**Notes on Matthew 9:18-34**

* Vv. 18-19
  + “While he spake these things unto them, behold, there came a certain ruler, and worshipped him, saying, My daughter is even now dead: but come and lay thy hand upon her, and she shall live. 19 And Jesus arose, and followed him, and so did his disciples.”
    - If you compare Matthew’s account of these events with Mark or Luke, you will realize very quickly that Matthew’s account is brief by comparison (nine short verses in Matthew vs. nearly twenty longer verses in both Mark and Luke). This doesn’t mean that their accounts contradict. It is the same story in all three gospels. Matthew simply tells a streamlined version of it. For instance, Matthew tells us that this ruler told Jesus that his daughter had just died. However, Mark and Luke give us a fuller version of the account. They tell us that the ruler’s daughter was at the point of death, but that the father didn’t receive the news that she had died until there were on the way back to his home. We do this all the time when we relay information to other people. When you tell a streamlined version of a story to someone else, are you lying? No. Of course not. We all understand this. If we purposely formulated half-truths in a story in order to mislead the person we were talking to, of course, that would be lying. However, Matthew was simply telling a story in a streamlined fashion. This same phenomenon takes place many times throughout the Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Most of the “contradictions” that skeptics tout are simply the same accounts being told in a fuller or more streamlined fashion. If we give ourselves the grace to communicate truth through this same method, shouldn’t we give the Holy Spirit that same freedom?
    - The ruler who came to Jesus was named Jairus. He was one of the elders of the synagogue there at Capernaum. In spite of his position of authority in the synagogue, Jairus was powerless to help his twelve-year-old daughter. Mark and Luke reveal to us that this little girl was at the point of death when Jairus came to Jesus (by the time he arrived at Jesus, it is likely that the girl had just passed away – unbeknownst to him). The dire situation prompted him to take extreme action. As we will learn down a few verses later, the Pharisees had already decided that Jesus was an imposter (v. 34). Perhaps this elder was a Pharisee himself. While the Temple in Jerusalem was the realm controlled by the Sadducees, the synagogues of Israel were the Pharisee’s realm. Can you imagine the courage it took for Jairus to come to Jesus? I imagine Jairus and his wife arguing about it in the days leading up to this. What would the other elders think? Would he lose his position? Would they be expelled from the synagogue? Ultimately, Jairus’ only daughter was more important to him than religious politics. He believed that Jesus could heal his daughter, and that’s all that mattered.
* Vv. 20-22
  + “And, behold, a woman, which was diseased with an issue of blood twelve years, came behind him, and touched the hem of his garment: 21 For she said within herself, If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole. 22 But Jesus turned him about, and when he saw her, he said, Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour.”
    - As Jesus and His disciples were on the way to Jairus’ house, another miracle took place. Mark and Luke reveal that Jesus was being “thronged” by a crowd—a word which means “to press on all sides” (Thayer’s). In this crowd, there was a woman which had suffered a continual flow of menstruous blood for twelve years. Luke tells us that this woman had spent all her living (literally, “spent her life”) on physicians. Mark tells us that she “had suffered many things of many physicians.” At this point in time, most doctors weren’t significantly better than witchdoctors. We don’t know all the experimental treatments that this woman had gone through, but we do know that they had hurt her.
    - What follows in Matthew is another example of him streamlining the story. Luke (very similar to Mark) says that she, “Came behind him, and touched the border of his garment: and immediately her issue of blood stanched. 45 And Jesus said, Who touched me? When all denied, Peter and they that were with him said, Master, the multitude throng thee and press thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me? 46 And Jesus said, Somebody hath touched me: for I perceive that virtue is gone out of me. 47 And when the woman saw that she was not hid, she came trembling, and falling down before him, she declared unto him before all the people for what cause she had touched him, and how she was healed immediately. 48 And he said unto her, Daughter, be of good comfort: thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace.” This is the detailed account. On the other hand, Matthew skips over the majority of these details straight to Jesus’ final comment. There is no contradiction here. Matthew simply streamlined the story. The heart of this account is that this desperate woman came to Jesus after everyone else had failed her. She found healing in the Creator.
    - There is something in this account that is key, but is usually missed by us. According to the Old Testament Law, a woman was considered unclean for seven days from the beginning of her period. During those seven days, no one could touch her, and everything she touched was considered to be unclean. However, if her blood lasted beyond the seven days, her uncleanness lasted for as long as the blood continued. Leviticus 15:25-27 says, “And if a woman have an issue of her blood many days out of the time of her separation, or if it run beyond the time of her separation [beyond the initial seven days]; all the days of the issue of her uncleanness shall be as the days of her separation: she shall be unclean. 26 Every bed whereon she lieth all the days of her issue shall be unto her as the bed of her separation: and whatsoever she sitteth upon shall be unclean, as the uncleanness of her separation. 27 And whosoever toucheth those things shall be unclean, and shall wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until the even.” Notice what v. 27 said. If a person touched anything that came in contact with this woman, they would have been unclean as well. In other words, her uncleanness was considered to be contagious—and she had been in this state for twelve years. Can you imagine? For twelve long years, no one would have touched this woman except by accident. Even then, they would have recoiled. It was her responsibility to stay away from others. She wasn’t allowed in the Temple. She wasn’t allowed to go to the synagogue. Considering the fact that this woman had had this problem for twelve years, it’s very likely that her husband would have divorced her (divorce in Jewish culture was very easy—especially in a situation like this). You can even make a case that “all her living” that she had spent on physicians is a reference to her dowry (a portion of a woman’s dowry was required to be returned to her by her husband if he divorced her). In fact, since this woman was obviously paying out of her own pocket, the most likely situation is that her husband had divorced her and she was using her dowry money. If she was still unmarried, her father would have been the one paying (because she wouldn’t have had any money herself). If she was still married, her husband would have been the one paying (according to Jewish law, the husband was in charge of the money). The fact that this woman was paying for all of this herself does seem to support the conclusion that she had been married, but that her husband had divorced her (leaving her a dowry to spend however she saw fit). At this point in her journey, this woman had used every available resource. She was at the end of her rope. Certainly, no one have considered marrying her, and “getting a job” wasn’t a possibility—especially with her illness. All of this demonstrates the desperate state that this woman found herself in, but it also reveals the extraordinary circumstances of her healing. All three of the gospels state that this woman touched Jesus’ garment. Based on the Old Testament rules, this would have rendered Jesus unclean—but it didn’t. How could this be? If it were true, what would the proof be? The only solution is that Jesus was God—and the proof is that the woman was healed. This story demonstrates Jesus deity, but it also provides us with a powerful image. Uncleanness is contagious, expect when you bring it to Jesus. When you do that, the course of natural and spiritual law is reversed. Instead of your uncleanness contaminating Him, His purity cleanses you.
* Vv. 23-26
  + “And when Jesus came into the ruler's house, and saw the minstrels and the people making a noise, 24 He said unto them, Give place: for the maid is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed him to scorn. 25 But when the people were put forth, he went in, and took her by the hand, and the maid arose. 26 And the fame hereof went abroad into all that land.”
    - Before the events we are given in Matthew, Mark and Luke tell us that someone came from Jairus’ house. They simply said, “Thy daughter is dead, why troublest thou the Master any further?” Once again, the title “Master” is given to Jesus (the typical title used by the lost to refer to Jesus as nothing more than a Jewish teacher). I don’t want to read something into the text that isn’t there, but it seems as if the person talking to Jairus wasn’t in favor of him coming to Jesus in the first place. Luke records that this person said, “Thy daughter is dead; trouble not the Master.” The form of the verb is imperative (a command). The tone I imagine is “Leave this teacher alone (which you should have done in the first place), and come home (where you should have been this whole time)!” Jairus had associated himself with this “teacher,” and where was the benefit? His daughter had still died—and he hadn’t even been there when she passed.
    - It’s at this point that you realize the significance of the interruption. While on the way to Jairus’ house, Jesus had been stopped. He had even taken the time to look through the crowd for the woman who had touched Him. The clock was ticking for this little girl. Imagine an ambulance taking a detour while on the way to pick up someone who had been in a terrible car accident. When he received the news that his daughter was dead, Jairus must have been crushed. Had the delay cost him his daughter’s life? Was he angry at Jesus? Did he blame himself for not coming to Jesus sooner? Did he feel guilty for not being by her side? Jesus cut through his turmoil by saying, “Fear not: believe only, and she shall be made whole.” In spite of the interruption, Jairus chose to believe in Jesus.
    - By the time Jesus and Jairus arrived at his house, the flute-players and mourners were already there. These were hired mourners (not family members). Even in the Old Testament, the custom of hiring professional mourners is mentioned regularly. Amos 5:16 says, “Therefore the Lord, the God of hosts, the Lord, saith thus; Wailing shall be in all streets; and they shall say in all the highways, Alas! alas! and they shall call the husbandman to mourning, and such as are skilful of lamentation to wailing.” Jeremiah 9:17-20 says, “Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Consider ye, and call for the mourning women, that they may come; and send for cunning women, that they may come: 18 And let them make haste, and take up a wailing for us, that our eyes may run down with tears, and our eyelids gush out with waters. 19 For a voice of wailing is heard out of Zion, How are we spoiled! we are greatly confounded, because we have forsaken the land, because our dwellings have cast us out. 20 Yet hear the word of the Lord, O ye women, and let your ear receive the word of his mouth, and teach your daughters wailing, and every one her neighbour lamentation.” Professional mourning was a regular part of their society. The Jews even had a rule that the poorest man should hire at least two flute-players and one mourning woman if his wife had passed (Clarke and Gill). Considering that this man was an elder in the synagogue, it’s certain that there would have been many more. When Jesus said to these professional mourners, “Give place: for the maid is not dead, but sleepeth,” it says that they “laughed Him to scorn.” That word means to “laugh scornfully, mock…laugh down, deride,” (LSJ accessed on Perseus Project). Keep in mind, these were professionals who had been paid to do a job. Imagine a construction guy walking into a doctor’s office today and saying, “Your patient isn’t actually dead. She’s only sleeping.” It’s not hard to imagine the doctor saying, “Get this idiot out of here.” But instead of Jesus leaving, Jesus commanded everyone else to leave except for Peter, James, John, and the girl’s parents.
    - Matthew tells us that Jesus took the girl’s hand, and Mark and Luke reveal that Jesus said “Maid, arise.” At Jesus’ command, the girl was raised from the dead. In both Mark and Luke the same word is used to describe her parent’s reaction—“astonished.” Literally, the word means to be out of your mind (in a good way). They were beside themselves with joy—so much so that Jesus needed to remind them to get the girl some food. The impossible had happened. God had visited them—and proved it by giving life from death.
    - Matthew says “And the fame hereof went abroad into all that land.” Can you imagine the scene? First, the crowd heard that the girl had died—but they followed Jesus to the house anyway. Second, Jesus, Peter, James, John, and Jairus entered into his house. Third, the mourners came out of the house, disgruntled and angry about the idiot that had just fired them. But a few moments later, the crowd heard the sound of astonishment, then laughter, then praise. Jesus and three of his disciples came out—and a little girl peeked her head out the door. This was a day that they would not soon forget.
* Vv. 27-31
  + “And when Jesus departed thence, two blind men followed him, crying, and saying, Thou son of David, have mercy on us. 28 And when he was come into the house, the blind men came to him: and Jesus saith unto them, Believe ye that I am able to do this? They said unto him, Yea, Lord. 29 Then touched he their eyes, saying, According to your faith be it unto you. 30 And their eyes were opened; and Jesus straitly charged them, saying, See that no man know it. 31 But they, when they were departed, spread abroad his fame in all that country.”
    - After Jesus left Jairus’ house, two blind men followed after Him. Their cry demonstrated their faith. They called Jesus “Thou Son of David.” This is a Messianic title which recognizes Jesus as the rightful heir of David (2 Samuel 7:12). However, unlike most of Jesus other miracles, He did not respond right away. Jesus was being followed by a crowd (of which these blind men were a part). Once Jesus arrived at a particular house (probably Peter’s house, if I had to guess), these two blind men came through the crowd to Jesus. The stage was set for a vital lesson.
    - The priority of faith is key here. Jesus said to them; “Believe ye that I am able to do this?” Think of what the Bible says in Hebrew 11:6; “But without faith it is impossible to please him [God]: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.” Faith is the single most important trait that God desires in man. It is His most-emphasized activity (to trust in Him). But why did Jesus ask these men if they believed? Certainly, Jesus already knew if they believed or not. Jesus could see into their hearts. He knew that they believed—but He wanted to teach the crowd a lesson about Himself. Jesus said, “According to your faith be it unto you.” These blind men believed, therefore, they received their sight from Jesus. The reality and necessity of their faith was clear to see. Jesus asked these men if they believed in order to teach everyone within earshot the truth present in Hebrews 11:6. Jesus wanted to show them the key. If they wanted to please God, all they had to do was believe in His Son. If they did that, anything was possible.
* Vv. 32-34
  + “As they went out, behold, they brought to him a dumb man possessed with a devil. 33 And when the devil was cast out, the dumb spake: and the multitudes marvelled, saying, It was never so seen in Israel. 34 But the Pharisees said, He casteth out devils through the prince of the devils.”
    - As the two healed men left, some other individuals in the crowd brought a man to Jesus that could not speak. This inability was due to the fact that he was demon possessed. However, once Jesus cast the demon out, the man miraculously regained his ability to speak. To me, that points to the fact that this individual was well known to the crowd. Perhaps he had been possessed for many years. In any case, Jesus’ miracle was undeniable.
    - Even the Pharisees admitted the reality of Jesus’ miracle. However, they claimed that Jesus source of power was “the prince of the devils,” (Satan himself). This shows us that, at this point, the Pharisees had already decided what they believed about Jesus. His miracles were undeniable, so they denied the source of them. If they admitted that Jesus was the Messiah, their whole system would have come crashing down. Jesus had already claimed to have divine rights—and He had ignored their traditions, teachings, and rituals. I don’t think the Pharisees really cared whether or not Jesus was the Messiah. Whoever He was, He was a threat to their authority and way of life.