



## Part 52: Jesus' Authority & Power Over Death

Matthew 9:18-26

Jesus proves he has ultimate authority and power over death for those who belong to him.

### I. Jesus Addresses Our Deepest Fear and Heartache

“Ah! When the mighty wings of the angel of death nestle over your heart’s treasures, and his black shadow broods over your home, it shakes the heart with a shuddering terror and horror of great darkness.” –Robert Dabney, theologian, on the death of his son

“Death is such an assault on the soul. Having someone you love, someone you have shared so much life with, suddenly yanked from your life is a violent and disorienting experience. Death is so hostile, so explosive to God’s design for us, the soul experiences it as trauma. This wasn’t meant to be. Our souls were never meant to go through this, so we reel like a ship on high seas.” – John Eldredge, August 2016 letter (speaking after the death of Craig McConnell)

### II. Jesus' Authority & Power Over Death

Matthew is concerned for his readers to recognize the unique authority and power of Jesus of Nazareth. He is concerned to show us that Jesus is Israel’s long-awaited King come to bring God’s beautiful Kingdom on earth.

He does this by giving us real life accounts of Jesus’ ministry, and we’ve been looking at Jesus’ unique authority and power to forgive sins, to rule over nature, to heal sickness and disability, and over demonic powers. Today, we see another healing story, but I want to focus on Jesus’ mighty act of raising this little girl from the dead. This account is recorded in both Matthew and Mark.

## A. Power & Authority Over Death

“He took her by the hand and said to her, ‘Talitha koum!’ (which means ‘Little girl, I say to you, get up!’)” Mark 5:41

What a tender and powerful ministry! Jesus speaks to her in Aramaic, her native language. He addresses her by an affectionate title, and he speaks with such great authority and power that death recedes and life returns to her body!

We can only imagine the rush of joy and amazement that filled those parents’ hearts!

Nearly a century later, the Christian apologist Quadratus wrote to the emperor Hadrian:

“The persons who were healed and those who were raised from the dead by Jesus were not only seen when they were healed and raised but were always present also afterwards; and not merely during the time that the Savior walked the earth – but after His departure also they were still there for a considerable time, so that some of them lived even until our times.”  
– Quadratus, Christian apologist, to Emperor Hadrian

Remember that Jesus’ miracles are not so much random proofs that he is the Son of God as the reality that God’s beautiful Kingdom is breaking into our reality. And our reality is living under the shroud of death, Satan, and sin.

“On this mountain the LORD Almighty will prepare  
a feast of rich food for all peoples,  
a banquet of aged wine—  
the best of meats and the finest of wines.

<sup>7</sup> On this mountain he will destroy  
the shroud that enfolds all peoples,  
the sheet that covers all nations;

<sup>8</sup> he will swallow up death forever.  
The Sovereign LORD will wipe away the tears  
from all faces;  
he will remove his people’s disgrace  
from all the earth.

The LORD has spoken.  
<sup>9</sup> In that day they will say,

“Surely this is our God;  
we trusted in him, and he saved us.  
This is the LORD, we trusted in him;  
let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation.”

Isaiah 25:6-9

## B. Power & Authority Over the Root Cause of Death (Romans 6:23; 2 Corinthians 5:21)

Of course, physical death is not our greatest enemy. Our greatest enemy is sin, which brings about death to everyone.

“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”  
Romans 6:23

Notice that Jesus takes the little girl’s hand while she is dead. This would have been shocking to see, because touching a corpse made one ritually unclean before God.

But Jesus reverses the old covenant. He takes the uncleanness in himself and gives purity; he takes the death into himself and gives life!

“God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” 2 Corinthians 5:21

### III. Fighting Despair Through Faith and Hope

Our worldview matters greatly – how we see reality; the vision of our future etc. impacts us now.

The resurrection of Jesus proves that Jesus was in fact who he claimed to be – Israel’s King, God’s Son, and the world’s Savior.

“Death, of course, tries to present itself as the ultimate reality. It is brutal and filled with so much mockery. Death wants to make everyone think it is the real end. It feels so final. But here is where Christianity shines like no other view of reality. For we know death has been defeated. This is the most stunning news in all worlds. Death is defeated. You live forever.”  
– John Eldredge, August 2016 letter (speaking after the death of Craig McConnell)

Jesus proves he has ultimate authority and power over death for those who belong to him.

“Where, O death is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?

The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is in the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us victory in Jesus Christ.” 1 Corinthians 15:55-56

#### Recommended Resources:

1. *Surprised by Hope* by Tom Wright
2. *A Grace Disguised: How the Soul Grows Through Loss* by Jerry Sittser
3. *The Question of God: C.S. Lewis & Sigmund Freud Debate God, Love, Sex, and the Meaning of Life* by Dr. Armand Nicholi, Jr.

#### Discussion Questions:

1. What has been your experience with death?
2. How have you been taught to think about death and respond to it?
3. What is your response to the story in Matthew 9:18-26?
4. What difference does it make to know that Jesus crossed religious and social customs by taking the dead girl’s hand?
5. If you are a follower of Jesus, how does this story influence the way you think about death?