

The Raising of a Girl and the Healing of a Woman
Matthew 9:18-26
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Matthew 8-9 provides us with the account of ten miracles that serve to prove the authority of Jesus over all. Matthew has organized these miracles into groups for the purpose of presenting Jesus as the Messiah of Israel.

- Miracles of healing (8:1-17)
- Miracles of power (8:23-9:8)
- Miracles of restoration (9:19-34)

The last set of miracles begins with the raising of a girl from the dead and the healing of a woman from a hemorrhage. These two miracles are woven together since the story of the hemorrhaging woman is inserted in the middle of the story of the girl being raised from the dead.

Mark 5:21-43 and Luke 8:40-56 also report the same account for both restorations. Like Matthew, both Mark and Luke insert the account of the hemorrhaging woman in the middle of the story of the raised girl. This indicates that there is a chronological aspect to the order, rather than Matthew using the placement of the stories to support his defense of Jesus as the Messiah.

Mark and Luke place these stories after the healing of the demoniac, which Matthew placed at the end of chapter 8. Therefore we can conclude that these incidents happened soon after Jesus and His disciples returned from Gadara on the east side of the Sea of Galilee (cf. Mark 5:21-22; Luke 8:40-41) in the town of Capernaum.

The request by the synagogue official (9:18-19)

While Jesus was speaking, a synagogue official in Capernaum named Jairus came to Him (Mark 5:22; Luke 8:41). As such, Matthew directly links the story of Jairus approaching Jesus to the question of fasting by John's disciples. Mark and Luke do not contradict this for they allow for a break between the healing of the demoniac (Mark 5:20; Luke 8:39) and this story. Apparently, the account of the calling of Matthew by Jesus (Matthew 9:9-13), followed by the teaching of Jesus to John's disciples (Matthew 9:14-17), led directly to the moment where Jarius came to Jesus.

As a synagogue official, Jairus would have held a position of respect and prestige in the community. For such an official (literally, “ruler” in Greek) to have the humility to approach Jesus and bow down before Him is significant. A Jewish synagogue leader would not have been expected to display such reverence toward Jesus and certainly not bow down to Him.

This is certainly a demonstration of the man’s hope that Jesus might help his daughter. This hope was expressed with great confidence, “*lay your hand on her, and she will live.*” This faith at least showed he understood Jesus’ authority to some degree. Since “*this report concerning Him went out all over Judea and in all the surrounding district*” (Luke 7:17), Jairus would have gained hope for his own daughter.

It appears that Jarius had more than just the hope of a desperate father willing to try anything to save his daughter. She was his only daughter, just twelve years old, and he implored Jesus to come to his house (Luke 8:41-42). He displayed his humility before not only Jesus’ disciples (Matthew 9:19) but also in front of a large crowd of people (Mark 5:21, 24). This demonstration of submission, by his words and his posture, to Jesus by such a notable authority in the community would have been remarkable for the crowds. Adding to the likelihood that the man possessed true faith in Jesus is the fact that Mark and Luke both refer to the man’s name, indicating that he would probably be known to the original readers of those Gospels.

His faith led him to conclude that Jesus had the power to restore his daughter but that Jesus needed to touch his daughter, as Jesus did in other healings in Matthew 8:2 and 8:15. The Roman centurion had even greater faith by believing that Jesus could heal from a distance. “*But the centurion said, ‘Lord, I am not worthy for You to come under my roof, but just say the word, and my servant will be healed’*” (Matthew 8:8).

While Matthew quotes the official as saying “*my daughter has just died,*” both Mark and Luke record him saying that his daughter was at the point of death (Mark 5:23; Luke 8:42). Both of the other Gospels clarify that the official considered his daughter to be near death by recording that he was not informed of his daughter’s death until he is told about it after Jesus heals the woman with the hemorrhage (Mark 5:35; Luke 8:49).

The solution to this apparent discrepancy is found in the greater detail that both Mark and Luke give to this account. Matthew is much more succinct, leaving out many of the facts that the other writers included. Matthew is therefore condensing the story to present what would be true from the outset of his account.

The first part of the story of the raising of Jarius' daughter ends with the official leading Jesus to his house (Matthew 9:23) where he had left his daughter. The disciples of Jesus dutifully followed them.

The restoration of the hemorrhaging woman (9:20-22)

As Jesus was headed to the house of the synagogue official, a woman with a hemorrhage touched His cloak. Such an malady was an uncontrollable, persistent bleeding, likely from her reproductive system. This bleeding was not enough to threaten her life since she had been living with this problem for twelve years. It was, however, enough to prevent her from bearing children and significantly, it rendered her ritually unclean (Leviticus 15:25-33). As such, she was to refrain from any contact with others in order to protect them from becoming unclean themselves.

This unnamed woman makes her way through the crowd to touch the fringe of his cloak, believing that this act would precipitate healing for her illness. The fringe of a cloak worn by Jews in the first century would have been one of four tassels that hung from the corners of their outer garment, to remind them to obey God's Law (Numbers 15:37-41; Deuteronomy 22:12). While these could certainly become fleshly efforts to showcase one's religious superiority (Matthew 23:5), all male Jews wore them customarily. Jesus was not adverse to wearing the customary attire of the day.

The desire of the woman to touch Jesus' garment was based in part upon a superstitious belief that touching an object could bring about a miraculous event. Yet this does not negate her faith as it is not simply a garment that she touched but the garment of Jesus. It was her faith in Jesus that led her to touch His cloak. In fact, Jesus commends her faith (Matthew 9:22). This shows that true faith does not require a complete rejection of past superstitions or immature thinking about doctrinal truth. The woman, like all of us, was on a journey of learning as a disciple of Jesus.

Mark and Luke note that this healing occurred in response to her touching the cloak of Jesus, with Jesus not even knowing who had been healed. He was aware that power had gone forth from Him and thus the affliction had been healed (Mark 5:29-30). Once again, Matthew's account leaves out such details. He does use the perfect tense "*your faith has made you well*" in his quotation of Jesus, pointing to the woman having been healed, and concludes with the summary "*At once the woman was made well*" to conclude this story.

Each synoptic Gospel emphasizes the role of faith in this healing. Her touching of His garment was an expression of her faith. Her faith brought her deliverance that could not have been achieved by the works of man. Mark 5:25-26 makes this point clearly, "*A woman who had had a hemorrhage for twelve years, and had endured much at the hands of many physicians, and had spent all that she had and was not helped at all, but rather had grown worse.*" The woman was truly in a desperate situation.

No thoughtful reader would confuse the touching of the garment with the source of the healing. Jesus not only acknowledges her faith, He also encourages her in her faith. Faith is truly the means by which the Lord works His will in our life, thus bringing the rightful praise to God rather than to our human efforts.

In all three synoptics, the healing of this woman is placed in the middle of the account of the raising of Jarius' daughter for one basic reason—these events occurred in this sequence. This is evident particularly in Mark's Gospel which describes the healing of the woman as occurring as they came to Jarius' house. Nevertheless, there is a connection between these miracles in that they both involve the restoration of a life.

The raising of the daughter of the synagogue official (9:23-26)

When Jesus arrived at the house of Jarius, He encountered the flute players and the crowd. All three synoptic Gospels mention these flute players. Jewish readers would readily understand that Jesus encountered the essence of a funeral setting, since Jewish custom required even poor families to hire two flute players and one wailing woman to mourn the death of someone. This custom is also alluded to in Matthew 11:16-17, "*But to what shall I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the market places, who call out to the other children, and say, 'We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not mourn.'*"

The noisy crowd was part of the public display of mourning. Unlike solemn occasions that are funerals in our culture, Jewish wakes included loud expressions of grief, along with the professional mourners. Since Jarius was a synagogue ruler, the number of participants in such a moment would be large.

Luke describes Jesus and the synagogue official being told about the death of the daughter by someone who came from the house (Luke 8:49) so they would not have been surprised at the mourning. Furthermore, Jesus responded by saying, “*Do not be afraid any longer; only believe, and she will be made well*” (Luke 8:50).

The weeping and lamenting were rebuked by Jesus as He informed the crowd that the girl had not died. By saying that she was asleep only meant to convey that her death was temporary. John 11:11 uses sleep in the same way in the story of the raising of Lazarus. This is the divine view of death as the girl would soon be raised from the dead by Jesus.

The contrast between the belief of Jarius and the unbelief of the mourners is vivid, for they laugh at Jesus. They believed that Jesus was ignorant of the situation as they knew better than He did. This is an aspect of unbelief, believing that our reasoning is above God’s understanding.

The means by which this healing occurred is notable. Jesus dismisses the mourners from the house (Matthew 9:25). He only allows the girl’s father and mother to enter with Him, along with only three of His disciples, Peter, John and James (Luke 8:51). These three disciples form an inner core and later it will be only these three disciples that will ascend the mountain to see the transfiguration of Jesus (Matthew 17:1).

The Scripture does not indicate why Jesus limited the crowd in the house. It may have been for the sake of space, but surely a home of a synagogue official could accommodate more than five witnesses. It may have been to limit the publicity from such a miracle, particularly since the earlier raising of a dead man in the city of Nain in Luke’s Gospel resulted in the report spreading far and wide (Luke 7:11-17). If the goal was to limit the news, Matthew 9:26 tells us it was unsuccessful, “*this news spread throughout all that land.*”

Another possibility would be to make the moment more private for the girl when she arose. Or that the crowds did not believe Jesus so they were excluded. There is no definite answer however.

Jesus “took her by the hand” when He raised her from the dead. This is significant since by touching a corpse He would have become unclean. This is similar to the miracle of the cleansing of the leper in Matthew 8:3. In both cases, Jesus’ healing touch resulted in the cleansing of the person, rather than the defilement of Jesus.

Mark and Luke also reference that Jesus took her by the hand, but they also add the words that Jesus spoke. Mark’s account is the most complete, recording the words that Jesus spoke in Aramaic, and then translating them for the reader, “*Little girl, I say to you, get up!*” (Mark 5:41). This is additional evidence that Jesus spoke in Aramaic and when He is quoted by the Gospel writers, they translate His words into Greek for their readers (cf. Matthew 27:46). Why Mark included the original Aramaic is unclear, but comparing the three Gospels, we see one omitting these words completely, one summarizing them (Luke 8:54, “*Child, arise!*”), and one providing the original Aramaic words.

This helps us to understand the nature of the Gospel narratives. While all are inerrant and authoritative, they are not complete. The accuracy of these accounts is not affected by the selective nature of the material included.

The story of the raising of the girl does not end with the dramatic miracle but with the result of the miracle. “*This news spread throughout all the land*” (Matthew 9:26). This is included to build the theme of opposition to Jesus. As His popularity increased, so did the opposition. Later in this chapter we will see the next stage of the opposition (Matthew 9:34).

Conclusion

These two miracles are woven together to show the power and authority of Jesus over illness and over life itself. Physical ailments ultimately lead to death, but Jesus overcame death. What was true in the physical realm is even more true in the spiritual realm. When people have tried every possible solution to their human problem, the Lord is able to deliver them. When people think there is no hope and laugh at the idea of God delivering a person, the Lord’s power is even more magnified.

This suffering of mankind is common to all, from a noble synagogue ruler to an ostracized hemorrhaging woman, prohibited from even attending the synagogue, who had to push her way through the crowd. While they enjoyed different stations of life in Jewish culture, both faced dire circumstances. Jesus was the Savior of the world, from the least of these to the greatest.

Jesus overcame ritual uncleanness by taking the girl by the hand to raise her from the dead and He overcame ritual uncleanness when the hemorrhaging woman touched His cloak. He freed the woman from the physically draining ailment and from the social stigma of uncleanness. He brings cleanness to the unclean, just as He brings life to the dying. His light illuminates darkness, darkness does not extinguish His light.

Both cases show Jesus' authority over life by conquering death. While the woman did not die, her despair was as great as Jarius' anguish. Her life had no vigor, her social relationships were limited, she had no ability to bear children, she spent all her money on doctors who had no cure, and she had suffered without relief for twelve years. When Jesus told her to "*take courage*" (Matthew 9:22), she had been living a despondent life. The joy of Jarius and the woman was not recorded, but must have been great.

How much greater is the spiritual deliverance that Christ brings to the dead who are brought to everlasting life? He has authority on earth to forgive sins (Matthew 9:6), bringing true salvation for eternity. It is faith that makes us well, in the truest sense. We have been outcasts, unable to worship the true God, but Jesus brought us near to Him. "*While we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son*" (Romans 5:10). Our joy should surpass the joy of even Jarius and the healed woman.