

Knowing God in the Word

That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death. Philippians 3:10.

Contradictions in Scripture: Two Miracles

In dealing with supposed “Contradictions in Scripture” thus far, we have seen that many times the gospels will record similar but different events. Christ worked certain important miracles two times or more, and the various gospels faithfully record details concerning each of these events. Though it may appear to the hostile observer that these accounts are in fact contradictory, for those of us who love and believe God’s Word it can easily be seen that the contradictions are caused not by error but by the fact that the various gospels record similar but different events.

Yet of all the records in the gospels, this theory that I have proposed perhaps meets with no greater test than that which we find in the accounts of the two healing miracles of Matthew 9:18-26, Mark 5:22-43, and Luke 8:41-56. We will examine these accounts in this study.

As we begin this study, certain facts learned in our previous messages will aid us in determining which of these accounts we would expect to be the same and which we would expect to be different. The Matthew account occurs only 18 verses into chapter 9, and the beginning of that chapter immediately follows the story of the casting of the demons into the swine, which account completes chapter 8. The Mark account occurs immediately following the same account in Mark, and the Luke account does likewise. Yet, as we learned in our previous studies, the events recorded in Matthew are different from those recorded in Mark and Luke, marked out most significantly by the fact that the Matthew account occurs BEFORE the calling of the twelve disciples whereas the Mark and Luke accounts occur AFTER that same event. Thus, we would expect again that in this case the Mark and Luke accounts would be complementary accounts of the same event, whereas the Matthew account would be a unique record of a different event. Let us examine the three passages in turn and see if this appears to be so.

1. In Matthew 9:18-26, we read that “a certain ruler,” in Greek a civil ruler, came and worshipped Him, telling Him that his daughter was dead, and requesting that He come and lay His hands on her, and she would live. Christ arises and goes with him along with His disciples. As they go, a woman who has had a flow of blood (hemorrhage) for twelve years comes behind Him. No mention is made of her previous efforts to heal herself. She touches the hem of His garment (actually one of the tassels at the four corners of His garment, worn as prescribed by law, “to touch which was a mark of profound respect.” (*The Companion Bible*)) She does this because she says to herself, “If only I may touch His garment, I shall be made well.” The Lord turns around, sees her, and says, “Be of good cheer, daughter; your faith has made you well.” The woman was made whole “from that hour.” Then, coming into the ruler’s house, our Lord sees “the flute players and the noisy crowd wailing,” and commands them, “Make room, for the girl is not dead, but sleeping.” They laugh Him to scorn, but they are the ones put out, at which point He goes in and takes the girl’s hand, and she arises. No command of the Lord as to what to do with her at this point is recorded. The report of what He had done goes out into all that land.

2. In Mark 5:22-43, we read that “one of the rulers of the synagogue,” therefore a religious ruler, named Jairus came and fell down at Christ’s feet, telling Him that his daughter lies at the point of death, and requesting that He come and lay His hands on her, and she would live. Christ goes with him along with a great multitude. As they go, a certain woman who has had a flow of blood for twelve years comes behind Him in the crowd. She has suffered many things at the hands of

physicians who took all her money but failed to heal her, for in fact she grew worse. She touches His garment. She does this because she says to herself, "If only I may touch His clothes, I shall be made well." "Immediately" the flow of blood dries up and she perceives that she is healed. The Lord, immediately realizing that power has gone out from Him, turns around in the crowd and inquires, "Who touched My clothes?" The disciples argue with Him, "You see the multitude thronging You, and You say, 'Who touched me?'" He simply keeps looking around to find her. Finally, "fearing and trembling," the woman comes and falls down before Him, admitting what had happened. The Lord says, "Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace, and be healed of your affliction." While He is still speaking, messengers come from the ruler's house and inform him, "Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the Teacher any further?" The Lord overhears and says to the synagogue ruler, "Do not be afraid; only believe." Then, allowing only Peter, James, and John to come with Him, He arrives at the Jairus' house, seeing there "a tumult and those who wept and wailed loudly." When He comes into the house, He says to them, "Why make this commotion and weep? The child is not dead, but sleeping." They laugh Him to scorn, but they are the ones put out, while He allows the father and mother of the child and those who were with Him to enter the room where the child is lying. He takes the child's hand and says to her, "Talitha, cumi," or "Little girl, I say to you, arise." "Immediately" the girl arises and walks, and the people are overcome with great amazement. The Lord commands them strictly that no one should know what He had done. Then He requests something to eat for her.

3. In Luke 8:40-56, we read that "a ruler of the synagogue," therefore a religious leader, named Jairus comes and falls down at Christ's feet, begging Him to come to his house because his only daughter about twelve years of age is dying. Christ goes with him, and as He goes the multitudes throng Him. As they go, a woman who has had a flow of blood for twelve years comes behind Him in the crowd. She has spent all her livelihood on physicians and could not be healed by any of them. She touches the hem of His garment (actually one of the tassels at the four corners of His garment.) No mention of her reasoning in touching Him is given. "Immediately" her flow of blood stops. The Lord says, "Who touched me?" When all deny it, Peter and those with him say, "Master, the multitudes throng You and press You, and You say, 'Who touched Me?'" The Lord replies, "Somebody touched me, for I perceived power going out from Me." The woman, when she "saw that she was not hidden," comes forward trembling and falling down before Him, and declares to everyone how she had touched Him and how she was immediately healed. The Lord says to her, "Daughter, be of good cheer; your faith has made you well. Go in peace." While He is still speaking, a messenger comes from the house of the ruler and says to him, "Your daughter is dead. Do not trouble the Teacher." The Lord overhears and answers him, "Do not be afraid; only believe, and she will be made well." When He comes into the house He permits only Peter, James, John, and the girl's father and mother to come in with Him. He sees everyone weeping and mourning for her, and says, "Do not weep, she is not dead, but sleeping." They all laugh Him to scorn, "knowing (understanding) that she was dead." They are all put out by the Lord, who then takes the little girl by the hand and calls her, saying, "Little girl, arise." Her spirit returns and she arises immediately. The Lord commands that something to eat be brought her. The parents are astonished, but the Lord charges them not to tell anyone what had happened.

Thus we see the clear differences between these accounts. In the Matthew account, the ruler is a civil ruler, whereas in the Mark and Luke accounts he is a synagogue ruler named Jairus. In Matthew he already knows his daughter is dead when he comes to the Lord Jesus, whereas in Mark and Luke he reports that she is on the point of death and only learns of her death after the incident with the woman and the flow of blood. In the Matthew account the woman who touched the Lord had no fear of Him realizing what she had done and thus He simply sees her and speaks to her when He turns around. In the Mark and Luke accounts, however, the woman hides herself, and the Lord has to ask for her before she is brave enough to come forward. In Matthew, the report of the girl's healing goes out into all the land, whereas in Mark and Luke He commands them not to tell anyone what He had done. Thus, we can clearly see the differences between the two accounts, and can say that the Matthew account appears to be a different event than that of Mark and Luke.

But what of differences between Mark and Luke? In Mark the woman is said to have touched His clothes, whereas in Luke it mentions her touching His hem. In this case then Luke is more specific as to what part of His clothes she touched, but this is not a contradiction. The quote in Luke of Peter replying to Christ's question, "Who touched Me?" is slightly different than that spoken by the disciples in Mark, but they probably all were saying the same thing in different words and Mark gives the words of a different disciple than Peter. Mark and Luke omit different parts of the Lord's words to the woman, but the parts that are there do not contradict. Mark talks about those He allowed to come into the room where the girl was whereas Luke talks about those He allowed to come with Him into the house, but these events probably happened in sequence and thus are not contradictory. Therefore, we can find no real contradictions between these two passages.

But, some may say, how could these events possibly have happened twice? The chances of a woman with a twelve-year flow of blood touching His garment on the way to heal a dying girl are not great, and the chances of this same thing happening twice in almost the exact same way...it seems impossible! And indeed this would be a coincidence so incredible that no one would believe it if indeed it were just a coincidence. But remember what we learned in the message on "The Feeding of the Multitude." These miracles happened twice for a purpose. God had something He wanted to teach by the repetition of these miracles, and thus He saw to it that they happened twice.

If it were not for the interference of the Lord, we would admit that two events happening twice in exact sequence like this would be a coincidence too great to be believed. However, can we really have so low an estimation of the power of our Lord to shape events that we would believe that He could not make two such events coincide twice if He wished to? Certainly His hand was in both these events seeing to it that they happened in conjunction just as they did! To admit anything different is to deny the Lord His power to shape events. Moreover, since we have already seen the similarity in sequence between the events of Matthew and the events of Mark and Luke in spite of the fact that they all are different occurrences, this is just another step on the chain of similar events that took place at two different times. Our Lord was not just working these miracles but also causing them to happen in the sequence that they did. The full significance of these events happening in this order may be hidden from us, but we can be certain that our Lord had a purpose in it, and that purpose will be revealed to us someday.

So there is no contradiction in the event of the two miracles. These miracles happened twice in two different circumstances. Though two such events happening in sequence would be so unlikely as to be impossible from a human standpoint, they are easy for our Lord to work out in just such a way as He sees fit. Thus our faith in the Word remains firm, and we have seen once again that there are no real "contradictions in Scripture."

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