

**THE AUTHORITY OF THE KING 07:**  
*Jesus' Authority over Death*  
Matthew 9:18–26

We have seen in previous weeks that Jesus is authoritative over disease, men, nature, demons, sin, and sinners. I suppose it is possible that some 1<sup>st</sup> Century Jew reading the book of Matthew for the first time at this point might say: *“Okay, I get that Jesus is authoritative over all these things. But does His power extend to man’s final and ultimate physical problem: Death?”*

That is what we come to this morning. Matthew moves on now to explain that Jesus is authoritative over death. I hope you understand that death was never God’s original plan. When God planted Adam & Eve in the Garden of Eden, everything was perfect. He placed man there to work and keep the garden, to rule the animals, and to lead His wife. It was a perfect place. And in that garden, God gave Adam just one rule. Don’t eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Adam, you can have the fruit of every tree but that one tree. And then God said, *“in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die”* (Gen. 2:17).

When that slimy serpent slithered towards Eve and convinced her to eat it and she gave it to Adam to eat, they died spiritually immediately. They were then separated from God. But even here, we see God’s mercy. For they did not die physically, even though the clock started its countdown on their physical life. They would eventually die physically like they were dead spiritually. And so the question that Matthew is trying to address is whether or not Jesus is powerful enough to take care of the spiritual and physical problem of death. That answer is overwhelmingly affirmed as Matthew interweaves two unique events in the life of Jesus.

I’m sure some of you have been to plays or drama’s that are usually played out in different Acts. The way Matthew writes this, we might consider it a 3-Act play, each of which move toward this overall theme that Jesus is authoritative over death!

**ACT I – A RULER’S SICK DAUGHTER (VS. 18–19)**

In this first Act, we have a ruler coming to Jesus to petition Him to heal his daughter. Before we get too far into this, I feel like I need to remind you again that Matthew is writing thematically, not chronologically here. Most likely, this takes place right after Jesus returns from casting out the demons from the men across the Sea of Galilee (both Mark & Luke, who write more chronologically place it at that point). Most likely, Jesus is getting out of the boat when all of a sudden a ruler comes up to him with a special request.

As we fill in some of the details, we learn in Mark 5:22 that this ruler's name was Jarius and he was not just any ruler; he was the ruler of the Synagogue. This means several things. He was Jewish. He was a man of considerable influence. He would have been a man that all good Jews looked too as respectable and worthy to follow. It was a very important position.

*"The ruler of the synagogue was the president of the board of elders—the rulers—who were over the affairs of the local synagogue. He was a lay official . . . responsible for the arrangement for the various parts of the synagogue worship service."<sup>1</sup>*

But it also means one final thing. He would have been part of the "religious leaders" that, up to this point, had rejected Jesus. We can only assume that the desperation of his situation is what led him to pursue Jesus. He comes and kneels before Jesus, which is probably not in the sense of worship. It is more likely a sign of great need. He needed help and he thought Jesus might have the solution. His kneeling should be seen as groveling.

His words describe his desperation. He says that his daughter had just died and that he believed that if Jesus would come lay His hands on her, she would live. Mark and Luke share that Jarius originally came saying that his daughter was close to death and that only later as Jesus is leaving with him, he is informed that she had died. Matthew simply summarizes the event for us that before Jesus came to the house she had died.

Luke 8 tells us one more detail that is important to note. We are told that Jarius had only one daughter and that she was 12 years old. I have one daughter, and I cannot imagine what sort of emotional state I would be in if she was close to death. A person like Jarius without hope and in great despair, was even willing to pursue someone he probably usually opposed. He is brought to seek Jesus because his situation was that desperate.

Let's not forget that if Jarius is the ruler of the Synagogue in Capernaum (which every indication is that he was), he most certainly would have known about the healing ministry of Jesus. He would have seen him heal and would have heard the stories of healings. And now, he finds himself in a dire situation that his daughter is going to die and so he runs to the only place he can think of for help. And my guess is that this was the last resort for him, not the first. He was at the end of his rope.

There are many people like this. They come or seek Jesus when their situation gets desperate enough. When their life stinks enough, when tragedy hits home, when they are at the bottom, they turn to Jesus to fix things. They don't know where else to turn. I wouldn't doubt that some of you are like that. Unfortunately, many people fail to turn to Jesus when things are going well because it is too easy to trust in their prosperity. But when trials hit, when

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<sup>1</sup> Hiebert, D. Edmond. *The Gospel of Mark*. (Greenville, SC: Bob Jones, 1994), 139.

they are hurting, they have no framework to interpret their suffering through and so they turn to Jesus, who offers hope. But as I read that, can I be honest? Part of me doesn't like this. I do not like it when people turn to Jesus as if some kind of last ditch effort. It is almost like people come to Jesus with ulterior motives, that *"they will follow Him if He gets them out of the foxhole."* I don't like it as it just doesn't seem genuine.

But I can't see the motives like Jesus can. And in this passage, at least, Jesus doesn't question the intents of Jarius. Jesus responds by not conversing with Him, but by getting up and following him. And the disciples tag along as they usually do. Obviously, we can learn from this that there are some who come at desperate times that do come with a pure heart of faith in Jesus as their only hope.

One last interesting part of Act 1. In his request, he thinks Jesus needs to come lay hands on her in order to heal her. It seems to me that this shows less faith than the centurion we saw in chapter 8 who said Jesus could heal his servant from a distance just by saying the word. But maybe Jarius thought this was different, for he thought his daughter was dead or as good as dead. This is much more serious than some illness or fever.


Now, it is actually while Jesus and Jarius (and the disciples) are heading towards the house that we have the interjection of the next Act.

## **ACT II – A VERY SICK WOMAN (VS. 20–22)**

The gospel of Mark tells us that there were so many people around Jesus as he is walking to Jarius house that everyone was pressing into each other. If you have ever been to a 3<sup>rd</sup> world country, you know what this is like. It can be a bit claustrophobic. It is now that we are introduced to a woman with a very serious problem. She had suffered from a discharge of blood for 12 years.

Trust me, we don't need to go into details here, but she was in extreme pain and discomfort and was not getting any help. Mark tells us that she had spent all of her money on doctors, trying to figure out a solution to her problem. The result of all that money spent was that things continued to get worse. And then Luke, who was a medical doctor, tells us that the doctors could not heal her. This was a horrible situation for her, one that I'm sure no woman here would ever want to go through.

But if I could, let me say that her situation in that culture would have been much worse than it would be for you. Here's why. In her current state of bleeding in the Jewish culture would mean that she would have been considered unclean. In fact, in the Law given by God, there are statements given about the monthly cycle for women. During this monthly cycle, a woman was considered unclean. But there were also special considerations given for a woman with an excessive cycle (12 years falls into this category).

 *Leviticus 15:25–30 → “<sup>25</sup> If a woman has a discharge of blood for many days, not at the time of her menstrual impurity, or if she has a discharge beyond the time of her impurity, all the days of the discharge she shall continue in uncleanness. As in the days of her impurity, she shall be unclean. <sup>26</sup> Every bed on which she lies, all the days of her discharge, shall be to her as the bed of her impurity. And everything on which she sits shall be unclean, as in the uncleanness of her menstrual impurity. <sup>27</sup> And whoever touches these things shall be unclean, and shall wash his clothes and bathe himself in water and be unclean until the evening. <sup>28</sup> But if she is cleansed of her discharge, she shall count for herself seven days, and after that she shall be clean. <sup>29</sup> And on the eighth day she shall take two turtledoves or two pigeons and bring them to the priest, to the entrance of the tent of meeting. <sup>30</sup> And the priest shall use one for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering. And the priest shall make atonement for her before the LORD for her unclean discharge.”*


Wow, that is one passage out of Leviticus that we will not be quick to preach through anytime soon.

For this woman, her 12-year problem of uncleanness led to something even further hurtful: isolation! Did you get that as I read Leviticus, whoever touches a bed or chair on which she sat would have been considered unclean as well. That led people to isolate themselves from someone like this woman. Nobody would have wanted to be around her. Nobody would have touched her. Nobody would have associated with her. Can you imagine never hugging anyone for 12 years? No handshakes. No physical contact. No fist bumps (do women do fist bumps?).

Nothing. This is much more than simply her losing money on doctors. It is much more than her physical pain or lack of comfort she experienced. She was a social outcast who had little hope. In many ways, she was like Jarius, at the end of her rope. She was desperate and had one last hope.

This last hope was found in Jesus. She certainly had heard of Jesus, for we are told that she thought to herself, *“If I only touch His garment, I will be made well.”* She probably had heard the stories or even witnessed from a distance that Jesus touched people and they were healed. And so in some way, it seems as though she is coming to Jesus superstitiously. She thinks touching His garment will transfer healing power to her situation.

And so she sneaks through the crowd to get to Jesus. Don’t forget that she is not to be around anyone. She is not to touch anyone. And the crowds are hovering around Jesus. So much so that we are told in Mark that when she did make it to Him, Jesus knew.

 *Mark 5:30–33 → “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.”*

Could Jesus have just let her go and be healed? Yes, of course. But His making a public display of her was for her good. He wanted to acknowledge and make her healing widely known so she could gain access back into the community much easier. I’m sure she didn’t want to come forward. She was embarrassed. She was ashamed. But don’t discount the fact that there might be things that God brings our way that are for our good, even though we don’t feel it at that moment.

Jesus gently responds to her in vs. 22. He encouraged her and confirmed to her that it was her faith that made her well. She might have come with a bit of superstition, that touching part of His garment is what would heal her. But in reality, Jesus confirms it is her faith in her heart that was effective to her healing. Martin Luther called faith, *“the empty outstretched hand of the beggar.”* That so fits here. The power of Jesus becomes effective in her life, and our life, through faith in Jesus. And at this moment, she is healed of an ailment that tortured her for 12 years.

### **ACT III – A RESURRECTION STORY (VS. 23–26)**

Jesus finally makes it to Jarius’s house and as they approach, the flute players are already playing. The crowd is already making a commotion. The oldest Jewish traditions say that the poorest in Israel were still required to hire two flute players and one mourner for a funeral. We can assume that since Jarius was a ruler of the Synagogue, this would have been a very big deal and probably many more than the basic requirement.

On many levels, this makes no sense to us, but was part of their funeral process. Our funerals are more reflective and hushed quietness. Their funerals were loud lamenting. Can you imagine if your occupation was to be hired to attend funerals to cry?

When Jesus and Jarius show up, Jesus wants the house cleared. He tells them that they have no need of mourning, for the girl is not dead, but sleeping. Now, this term sleep is often used of death. For sure, Jesus is not saying they did not know how to tell the difference between someone who had died and someone who was taking a nap. And Jesus is not saying that he is just going to wake her up from a nap. Most likely, this is a statement of His power. *To Jesus, bringing someone back from the dead is nothing more than waking someone up from a nap.*

Their response to Jesus? They mocked Him. They laughed at Him. I suppose there could have been two reasons why they laughed at Him. For some, they laughed at His assessment of her being asleep. They know when a person is dead and for Jesus to say that is ridiculous.

But I wonder if it is deeper than that. Don't forget that this is Jarius' house. The ruler of the Synagogue's house. The ruler of many of the people who had despised Jesus as He interacted with sinners and tax collectors. Many of these are probably people who couldn't stand His healing powers. They are the ones that we will learn next week, have no option but to claim that He heals from the power of Satan (a blatant lie). My guess is that many of these people despised Jesus.

And now He shows up to heal this girl who is no longer sick, but dead! I wonder if they laugh because the great healer has shown up too late for this one. He might be able to fix the leper and cast out demons, but He certainly couldn't fix what death brings. Or could He?

Mark tells us at this point, only Peter, James, and John are with Jesus. He puts everyone outside the house except them and the father and mother. And He took the hand of the child (by the way, don't miss the fact that touching a dead body made you unclean, sort of like touching a bleeding woman) and said these special words to her: *"Little girl, get up."* Words that her mother probably told her every morning are now resurrection words. She got up.

The last thing Matthew tells us is that the report of this resurrection goes through the entire district. What report? That the authority of Jesus extends even to the dead. This miracle made a deep impression upon the community.

Now that's the story. But I want to finish this morning by pressing home a few points that we can draw out of the story that hopefully will encourage us in our life.

### *1. JESUS IS MORE POWERFUL THAN PHYSICAL DEATH.*

We will not belabor this point because we have talked about it most of the way through this message. But it won't hurt us to say it one more time. There is no doubt about the fact that Jesus is more powerful than; He is superior to; He has authority over physical death.

When Jesus raises this young girl from the dead, it is not the first time or the last. Not long before this, Jesus had raised a widow's son (Luke 7). And of course, the most famous is Jesus' raising of Lazarus (John 10). But neither of these prove His power as does His own raising from the dead. You see, when they put Him in the tomb, everyone thought it was over. The religious leaders thought they had finally won. But it was just starting. The resounding message of God's people from that point on is . . .

📖 *1 Corinthians 15:55–57 → “O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?” The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”*

There is no fear in physical death because Jesus has defeated it. That means that death is not the end of it all for us. It is merely a hallway to true reality. If you are a Christian, you have no need to fear the end of your breathing here and now. Jesus is more powerful than physical death. But there is another thing we learn from this passage.

## *2. PHYSICAL DEATH IS NOT THE ONLY TYPE OF DEATH PEOPLE EXPERIENCE ON EARTH.*

I think this is a powerful aspect of this text that is often overlooked. The last few weeks as I have been thinking about this text, there is one question I kept looking for an answer to: “*Why is the story of the woman always interjected into the story of Jarius’ daughter dying?*” You see, there is no coincidence when it comes to God and these gospel writers. Why are we told the woman bled for 12 years and his daughter was 12 years old? As long as the child was alive, this woman had struggled with this bleeding issue. (JT turns 11 this next week, I can hardly remember back that far).

As I thought about it, one recurring thought kept coming back to my mind. *Jarius’ daughter died, but this woman was already dead.* Not physically, but she had died emotionally and relationally. There is no doubt about it; both of these situations were incurable. This lady experienced a rejection like we would never want to imagine. But unfortunately, there are many who do experience a similar type of emotional and relational death like her.

In response to being rejected by their families, friends, and the world, many people become so hopeless that they feel there is no other place to turn other than taking their own life. In case you have not become aware of it, suicide is becoming more and more of an epidemic in our world today.

### **Illustration: Suicide Statistics<sup>2</sup>**

- In a study done in 2010, there were over 38,000 deaths by suicide in America. That is just over 105 a day in our nation.
- This puts suicide as the 10<sup>th</sup> ranking cause of death in the U.S. (death by homicide is 16<sup>th</sup>).
- It is estimated that there are 959,000 annual suicide attempts in the US each year. That means every 32 seconds, someone in our country is trying to take their own life.
- For young people, 15–24 years old, suicide is the 3<sup>rd</sup> leading cause of death. The largest group of people committing suicide are white males.

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<sup>2</sup> [http://www.suicidology.org/c/document\\_library/get\\_file?folderId=262&name=DLFE-636.pdf](http://www.suicidology.org/c/document_library/get_file?folderId=262&name=DLFE-636.pdf)

- According to a recent article, suicide is the leading cause of death among young men in Britain (3 every day).
- In 2012, there were 295 combat deaths and 349 suicides among our military men and women.

We can keep coming with stat after stat. My guess is that each of you have been affected at some level by someone who has tried to take their own life or have actually done it. There is no doubt there is a hopelessness that many people experience, just like this woman. But her final hope was found in running to Jesus, not to a lethal weapon.

*“Intellectually, hopelessness is the utter certainty that there is no solution to a problem, and the loss of what he values is certain. He sees no hope. Emotionally, hopelessness is a pervasive despair and misery, or dread of the future. He feels no hope . . . But Jesus Christ creates a revolution. For those who have God as their Father and Christ as their Redeemer, ‘The desire of the righteous will be granted. . . . The hope of the righteous is gladness’ (Prov. 10:24, 28 NASB). If a person has Christ, he has hope that will not go away, that will pursue him and never let him go, that will make a decisive difference in the long run. Believers in Christ are the most hope-filled people on the planet, for solid reasons. If a Christian is without hope and sees himself as helpless, it underscores that his thinking is out of alignment with God’s.”<sup>3</sup>*

My guess is that there are some of you that are struggling in your marriage and you think there is no way out. There might be some of you looking at a financial loss from one thing or another and you feel there is no way out. Others of you think that nobody cares for you. Still others feel backed into a corner because of your situations in life.

Let me beg of you that before you do something that cannot be reversed, that you fight your way through the crowd and reach out for Christ? Grab ahold of His garment. Like the woman, reach out and find mercy and grace in that time of need. There is one you can run to that will never let you down. His name is Jesus, the One who is authoritative over all kinds of death.

### ***3. OUR GREATEST NEED IS TO BE HEALED OF OUR SPIRITUAL DEATH.***

There certainly is some imagery here. We are all unclean when it comes to God. We have been isolated from His presence because of our sin. And we are all hopeless when it comes to our ability to make our way to Him.

*“Jesus is strong, yet tender and generous. The girl’s father and the bleeding woman have no basis for an appeal to Jesus. They are not old friends. They are not from the same town. They are not offering payment. They are not*

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<sup>3</sup> Black, Jeffery S. *Suicide: Understanding and Intervening*. (P & R Publishing, 2003), 21–22.



*especially virtuous. They cannot say, 'I deserved your help because . . .' They are simply people in need. They find in Jesus their only hope.'*<sup>4</sup>

There is no one too isolated, too unclean, or too hopeless when it comes to Jesus Christ.

The Gospel Message

**Conclusion: G.B. Hardy**

- In the 1970s, a Canadian scientist by the name of G. B. Hardy wrote a book called *Countdown: A Time to Choose*. It was a call for people to think deeply about their religion. In that book, he writes . . .
- *"When I looked at religion I said, I have two questions. One, has anybody ever conquered death, and two, if they have, did they make a way for me to conquer death? I checked the tomb of Buddha, and it was occupied, and I checked the tomb of Confucius and it was occupied, and I checked the tomb of Mohammed and it was occupied, and I came to the tomb of Jesus and it was empty. And I said, 'There is one who conquered death.' And I asked the second question, 'Did He make a way for me to do it?' And I opened the Bible and discovered that He said, 'Because I live ye shall live also.'"*<sup>5</sup>
- His search proved what Jarius and the woman experienced. Those that put their trust in Jesus can never fear death.

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<sup>4</sup> Doriani, Daniel. *Matthew, Volume I: Chapters 1–13*. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2008), 398.

<sup>5</sup> Qtd in MacArthur, John. *Matthew 8–15*. (Chicago, IL: Moody, 1987), 75.