did Jesus to go to the mother and tell her not to weep? Why would it be very surprising for everyone for Jesus to go up to the bier and touch it? By what means did Jesus restore life back to the young man? How did He restore life back to Jairus' daughter (Luke 8:41-56) and to Lazarus (John 11:1-44)? What was the two-fold response of the people to this miracle? Why did they conclude that Jesus was a great prophet? What is the source of Jesus' authority? Describe the characteristics of true faith in your own words? Do you have such faith? What will be the final destination of all who do not have Jesus? How does Jesus forgive sins and give eternal life to His followers? Have you been forgiven by God? Why? Will you spend eternity in Heaven or Hell? Why?