

Jesus' Authority Over Disease and Death

Jesus is once again preaching the good news of the Kingdom of God, demonstrating His full authority as the King over all those forces which threaten to destroy our lives. To fully understand what Jesus is doing in these stories we need to set them properly in their immediate context. Jesus has already proven His authority and power over those impersonal forces of destructive nature when He merely spoke to the winds and waves and they obeyed Him (vv. 22-25). He also displayed His sovereign power and authority over personal evil when He commanded and determined the destiny of a legion of demons, who begged Him not to assign into eternal confinement ahead of the last judgment (vv. 26-39). In both stories the immediate reaction of those present was to be stricken with fear and amazement at the power Jesus wielded by the words of a sovereign King.

Today we will see that same sovereign power and authority over yet two more forces which threaten our lives: disease and death (vv. 40-56). When we step back and think about these displays of Jesus' power and authority over those foreboding threats against our lives what is left that Jesus hasn't perfectly displayed His Kingly, commanding authority over? Oh, yes, there is one more – the greatest of all threats against our full flourishing as human beings created in the image of God! There is the eternal condemnation and judgment of God Almighty, which threatens to destroy not only our earthly happiness but our eternal joy. And we will see before the Gospel is complete that Jesus fully demonstrates His Kingly power and authority over our greatest danger – the eternal judgment of all who have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. At the cross, Jesus will pay the penalty Himself as your substitute – taking your eternal condemnation upon Himself, freeing all who put their trust in His all-sufficient sacrifice from any need to pay the penalty you deserve.

The Promised One who has been anticipated ever since God promised Eve that from her One will come who will crush the head of the serpent and foreshadowed throughout the whole history of Israel has demonstrated that He is fully worthy of hearing rightly and holding fast to every word that proceeds from His lips.

As the Promised King of the Kingdom of God, Jesus has the prerogative to transmit His sovereign power and authority to whomever He chooses, which we will see in 9:1-6. They will multiply Jesus' ministry of extending God's power in the gospel into every village where they will be sent. After experiencing the power of the Kingdom of God themselves, their only conclusion will be that Jesus is in fact the Christ, Messiah, of God – He is in fact the Promised King God has sent into the world (9:20). It is at that moment of God's revealing to the disciples

the true identity of Jesus that Jesus now reveals how His Kingly power and authority will be most fully demonstrated (9:22).

Now that we have set Jesus' present actions in their immediate context, we now turn to Jesus' power and authority over disease and death in such a beautiful story filled with two amazing displays of Jesus' power and how He uses that power with such love and compassion on those who have no hope in this world without Him. Our stories are beautifully intertwined which heightens the suspense of the stories moving from one who is suffering the curse of the Law and climaxing in Jesus' choice to restore life to one who has suffered the ultimate curse of the fall.

There are several characteristics that tighten the interwoven nature of two acts Jesus is about to perform. First, the most obvious is that both of the recipients of Jesus' power are women who are suffering from the curse of the fall. Jarius' daughter has reached the age of 12 when a young girl in Jewish culture flowers as a woman (v. 42). The other woman in the story, who also remains unnamed, has had a discharge of blood for 12 years, as long as the young girl has been alive (v. 43). Both of them are suffering greatly under the curse of the fall. The older woman has been ceremonially unclean (cf. Lev. 15:19-27) for 12 years keeping her from approaching the LORD in worship at the temple. Further, she should not have even been walking anonymously in the crowd less someone had touched her and became ritually unclean themselves. The young daughter is dying, suffering the ultimate curse of the fall just as she is starting her life as a full member of the covenant community. Both stories are intertwined beautifully as the stage is set for Jesus to use His power as the King who has come to bring the new creation into our fallen world.

Our stories begin with the crowd waiting with anticipation for Jesus' return that they may hear more words from Jesus that they may do all He says (v. 40). But one in the crowd is more eager to see Jesus than the rest. His name is Jarius and we are told that he was a ruler in the synagogue, a leading figure in the life of that Jewish community. Usually in the Gospels, when we meet one of Judaism's religious leaders they are in conflict with Jesus, but here we find Jarius humbling himself before Jesus, prostrating himself at Jesus' feet and imploring Him to use His power and authority to save his dying daughter (vv. 41-42). Jarius' name is significant in the story – it means "God will awaken," which not only points to what God is doing in Jarius' own heart but what Jesus is prepared to do when He announces to the parents that their daughter is not dead but asleep (v. 52). What a moving scene as this father has come to realize he has hope in this world in no one else but the One who alone has the power to grant life to his dying daughter and who has the love and compassion to use that power to help in his time of need (cf. Heb. 4:16).

As Jesus immediately begins to move towards Jarius' dying daughter, suddenly another anonymous woman enters the scene, who herself is in need of the Master's attention. She has been suffering from a continual flow of blood for as long as Jarius' daughter has been alive. She has sought help from many physicians to the extent of being depleted of all her living expenses to no avail. Luke tells us simply that "she could not be healed by anyone" (v. 43). Just imagine how depleted this woman must be by now that she has been living with a chronic condition for 12 years with no relief even though she has tried everything she knows to do. Each time she sees a new doctor, she hopes in anticipation that he will be able to help her so that she can get relief and more importantly return to the worship of God. But each time she leaves those who are trained to heal the sick all her hopes are dashed that she will never be well again. This woman reminds us of the woman at the well who had searched for love in one man after another only to find herself emptied of all hope to ever feel wanted in this world (cf. **John 4:7-30**). We could greatly multiply this brokenness of men and women, both young and old, not only present in the crowd that is surrounding Jesus that day, but in our world down to this very day. How many surround you everyday who are living on the precipice of suffering the curse of the fall and have given up all hope of ever being whole again?

Upon hearing that Jesus had returned this hopeless woman regained hope that if she could just approach Jesus and touch Him she would be healed. Suddenly faith reaches out to the source of life Himself, knowing there is no one else to turn to but Jesus. Immediately when she touched the hem of His garment something happened in her body (v. 44). She could feel the blood dry up in her womb and she knew that finally she was clean. She had been made well by the Master and she can now return to the worship of God.

At that moment, she thinks she has received everything she needs from Jesus. She doesn't mind that Jesus doesn't know who she is. After all, she has been anonymous for years, ostracized by others by being unclean. Who is she to be noticed by Jesus? She has received everything she needs and now she can return to her life, once again clean among the people of God. But Jesus knows she needs much more. The next moment is almost comical as Jesus asks who it is who touched Him (v. 45). The disciples are incredulous. "Master, the crowd is completely surrounding you. How can we possibly know who touched you?" (v. 45). Once again, the disciples second guess Jesus, thinking He misunderstands the situation. But it is not Jesus who is mistaken (v. 46). He knows that the woman needs much more than an anonymous healing. So Jesus draws her out of anonymity, not to expose her, but to give her more. Healing without meeting Jesus could be perceived as merely magic. She doesn't simply need healing; she needs Jesus.

Upon hearing Jesus, she is drawn out. We must wonder at this moment what amount of courage it took for her to expose herself to Jesus. She falls at His feet now ready to meet Jesus face-to-face (v. 47). She explains both what and why she touched Him and how she had been immediately healed. But she needed much more than mere physical healing. Like all the rest of us, she needed Jesus. He came into this world to give us much more than physical wholeness. He gave to give us life, which is found only in Himself. Jesus now gives her what she truly needed – He grants her peace with God (v. 48). She now can return to her daily life completely whole and healed as a woman completely reconciled with God, ready to return to glorifying God and enjoying Him forever.

As we can see, what we might perceive as an interruption in God's greater glory is a divine appointment of the sovereign King. But suddenly it appears as if Jesus is too late -- that He has wasted too much time with a woman who merely needed physical healing but could have waited for the more pressing need to be met. As Jesus once again heads to the Jarius' house, someone from the ruler's house approaches Jarius with the terrible news that the Master is too late; Jarius' daughter is dead (v. 49). But Jesus, who is in complete control of the whole situation, assures them that He is not late (v. 50). Jesus instructs them not to be afraid, only believe and she will be well. It is at this point that many misinterpret what Jesus is saying. Jesus is not promoting the "power of positive thinking." Many today heretically teach that when life is difficult, just keep your chin up and think positively and everything will be ok. Faith alone, in itself, saves no one. Power resides not in your faith but in the One who is worthy of your complete trust, who is causing all things to work together for good, for those who love Him and who are called according to His purpose (cf. **Rom. 8:28**).

When Jesus arrives at Jarius' house, He admits only Peter, James, and John – who will soon see Jesus transfigured in glory before their very eyes (cf. **9:28-29**) – and the girl's parents into the room (v. 51). He assures them all that the young girl is not dead but is sleeping (v. 52). Those who were mourning suddenly begin to laugh thinking that Jesus has once again misinterpreted the situation (v. 53). Luke assures us that everyone knew she was in fact dead, but Jesus speaks not about what is but what He is about to do (v. 53). The King next takes the young lifeless hand of the dead girl and, with all the power of Heaven and Earth, He speaks life back into her little body. "Child, arise" (v. 54). Suddenly, as in the day He breathed into Adam's nostrils, what was dead is alive again. The One, who is the source of life, comes into contact with the dead and Jesus once again demonstrates that in Him alone resides the power to conquer even sting of death. Immediately, the young girl is awakened and she stands before Jesus, her Savior. Now that she is restored to life, her next need is a good meal (v. 55). Jarius too has been awakened by Jesus, seeing his young daughter brought to life at the Master's command. Jarius has trusted in the true Savior.

Unlike Jesus' earlier command to the man who was freed of demonic possession and told to go and tell what God had done for him (v. 39), Jesus instructs Jarius and the others not to tell anyone what had happened (v. 56). We are left to guess what happened when others outside the house saw the young girl alive again. But it was not time for Jesus' true identity to be revealed yet. It will only be when it is time for Jesus to approach Jerusalem and the cross that who Jesus truly is will be more fully revealed. Until that time there is much more for Him to do before the final destructive force is conquered. At the cross, Jesus will deal the deathly blow to your sin freeing you from eternal condemnation so that along with Jarius' daughter you too will sing:

1 Corinthians 15:55-57 ⁵⁵ "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?"
⁵⁶ The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. ⁵⁷ But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen!

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