

## Comments on Matthew 9

<sup>1</sup> And he entered into a ship, and passed over, and came into his own city. <sup>2</sup> And, behold, they brought to him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed: and Jesus seeing their faith said unto the sick of the palsy; Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee. <sup>3</sup> And, behold, certain of the scribes said within themselves, This man blasphemeth.

<sup>4</sup> And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, wherefore think ye evil in your hearts? <sup>5</sup> For whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and walk? <sup>6</sup> But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith he to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house. <sup>7</sup> And he arose, and departed to his house.

<sup>8</sup> But when the multitudes saw it, they marvelled, and glorified God, which had given such power unto men.

v1-8 Jesus returns to Galilee (v. 1) and the locals carry a paralytic to him. Jesus recognizes their faith and tells the paralyzed man his sins are forgiven (v. 2). Among the crowd are scribes, who cannot believe what Jesus is saying (v. 3), as only God can forgive sins (cf. Mark 2:7).

Jesus questions the scribe's conclusion, telling them their desires are evil (v. 4). Jesus asks them if it is easier to say the man's sins are forgiven or to tell him to stand up and walk (v. 5). Jesus then tells them that as proof He has the right to forgive sins, and therefore is necessarily not blaspheming, he tells the paralytic to rise and walk (v. 6), which he does, and he returns home (v. 7).

The crowds are shocked, and attribute the healing to God, who they believe has given Jesus the power to heal (v. 8).

There are a couple of ironies at work. The scribes are caught in their own logic trap, but cannot get themselves to admit what they are seeing. They reason that only God can forgive sins, and then Jesus forgives the man's sins and immediately performs an extraordinary healing in front of them. Had Jesus been blaspheming in forgiving this man's sins, then He could not have healed the man using the priesthood. This necessarily implies Jesus is God, by their own logic. Yet, they refuse to follow their own argument to the logical conclusion. They are trapped in cognitive dissonance, and cannot sort it.

The second irony is the crowd praises God, believing Him to be the source of the miracle. And they are right, as that is the case. However, they fail to make the connection that Jesus is God, the Lord of the Hebrew Bible. It is not a matter of the

Lord giving Jesus His power, it is that Jesus is the Lord and therefore has the Lord's power to heal. The scribes refuse to recognize, and the crowd fails to recognize that Jesus has the power because He is the Lord.

These verses show there are differing responses to Jesus among the religious elite and the population at large. The religious elite who are prone to sin hate Jesus for exposing their sin.

v3 "this man blasphemeth", the term "blasphemy" means "slander" in a theological or religious context. The English word is a transliteration of the Greek word *blasphemeo*. A most literal translation would be "speaking harm" or "stating injuriously".

In this context the way it is being used is the insinuation that what Jesus is saying is offensive to God, as opposed to an ad hominem accusation against the person of Jesus. If Jesus weren't actually the Lord incarnate, then what He is saying would be offensive to God. The issue here is the scribes do not recognize Jesus as the incarnate Lord, so they reason what He is saying is offensive and slanderous.

It isn't until later (cf. 26:65, 7:39) that we see the term used as an ad hominem justification for Jesus' crucifixion. At this point the scribes are trying, and failing, to figure out what is going on.

<sup>9</sup> And as Jesus passed forth from thence, he saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he saith unto him, Follow me. And he arose, and followed him.

<sup>10</sup> And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples. <sup>11</sup> And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto his disciples, why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners?

<sup>12</sup> But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. <sup>13</sup> But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

v9-13 Jesus calls a publican to be among His disciples (v. 9), and socializes and eats with publicans and sinners (v. 10). The Pharisees fault Jesus for associating with such people (v. 11), and he responds to them by pointing out it necessary to associate with these people to get them to repent (v. 12-13).

The Pharisees are insinuating Jesus is one of the sinners, because that is who He associates with. Guilt by association.

Jesus points out this is not necessarily the case, as one must associate with those whom one is trying to help. Jesus' implication is the Pharisees aren't trying to help anyone but themselves, so they aren't doing their job. They are religious and cultural elitists who don't want to get their hands dirty doing the Lord's work. Unlike Jesus, they aren't physicians among the spiritually ill.

v11 Jesus eats with sinners and social outcasts, he doesn't sin with them.

v12-13 Jesus' response to the Pharisees in quoting Hosea 6:6 is an indictment of their religious hypocrisy, as that entire chapter is a broadside against the supposed goodness of Ephraim and Judah in performing empty rituals that are entirely lacking in genuine knowledge of the Lord.

v13 The quote is from Hosea 6:6, and Jesus is pulling in the context of that entire chapter into the current conversation. Hosea 6 is a scathing rebuke on the rebellions of Ephraim and Judah that invokes covenant curses. See also 1 Sam. 15:22-23 and Micah 6:6-8 for related texts.

Jesus quotes this passage again in Matt. 12:7.

<sup>14</sup> Then came to him the disciples of John, saying, why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but thy disciples fast not? <sup>15</sup> And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? but the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast.

<sup>16</sup> No man putteth a piece of new cloth unto an old garment, for that which is put in to fill it up taketh from the garment, and the rent is made worse. <sup>17</sup> Neither do men put new wine into old bottles: else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish: but they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved.

v14-17 Jesus is approached by some of John Baptist's disciples and they ask him about fasting (v. 14). Jesus tells them they aren't fasting now because He is with them, but the time is coming when they will fast (v. 15). He then explains it to them as a pair of parables about cloth and wine bottles (v. 16-17), insinuating the old ways need to give way to the new ways.

The two parables, or metaphors, Jesus uses are not explicitly from the Law of Moses. They are common sense sort of "wisdom literature" aphorisms (cf. Joshua 9:4-13, Job 32:19).

He is encouraging them to see past the traditional way of doing things and recognize His ministry is something new and different, and they need to be open to that. Jesus is being gentle with John Baptist's disciples, unlike his responses to the scribes and Pharisees. This suggests this group of disciples isn't being hostile with Jesus, they are having a hard time letting go of what they have already committed to.

Some of John Baptist's disciples follow Jesus (e.g., John the Beloved and Simon's brother Andrew, cf. John 1:40-42), and some don't. This group is possibly the same as the group in 11:2-6.

The IV/JST for these verses makes significant changes to the KJV, as follows:

15. And while he was thus teaching, there came to him the disciples of John, saying, Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft but thy disciples fast not?

16. And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bride-chamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them?

17. But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast.

18. Then said the Pharisees unto him, Why will ye not receive us with our baptism, seeing we keep the whole law?

19. But Jesus said unto them, Ye keep not the law. If ye had kept the law, ye would have received me, for I am he who gave the law.

20. I receive not you with your baptism, because it profiteth you nothing.

21. For when that which is new is come, the old is ready to be put away.

22. For no man putteth a piece of new cloth on an old garment; for that which is put in to fill it up, taketh from the garment, and the rent is made worse.

23. Neither do men put new wine into old bottles; else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish; but they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved

Smith's emendation unites v. 9-17 into a single scene where John Baptist's disciples and Pharisees are both questioning Jesus jointly, presumably at, or just after, eating with the

"publicans and sinners". The springboard is v. 11 and 14, where both parties are referenced, with the IV/JST making explicit what is otherwise implied.

<sup>18</sup> 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. <sup>19</sup> And Jesus arose, and followed him, and so did his disciples.

<sup>20</sup> And, behold, a woman, which was diseased with an issue of blood twelve years, came behind him, and touched the hem of his garment: <sup>21</sup> For she said within herself, If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole. <sup>22</sup> 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.

<sup>23</sup> And when Jesus came into the ruler's house, and saw the minstrels and the people making a noise, <sup>24</sup> He said unto them, Give place: for the maid is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed him to scorn. <sup>25</sup> But when the people were put forth, he went in, and took her by the hand, and the maid arose. <sup>26</sup> And the fame hereof went abroad into all that land.

v18-26 The conversation of v. 14-17 is interrupted by a prominent local religious leader (cp. Mark 5:22-43, Luke 8:40-56 for considerable additional details) who pleads with Jesus to come and raise his daughter from the dead (v. 18), and Jesus obliges him (v. 19).

While traveling to Jairus' house, a chronically ill woman approaches Jesus and touches the hem of his robes without asking (v. 20-21). Jesus is witting, and blesses her for her faith, and she is healed (v. 22).

Jesus arrives at Jairus' house and sees the mourners (v. 23), and tells them she is not dead, but the mock him (v. 24). The mourners are ejected and Jesus raises the girl (v. 25). Word spreads that Jesus healed her (v. 26).

v18 Consider the implications of the setting of Jesus being questioned concerning doctrine by Pharisees (v. 11) and disciples of John Baptist (v. 14), and then having a prominent local religious leader arrive and defer to Jesus and plead with him to raise his daughter from the dead. The petty fault-finding conversation over doctrine is immediately dismissed as Jesus leaves to go do something important. Jairus' confession would certainly leave the Pharisees speechless.

"my daughter is even now dead", the IV/JST emends "dead" to "dying", harmonizing it with the Mark and Luke accounts.

v20-22 A fulfilment of Mal. 4:2, as the prediction there of rising with "healing in his wings" can also be translated "healing in his robes". See general comments on ch. 8 for additional discussion.

v26 The Mark and Luke accounts have Jesus telling them to not tell anyone He has raised her from the dead. But, given the circumstances of Jairus' very public request for help, and the presence of mourners at Jairus' house, it is clear there were a lot of witnesses to the events. And with Jairus' daughter walking around in the community, there would be a lot to talk about.

<sup>27</sup> And when Jesus departed thence, two blind men followed him, crying, and saying, Thou son of David, have mercy on us. <sup>28</sup> 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. <sup>29</sup> Then touched he their eyes, saying, According to your faith be it unto you. <sup>30</sup> And their eyes were opened; and Jesus straitly charged them, saying, See that no man know it. <sup>31</sup> But they, when they were departed, spread abroad his fame in all that country.

<sup>32</sup> As they went out, behold, they brought to him a dumb man possessed with a devil. <sup>33</sup> And when the devil was cast out, the dumb spake: and the multitudes marvelled, saying, It was never so seen in Israel. <sup>34</sup> But the Pharisees said, He casteth out devils through the prince of the devils.

v27-34 Jesus continues to travel and preach. He comes into contact with two blind men who follow him and call him the Messiah (v. 27). Jesus keeps moving and they keep following him until he stops at a house. When they get to Jesus, He questions them concerning their faith, and they express their belief that He can heal them (v. 28). Jesus then touches their eyes and says that according to their faith, they will be healed (v. 29). With their eyes being healed, Jesus tells them not to tell anyone else (v. 30), but as soon as they leave, they tell everyone (v. 31).

As soon as the healed blind men leave, a man who is mute demoniac is brought to Jesus (v. 32), whom Jesus cures, and all of the people who witness it are amazed and say there has never been such miracles in all of Israel's history (v. 33). The

Pharisees refuse to acknowledge what Jesus is doing is divine, ascribing it to the devil (v. 34).

v27-31 Jesus isn't interested in these two blind men who are publicly calling Him the "son of David" (cf. 2 Sam. 7:12, Isa. 9:6-7, Ezek. 37:24). Jesus wants to avoid this kind of public praise and the following that comes with it. He wants people to change from the inside out, not build a following based on popularism. This is why Jesus is questioning their faith and telling them to not talk about their miraculous healing afterwards.

Also note Jesus doesn't just heal them, but instead makes a conditional statement they will be healed according to their faith. In doing so, Jesus is doing what He can to make it not about Himself, but about the faith of the individual. The message is that it isn't himself that is doing the healing, but the faith of the individual.

v30 The IV/JST emends this verse to:

And their eyes were opened; and straitly he charged them, saying, Keep my commandments, and see ye tell no man in this place, that no man know it.

Jesus tells them to keep his sayings and to not tell people, because he doesn't want people to know He has healed their blindness. Jesus clearly isn't interested in sign seekers or people who are there only for their own immediate gratification. Jesus' intent is to teach and preach the gospel of the kingdom, per v. 35.

<sup>35</sup> And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.

<sup>36</sup> But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd. <sup>37</sup> Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; <sup>38</sup> Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.

v35-38 Jesus continues His ministry preaching the gospel everywhere He goes, healing whatever ails the people He comes into contact with (v. 35). Seeing there are too many people for Him to minister to alone, as there is presently nobody else

helping Him (v. 36), Jesus turns to His students He wants them to help Him (v. 37), by praying they will be His assistants in the ministry (v. 38).

v35 Jesus continues His ministry despite people not doing what He tells them to do (v. 31), and the adversity of the local religious leaders (v. 34). He is focused on doing His Father's will, not on the failure of individuals not listening to Him.

v36 "as sheep having no shepherd", an attack on the Pharisees, who are supposed to be the religious leaders of the people, but are not (cf. Ezek. 34).

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