

Matthew 9:18-26

Introduction

We come now to the last set of three miracle stories in this collection of three sets of three miracle stories with two teaching interludes. Since the beginning of this chapter, Matthew has been following the same order as Mark and Luke. But now yet once again he goes his own way and follows a different order. In both Mark and Luke, Jesus' teaching on new wine and old wineskins (Mk. 2:18-22; Lk. 5:33-39) is separated from the stories of the healing of a woman and the raising of a girl (Mk. 5:21-43; Lk. 8:40-56) by three full chapters. Matthew, however, puts these two texts together, and he even connects them with the words: "While he was saying these things to them [about new wine and old wineskins], behold, a ruler came in and knelt before him." If Mark and Luke are the ones who give us the *historical* order, then this is just a literary device ("once while he was teaching such things" – Grosheide; quoted unapprovingly in Hendriksen). On the other hand, in this case it may be Matthew—not Mark and Luke—who gives us the historical order (this is definitely possible and could still fit with Mark and Luke). But in any case, the main point is that Matthew has decided *not* to follow the order of Mark and Luke. And so by putting these two texts *together*, it seems clear that Matthew wants us to read this last set of miracle stories *in the light of* what Jesus' has been teaching about the new wine of the *kingdom*. Remember that one of the special purposes of Matthew is to show how the Old Testament is being *fulfilled* in the arrival of the Messiah and His kingdom. We've seen the teaching of the King in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7), and now in these chapters (8-9) Matthew is giving us a collection of Jesus' miraculous deeds. And why does he do this? So that we might understand more fully the power and joy of the kingdom.

Not only does Matthew follow his own order, but as usual, he shortens his version of the story compared with Mark and Luke. Mark uses 346 words to tell the story of the healing of the woman and the raising of the girl, while Matthew uses only 138 words (208 words less than Mark)! (Cf. Comparison Chart) Matthew leaves out most of the personal and more intimate details of the story so that he can strip it down to the bare essentials and focus simply on *what Jesus did* (cf. Comparison Chart). Matthew leaves the ruler unnamed (Mark and Luke tell us that his name was Jarius and that he was a ruler of the synagogue.) Matthew doesn't tell us that the girl was an only daughter about twelve years old. Matthew doesn't tell us about how the woman had suffered under many physicians and spent all she had without getting better, but actually only getting worse. Matthew doesn't tell us what Jesus said to the girl ("little girl, I say to you, arise"). And Matthew doesn't tell us that Jesus directed that something should be given the girl to eat. All of these details, Matthew leaves out.

Not only does Matthew follow his own order, and not only does he condense his version of the story, but he actually tells the story in an entirely different way than Mark and Luke. As Mark has it, one of the synagogue rulers implored Jesus saying, "My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her so that she may be made well". As Jesus was on his way to the ruler's house, He encountered the woman with the hemorrhage, which turns into a very long and drawn out encounter. As this encounter with the woman was ending (during which the ruler had probably been filling with great anxiety for his daughter), some messengers came to inform the ruler that his daughter had died and so there was no longer any need to bother Jesus.

But Jesus encouraged the synagogue ruler by saying: “Do not fear, only believe.” And apparently the ruler did believe. He believed that Jesus could even raise his daughter from the dead. Matthew, on the other hand, actually begins his story with the girl having already died. So instead of saying to Jesus: “My little daughter is *at the point of death*. Come and lay your hands on her so that she may be *made well*” (Mark), Matthew (anticipating the ruler’s faith later on in the story) has the ruler saying: “My daughter has *just died*, but come and lay your hand on her, and she will *live*.” As Jesus follows the ruler, he encounters the woman with the hemorrhage, but Matthew eliminates all the drama that we find in Mark and Luke. And we aren’t aware of any tension or building anxiety in the ruler, because in Matthew, the ruler has known all along that his daughter has died. (This is why Matthew can leave out the messengers who came to inform the ruler about the death of his daughter.)

It’s obvious from all of this that Matthew has just one very simple agenda in mind as he tells this story (compared with Mark and Luke)! He has cut out much of the drama, and eliminated many of the personal touches in order to focus in simply on *what Jesus does* (He saves a woman and raises the dead). For Matthew, all other details will only distract from his agenda. And so we have to be careful not to import into Matthew all the extra details provided by Mark and Luke. Sometimes, in our desire to have the fullest and most “interesting” story, we can be distracted from the special focus and agenda of Matthew. But *why* does Matthew want to focus so exclusively on what Jesus *does* – so much so that he cuts out more than two-thirds of the story (full of dramatic and touching details)? The answer is simple: Because it is in the *deeds* of Jesus (more than in anything else) that our eyes are opened to the arrival of the *kingdom*.

- ✓ Matthew 11:2-6 – Now when John heard in prison about the deeds of the Christ [Messiah], he sent word by his disciples and said to him, “Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?” And Jesus answered them, “Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them.”

It is in the powerful deeds of Jesus that our eyes are opened to *see* the arrival of the kingdom! Matthew has already given us examples of when Jesus cleansed a leper (8:1-4), and caused the lame to walk (9:1-8), and preached good news to the poor (9:9-13). And now in this last set of miracle stories, Matthew will give examples of Jesus raising the dead (9:18-26), giving sight to the blind (9:27-31), and causing the deaf to hear* (9:32-34). “These stories make [it] clear... that the present is a unique era of incomparable joy, the anticipation [in the already] of the very blessings of the eschaton” [the not yet]. (Hagner) “The overriding note is... one of deliverance and joy, as people are set free from danger, disease, demonic powers, and death, and called to share with Jesus in enjoying the new wine of the kingdom of heaven.” (France) So these are not just isolated stories of novel and amazing miracles that Matthew records as simple “proofs” of who Jesus is! These stories are *meant* to help *you* and *me* to *rejoice* in the new wine of the kingdom – the new age of salvation and deliverance for God’s people. Toward that end, then, let’s look a little closer at what Matthew has written, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

* Deafness and muteness are connected in the Bible and described with the same Greek word.

Verse 18a-b – While he was saying these things to them [about the new wine of the kingdom], behold, a ruler came in and knelt before him, saying, “My daughter has just died.”

Did you see a big, huge contradiction in this verse? Death and merriment don’t go together. Funerals and new wine is an oxymoron. There is absolutely nothing that is joyful about the grave. And so here we have a very serious tension. Jesus and His disciples are eating and drinking in Matthew’s house, and a father enters with the news that his daughter has just died. Now what was that about the new wine of the kingdom? Is this really the new age of incomparable joy and rejoicing? And if so, then what are we to do with the death of the ruler’s daughter? Sickesses can be healed, storms can be stilled, demons can be cast out, but what about *death*?

Verse 18b-c – Behold, a ruler came in and knelt before him, saying, “My daughter has just died, but come and lay your hand on her, and she will live.”

Mark and Luke say that the ruler fell at Jesus’ feet and implored him earnestly. But Matthew simply says that the ruler “knelt before him”. “Knelt” is also Matthew’s word for “worshipped” (2:2, 8, 11; 4:9-10; 14:33; 28:9, 17). So while the ruler himself was probably not worshipping (cf. Mat. 18:26; 20:20), Matthew is inviting us to consider that *even in time of death*, the one who brings the *new wine of kingdom rejoicing* is worthy to be worshiped. But how can this be true? Jesus can heal disease and sickness all He wants, but at the end of the day, death still comes for all of us. So then in time of *death*, *why* should I worship before the one who has been proclaiming a new age of *rejoicing*? Doesn’t there seem to be a contradiction here? Jesus says that fasting and mourning is no longer appropriate to the new age of the kingdom. So then what would He say about the professional mourners who attend the funerals of the dead? Now *really*! In time of death, *why* should I still kneel before the one who sits in Matthew’s house eating and drinking? For the ruler, there could only be *one* possible reason: “But come and lay your hand on her, *and she will live.*”

Verse 19 – And Jesus rose and followed him, with his disciples.

Now at this point, the story of the ruler and his daughter is interrupted by the story of a woman with a severe hemorrhage. For Matthew, much of the dramatic tension here has been lost because we already know that the girl is dead. And of course, Matthew also shortens the story of the woman by a full two-thirds in comparison with Mark (48 words versus 154 words). So in light of these things, I’m inclined to ask why Matthew kept the story at all! Compared to resurrecting someone from the dead, healing a hemorrhage doesn’t seem like that big of a deal (especially in Matthew’s shortened version).

Verses 20-22 – And behold, a woman who had suffered from a discharge of blood for twelve years came up behind him and touched the fringe of his garment, for she said to herself, “If I only touch his garment, I will be made well.” Jesus turned, and seeing her he said, “Take heart, daughter; your faith has made you well.” And instantly the woman was made well.

According to Israel's law (Lev. 15:25-27), a discharge of blood caused a person to be ceremonially unclean. Apparently, this woman had suffered a semi-continuous discharge of blood for twelve years. This means that for twelve years she had been cut off from the religious life of the community (because even a touch from her would make other people unclean) and from the presence of God at the temple. This woman's problem was far more than just a physical problem! The point is not so much the woman's bleeding, but the woman's alienation from the life of God's people. And we can see this especially in the way that the woman approaches Jesus. She tries to remain unnoticed, and so she comes up *behind* him and touches just the very *fringe* of His garment!

But now we see something amazing. In none of his other healing stories does Matthew ever say that the sick person was "*saved*". *Only here*. And not only that, but here *three times*. And so the woman says to herself: "'If I only touch his garment, I will be *saved*.'" Jesus turned, and seeing her he said, 'Take heart, daughter; your faith has *saved* you.' And instantly the woman was *saved*.'" Matthew wants us to see this as *so much more* than a story of a hemorrhage that was healed. This is a story of Jesus restoring an alienated woman to the *fullness* of life lived in fellowship with God in the community of all God's people! Can you imagine the *joy* that this woman would have experienced? Can you imagine the *thrill* of hearing these words, "Take heart, daughter; your faith has *saved* you", and knowing right away that this meant so much more than just the healing of a hemorrhage? I mean, just for a moment, we might be tempted to break out the new wine! Only then we remember that the ruler's daughter is still dead.

Verse 23 – And when Jesus came to the ruler's house and saw the flute players and the crowd making a commotion...

The professional mourners have already arrived. We know that "even the poorest Jewish families were expected to hire 'not less than two pipers and one wailing woman'" (France). And since this was the ruler of a synagogue, the number of pipers and wailing women was probably much greater than just one or two. In the Greek, the crowd making a commotion is literally the crowd in an "uproar". So here is an uproar of *weeping*, a great noise of *mourning*, and the chaos of loud *wailing*. And now what will the one who brings the new wine of kingdom rejoicing have to say to these mourners who attend the funerals of the dead? Is there not an inherent contradiction between this scene of chaotic weeping and the announcement that the kingdom has arrived? Someone has got to go—either Jesus or the mourners—because obviously, one of the two is *completely* out of touch with *reality*.

Verse 24 – [Jesus] said [to the mourners], "Go away, for the girl is not dead but sleeping." And they laughed at him.

If we think "go away" sounds a bit curt, Matthew actually goes on to say, "when the crowd had been put outside" – which could also be translated, "when the crowd had been *thrown out*". We clearly get the impression that Jesus has absolutely no time for this kind of mourning. Jesus has come to bring the new wine and the rejoicing of the kingdom, and yet here is the wailing of despair and utter hopelessness in the face of death! "*Go away!*" Jesus says to the mourners. And the wailing crowd was *thrown out* of the house. But not before they laughed at Jesus scornfully when He said that the girl was only sleeping. They obviously believe that Jesus is the one who

should “go away” because *He* is obviously the one who is out of touch with reality. Now we know that the girl is dead. So what did Jesus mean when He said that she was *sleeping*?

Verse 25 – But when the crowd [of mourners] had been put outside [thrown out], he went in and took her by the hand, and the girl arose.

So who was out of touch with reality – Jesus or the mourners? Now we see that when Jesus said the girl was only sleeping, He meant to show that her death was not permanent, but only temporary. And if death is only temporary, then there is absolutely no reason for all this hopeless wailing. And so the mourners must “*go away*”. And if they will not go away, then they must be “*thrown out*”. When Matthew says that the girl “*arose*”, we could also translate, “and the girl *was raised*.” Matthew wants to bring before our minds one simple truth – the dead are raised to *life*. And if the dead are raised to life, then the last and most compelling reason for fasting and mourning, and wailing and weeping has been utterly *obliterated*. Just for a moment, the feasting and celebrating in Matthew’s house seemed to be threatened by the arrival of the ruler whose daughter had died. But no longer! Because by the powerful word of Jesus, even the dead come to life. And that’s not all.

I believe that now we can understand why Matthew included the story of the woman with a hemorrhage – the woman who was alienated from the presence of God in the temple and from the life of God’s people. Jesus’ power to raise the dead to life is really no great thing if He can’t also restore us to the presence of God, amidst all of His redeemed people – where there are pleasures forevermore. What is the point of living – if it is not in the presence of God? And so we see in these two stories *together*, that Jesus has come not only that we might have *life*, but that we might have it *abundantly* (Jn. 10:10).

Conclusion

Verse 26 – And the report of this went through all that district.

What is this report that spreads throughout the district of Galilee? For some, it was just the simple *fact* that Jesus had raised a girl from the dead. But for those who had eyes to see and ears to hear, it was a dramatic, ringing announcement that the kingdom had arrived. When John sent his disciples to ask Jesus if He was “the one who is to come”, Jesus answered, “Go and tell John what you *hear and see*: the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, *and the dead are raised up*.” And Jesus wants John to see the raising of the dead in the light of these Old Testament prophecies:

- ✓ **Isaiah 26:19** – Your dead shall live; their bodies shall *rise*. You who dwell in the dust, awake and *sing for joy*! For your dew is a dew of light, and the earth will give birth to the dead.
- ✓ **Isaiah 25:6-9** – On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine, of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined. And he will swallow up on this mountain the covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death forever; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the LORD has spoken. It will be said on that day, “Behold, this is our God; we have waited for

him, that he might *save* us. This is the LORD; we have waited for him; *let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.*”

Some of us now are feeling a little bit disillusioned – like we’ve been building to some grand finale, and now we realize that it has to wait for some time in the future. How can Jesus talk about the new wine and joy of the kingdom when He has raised only *one* girl from the dead? How can Jesus have so little patience with those who wail and mourn when there are so many others who still lie in the grave? The answer is *simple* – because even *today*, Jesus would come to any Christian funeral and say to all the hired mourners and to those who weep without hope: “*Go away(!)*, for the girl (or boy, or man, or woman) is *not* dead but *sleeping*.” And the very one who will awake the dead from their sleep is also the one who is *with us now*, and who has promised that He will be with us always. You see, admitting the “not yet” should never lessen the *full* enjoyment of the “already.” Because it’s the “already” of the kingdom that actually guarantees us the “not yet” is coming. It’s the new wine *today* that guarantees the new wine tomorrow. It’s the feasting *today* that guarantees the feasting tomorrow. It’s the rejoicing *today* that guarantees the rejoicing tomorrow. It’s the presence with us *today* of the one who wakes the dead that guarantees the resurrection tomorrow. And so even *today*, Jesus would have us *put away* all the old fasting and mourning, and weeping and sorrow, and break out the new wine of kingdom joy and gladness. The same report that spread through all the district of Galilee two thousand years ago, has come now to us: “The dead are raised!” And for all those who have ears to hear and eyes to see, this report can only mean one thing: *the kingdom has arrived*, and regardless of any other circumstances, *these are now days of rejoicing*.

- ✓ 1 John 1:1-4 – That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life— the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us— that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you... And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.
- ✓ Philippians 4:4 – Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice.

Teaching our children

- Q.** While Jesus was eating and drinking in Matthew’s house and teaching about the joy and gladness of His kingdom, what news did a certain “ruler” bring to Him?
- A.** The ruler brought news to Jesus that his daughter had just died.
- Q.** Is there a tension here? Are there some things here that don’t seem to go together?
- A.** Yes! It seems like death would take away all joy and gladness. It seems like a funeral could never fit with the good news about the kingdom.
- Q.** Who did Jesus meet while He was on His way to the ruler’s house?
- A.** Jesus met a woman who had been bleeding inside her body for twelve years.
- Q.** What was this woman’s biggest problem? What did her bleeding mean?
- A.** This woman was unclean. This meant that she was not allowed to come into God’s presence at the temple.
- Q.** What word does Matthew use when he tells us that the woman was healed?
- A.** Matthew says that the woman was *saved*. Jesus didn’t just stop her bleeding, Jesus made it possible for her to be restored to God’s presence in the temple!
- Q.** What did Jesus see when He arrived at the ruler’s house?
- A.** He saw people making a great noise of weeping, and mourning, and wailing!
- Q.** If Jesus came to bring the rejoicing of the kingdom, what do you think He will have to say to all these mourners?
- A.** “Go away!” (The mourners were thrown out of the house!)
- Q.** What did Jesus say to explain why the mourners should go away?
- A.** “The girl is *not* dead but *sleeping*.”
- Q.** What did Jesus mean when he said that the girl was not dead, but sleeping?
- A.** He meant that the girl’s death was only temporary and that soon she would come back to life (wake up). If the girl will come back to life, then there is no need for all this hopeless weeping and wailing.
- Q.** When Jesus went in and took the girl by the hand, what happened?
- A.** The girl *arose*. The *dead* came back to *life*!
- Q.** We know from the story of the woman who was bleeding that Jesus does more than just raise the dead to life. What else does He do?
- A.** Jesus gives us the *fullness* of a life lived *with God*. In God’s presence there are pleasures forevermore.
- Q.** Is this a good enough reason for gladness and rejoicing?
- A.** Yes! (See Scriptures on bottom of page 5; Talk about the “already” and the “not yet”)
- Q.** Even though Jesus only raised one girl (and just a couple of others) 2000 years ago, what would Jesus say to those who are weeping without hope at a Christian funeral?
- A.** “Go away! For the girl (or boy, or man, or woman) is *not* dead, but *sleeping*.”
- Q.** Where is the one who wakes the dead out of their sleep?
- A.** He is *with us* – and He will be with us always!
- Q.** If the dead are raised, then that must mean that the kingdom is already coming into the world. And if the kingdom is already coming into the world, then we must be living in days of _____.
- A.** We are living in days of *rejoicing*. We have put away all of the old weeping, and mourning, and sorrow, and now we are full of gladness! (See Scriptures on bottom of page 6)

Then came one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name, and seeing him, he fell at his feet and implored him earnestly, saying, “My little daughter is AT THE POINT OF DEATH.

Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well [lit. be saved] and live.”

And he went with him. And a great crowd followed him and thronged about him. And there was a woman who had had a discharge of blood for twelve years,

and who had suffered much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was no better but rather grew worse. She had heard the reports about Jesus and

came up behind him in the crowd and touched his garment.

For she said, “If I touch even his garments, I will be made well [lit. saved].”

And immediately the flow of blood dried up, and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease.

And Jesus, perceiving in himself that power had gone out from him, immediately turned about in the crowd and said, “Who touched my garments?” And his disciples said to him, “You see the crowd pressing around you, and yet you say, ‘Who touched me?’ ” And he looked around to see who had done it. But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling and fell down before him and told him the whole truth.

While he was saying these things to them, behold, a ruler came in and knelt [or, bowed down / worshipped] before him, saying, “MY DAUGHTER HAS JUST DIED,

but come and lay your hand on her, and she will live.”

And Jesus rose and followed him, with his disciples. And behold, a woman who had suffered from a discharge of blood for twelve years...

came up behind him and touched the fringe of his garment,

for she said to herself, “If I only touch his garment, I will be made well [lit. saved].”

Jesus turned,

And there came a man named Jairus, who was a ruler of the synagogue. And falling at Jesus’ feet, he implored him to come to his house, for he had an only daughter, about twelve years of age, and SHE WAS DYING.

As Jesus went, the people pressed around him. And there was a woman who had had a discharge of blood for twelve years,

and though she had spent all her living on physicians, she could not be healed by anyone.

She came up behind him and touched the fringe of his garment,

and immediately her discharge of blood ceased.

And Jesus said, “Who was it that touched me?” When all denied it, Peter said, “Master, the crowds surround you and are pressing in on you!” But Jesus said, “Someone touched me, for I perceive that power has gone out from me.” And when the woman saw that she was not hidden, she came trembling, and falling down before him declared in the presence of all the people why she had touched him, and how she had been immediately healed.

And he said to her, “Daughter, your faith has made you well [lit. saved you]; go in peace, and be healed of your disease.”

While he was still speaking, there came from the ruler’s house some who said, “Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the Teacher any further?” But overhearing what they said, Jesus said to the ruler of the synagogue, “Do not fear, only believe.”

And he allowed no one to follow him except Peter and James and John the brother of James.

They came to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and Jesus saw a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly. And when he had entered, he said to them, “Why are you making a commotion and weeping?” The child is not dead but sleeping.”

And they laughed at him. But he put them all outside and took the child’s father and mother and those who were with him and went in where the child was. Taking her by the hand...

...he said to her, “Talitha cumi,” which means, “Little girl, I say to you, arise.”

And immediately the girl got up

and began walking (for she was twelve years of age), and they were immediately overcome with amazement. And he strictly charged them that no one should know this, and told them to give her something to eat.

and seeing her he said, “Take heart, daughter; your faith has made you well [lit. saved you].” And instantly the woman was made well [lit. saved].

While he was still speaking, someone from the ruler’s house came and said, “Your daughter is dead; do not trouble the Teacher any more.” But Jesus on hearing this answered him, “Do not fear; only believe, and she will be well [lit. saved].”

And when he came to the house, he allowed no one to enter with him, except Peter and John and James, and the father and mother of the child.

And when Jesus came to the ruler’s house and saw the flute players and the crowd making a commotion, he said, “Go away, for the girl is not dead but sleeping.”

And they laughed at him. But when the crowd had been put outside, he went in and took her by the hand,

...he called, saying, “Child, arise.” And her spirit returned, and she got up at once.

And he directed that something should be given her to eat. And her parents were amazed, but he charged them to tell no one what had happened.

And the report of this went through all that district.

And he said to her, “Daughter, your faith has made you well [lit. saved you]; go in peace.”

While he was still speaking, someone from the ruler’s house came and said, “Your daughter is dead; do not trouble the Teacher any more.” But Jesus on hearing this answered him, “Do not fear; only believe, and she will be well [lit. saved].”

And when he came to the house, he allowed no one to enter with him, except Peter and John and James, and the father and mother of the child.

And all were weeping and mourning for her, but he said, “Do not weep, for she is not dead but sleeping.”

And they laughed at him, knowing that she was dead. But taking her by the hand...

...he called, saying, “Child, arise.” And her spirit returned, and she got up at once.

And he directed that something should be given her to eat. And her parents were amazed, but he charged them to tell no one what had happened.