

The following sermon was preached at Redemption Baptist Church on Sunday, 18 February 2024. We encourage you to look up the Scriptures that are referenced and see the context for yourself. May the Lord speak to your heart as you study His Word.

Christ's Authority over Death

Matthew 9:18-26

In the year 1789, a baby girl named **Charlotte Elliott** was born in Brighton, England, to a Christian couple named Charles and Eling Elliott. Charlotte had a godly heritage, which spanned the generations. For example, her maternal grandfather, **Henry Venn**, was a pastor who had been very involved in the Great Awakening of the mid 1700's; and through his labours, many souls had been saved.¹ Charlotte herself grew up in an environment in which she was surrounded by the light of the Gospel. She was also highly educated, and was gifted in music and art. There was just one problem, though: she wasn't saved! Though she knew, in her *head*, who Jesus is, she didn't *know* Him as her personal Lord and Saviour—not, that is, until the day when God's Word finally pierced her heart, and she came to Jesus as a broken sinner.

You see, as a young woman, Charlotte had fallen into the worldly "social life." The friends with whom she hung out didn't talk about God, Jesus, the Bible, or the Gospel. She was happy enough going down the road of self-centred frivolity and pleasure. However, her bright social life suddenly came to a screeching halt in 1821, when she came down with a severe illness, which turned her into an invalid. At this point, her true thoughts toward God came to the surface. She was filled with anger and bitterness; and she hardened her heart against God. If her family hadn't realised it before, they now knew that Charlotte was *not* a believer! They were very concerned for her soul; and on 9 May 1822, they invited a Swiss minister named Cesar Malan to dinner, in the hope that he might be able to lead her to Christ.²

Well, during dinner, Charlotte lost her temper; and she began to rail against God, and against her own family. Embarrassed, her family all left the room; and Dr. Malan found himself awkwardly sitting across the table from Charlotte. Dr. Malan finally broke the silence by saying, "You are tired of yourself, aren't you? You are holding to your hate and anger because you have nothing else in the world to cling to. Consequently, you have become sour, bitter, and resentful." Charlotte retorted, "What is *your* cure?" Dr. Malan responded, "The faith you are trying to despise." As Dr. Malan continued to talk with Charlotte about the Lord, she began to listen. She apologised for the way she had spoken to him earlier, and said that she knew she must cleanse her life before becoming a Christian. However, Dr. Malan said that trying to clean up your life was *not* the way to be reconciled to God. Confused, she asked, "If I wanted to become a Christian, and to share the peace you possess, what *would* I do?" Dr. Malan said, "You would give yourself to God just as you are now, with your fightings and fears, hates and loves, pride and shame." For clarification, Charlotte asked, "I would come to God just as I am? Is that right?"³

As it turned out, Charlotte *did* come to Jesus just as she was: and she soon claimed **John 6:37** as her life verse: "***All that the Father giveth me shall come to me: and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.***"⁴ Furthermore, she wrote a poem about it! A few years later, her brother, Henry (who was a pastor), published that poem in an invitation to a fund-raiser for a school in Brighton: and in 1835, it was published in *The Christian Remembrancer*. In 1849, William Bradbury put it to music, and published it in

a hymn book; and today, people all over the world are still singing, “Just as I am without one plea, but that thy blood was shed for me; and that thou bidst me come to Thee, O Lamb of God, I come, I come.”⁵

It always has been, and always will be, necessary to come to Jesus “just as you are.” This morning, we will learn about a very sick woman who *literally* came to Jesus just as she was, in the streets of Capernaum, by the Sea of Galilee; and we will see what Jesus did for her. We will also see what Jesus did on that same day for a little girl who was not just sick, but *dead*. The title of this message is ***Christ’s Authority over Death***.

Read Matthew 9:18-26.

I. Christ’s restoration power (vv. 19-22)

In the last couple weeks, we have been focusing on the party that Matthew held in his house after he became a disciple of Jesus. Needless to say, it was an eventful day there in Capernaum! Jesus taught many important things to the guests at that party. However, the day wasn’t over yet. While Jesus was still speaking to Matthew’s guests, a man named Jairus interrupted the party, and begged Jesus to come to his house immediately, to heal his daughter. In a moment, we will examine Jairus’s request; but first, I’d like to point out what Jairus did as he approached Jesus. Did you notice it? Matthew says that as Jairus approached Jesus, he *worshipped* Him. That word “worship” (the Greek word *prosekunein*) does not simply mean “honouring”: it means “falling prostrate on the ground in worship.” Once again, Matthew is emphasising that Jesus is the *King of Kings*. Fourteen times in the book of Matthew, Matthew uses a form of the word “worship”; and eleven of those fourteen times, it is specifically said that a person, or group of people, worshipped *Jesus*. Why? Because He is God! Folks, the implications of this are profound. In **Matthew 4**, Jesus Himself quoted Old Testament Scripture as He told Satan, “***Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.***” Only God is to be worshipped; yet, here is Jesus, accepting people’s worship! It was *right* for Jairus to worship Jesus, because He is Lord of lords, and King of kings!

Now, as we have already seen, Jairus had an urgent request for Jesus. His daughter was extremely ill; and he needed Jesus to heal her straightaway, lest she die. Jesus graciously got up and followed Jairus to his house; however, the going was slow, because many people were pressing close against Him as He walked. It was at this point that a very needy woman walked into Jesus’ life. (Or, rather, *Jesus* walked into *her* life!) Jesus, being God, had known about this woman from eternity past; and He arranged this exact time and place to meet her face to face! Let’s look at the book of **Mark**, and examine the details more fully.

Read Mark 5:21-43.

I don’t think any of us can really understand the suffering that this woman had endured for twelve long years of her life. Because of her issue of blood, this woman was an outcast from society. According to the Law of Moses, this woman would have been ceremonially unclean, and greatly hindered from interaction with others. Let’s examine that law.

Read Leviticus 15:19-27.

Can you imagine how desperate and lonely this woman must have been? For twelve years of her life, she had been perpetually unclean. She was not able to go near other people, nor to touch them. If anyone *did* accidentally touch her, that person would become ceremonially unclean, as well, and would have to bathe, wash his clothes, and not touch anything or anyone else until evening. Needless to say, there were no hugs or kisses for this woman!

Can you imagine how cruelly this woman must have been treated? God had established these laws of cleanliness in order to maintain physical hygiene (as well as to be an illustration of separation from sin); yet, the Jewish people had misused these laws to *punish* people, mentally and emotionally. From earliest childhood, the Jews were taught that if you had a terrible, chronic illness or handicap, it meant that you or your parents had done something terribly sinful, and that you were being judged by God. Can you imagine the mental and emotional turmoil that this woman must have been suffering as she dealt with the shame and rejection?

The Bible doesn't tell us anything about this woman prior to this day; however, it wouldn't be surprising if she had been *questioning* God, or had even been *angry* at God. One thing is for sure, though: if she were to come to Jesus for help, she had to come to Him *just as she was*—anger, shame, guilt, and all. She was at the “end of the line.” After twelve years of progressively severe blood loss, she may have even been coming nigh unto death. Not only had the doctors been unable to help her, but their “remedies” had actually made her condition worse. Jesus was her only hope: and this was probably her only chance to come to Him for help. She couldn't afford to wait for a better time to come to Jesus, because she wasn't even supposed to touch anyone! *This* was the only time she could hope to approach Jesus—while there was a great crowd of people pressing against Him. She must have been trying to hide her identity as she pushed her way through the crowd. The very fact that this woman came to Jesus “*trembling*” reveals the risk that she was taking. She was afraid that she might be in trouble with the religious leaders for going into the crowd, and for brushing up against people. Furthermore, she had dared to *touch* Jesus' clothing; and touching was forbidden to her!

This woman had had a very hard life. Yet, this woman had something that was infinitely more invaluable than physical health: and that was *faith* in Jesus Christ. Clearly, this woman had faith in Jesus *before* she ever approached Him, because Jesus said, “***Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole.***” Perhaps this woman had heard about Jesus through relatives; and, perhaps, she had sneaked out of the house to listen to Jesus from afar. Somehow, she had heard Jesus' words of eternal life; and as she heard His words, saving faith sprang up in her heart. (The Bible says that “***faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.***”) Jesus didn't say anything to this woman about receiving forgiveness of sins, because her sins had *already* been forgiven, by God's grace. However, on *this* day, she received an additional gift of God's grace—the gift of physical healing.

With this in mind, let's go back and take another look at the exchange that took place between Jesus and this woman. **(Read Mark 5:27-34 again.)** When you stop to consider what this woman was going through, a question arises: "Why did Jesus draw attention to this woman's healing?" *Jesus* knew very well that "virtue had gone out of Him" to heal this woman; and He, being God, knew exactly who had touched Him. Why, then, did He *ask* this question, and draw attention to her? Why didn't He let her slink away discreetly, and unnoticed? Why did He point her out, and embarrass her in front of everyone? Was this insensitive of Him? No, it wasn't. In fact, it was very loving and gracious of Him! You see, if Jesus had simply let her sneak away, she would have always wondered if she had done something wrong. She would have wondered if she had *stolen* something from Jesus. She would have wondered whether she had broken God's law by brushing up against people when she was still "unclean." She especially would have wondered whether it was right of her to *touch* Jesus' clothing. Jesus wanted her to know that she had not *stolen* anything: rather, He had freely *given* her restoration of physical health, of His own love and grace. Jesus also wanted this woman to know that there was no "magic" in His clothing. It was *Jesus*, and not His clothing, that had healed her; and He had responded to her *faith in Him*.

This miracle has gone down in history as one of the greatest examples of Jesus' mighty healing power. In fact, it was probably this miracle that the LORD was alluding to when He gave Malachi the last prophecy of the Messiah in the Old Testament! Let's take a look at it.

Read Malachi 4:1-2.

In this beautiful prophecy, the Messiah is called the "***Sun of righteousness.***" He is called "***the Sun of righteousness***" because He is "***righteousness***" to all who believe on Him. He also brings spiritual *light* to every soul who believes on Him. Just as the sun arises in the morning, and brings light to a darkened world, so the Son of God, by His coming to earth, brought the light of God's truth to a dark and sinful world.

Now, like many other prophecies of Christ in the Old Testament, this prophecy will not find its ultimate *fulfilment* until the Day of the LORD. When Christ returns to earth for the *second* time to set up His Kingdom, His glory will fill the earth. Spiritually speaking, it will be like bright noonday all over the world. For 1,000 glorious years, people will come to Jerusalem, from all corners of the earth, to worship King Jesus; and many people will be healed of diseases by the Messiah Himself. However, even though this prophecy has yet to see its ultimate fulfilment, it certainly can *apply*, in a limited sense, to Jesus' *first* coming to earth. Jesus' first coming was a faint foreshadowing of His *second* coming; and one of the many characteristics of Jesus' ministry in His *first* coming was His healing ministry. Malachi specifically states that the Sun of Righteousness would arise with "***healing in his wings.***" Yet, what does this mean, exactly? Particularly, what does he mean by the word "wings"? Well, the Hebrew word for "wing" is *canaph*; and although *canaph* can refer to a bird's wing, it can also refer to the outer hem, or corner, of a *garment*. Sound familiar? I believe that the Lord was referring *specifically* to Jesus' healing of the woman with the issue of blood! There

was no healing power in Jesus' actual garments; but there was power in *the wearer* of the garments, because Jesus is Almighty God!

During the Millennium, Christ's healing ministry will far exceed His healing ministry during His first coming to earth; yet, the *purpose* of His healing ministry will be exactly the same. First of all, Jesus will heal people out of love and compassion. In **Matthew 9:36**, Matthew says that Jesus was "***moved with compassion***" for the multitudes of sick and hurting people; and He healed *all* their diseases. Secondly, Christ will heal people in order to glorify God. In **Matthew 15**, we are told that when the people saw Jesus healing the lame, the blind, the dumb, and the maimed, they "***glorified the God of Israel.***" So He will do in His *second* coming to earth. Thirdly, Christ will heal people in order ***to prove that He is the Messiah***, so that upcoming generations might believe on Him, and be saved. To this day, Jesus' miracles are recorded for us in Scripture so that *we also* might believe on Him, and be saved!

Read John 20:30-31.

In **Matthew 11**, we are told of a time when John the Baptist was having momentary doubts as to whether Jesus was the Messiah. As John sat in a lonely prison cell, even *he* had fleeting fears. And so, he sent some of his disciples to ask Jesus, "***Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?***" Jesus' reply was powerful. He said, "***Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see: the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me.***" Clearly, Jesus' miracles were for the purpose of preparing people's hearts to believe "***the gospel!***" Physical healing *was* an important part of Jesus' ministry; but Jesus came into our world to do something far more important than this. Jesus came to provide *salvation from our sin*. If we did not have the hope of salvation from our sin, then physical healing would be pointless. Without salvation, physical healing would provide only a temporary lengthening our lives, as we continue on our way to the Lake of Fire! Jesus healed people so that they might believe on Him as Messiah and Lord, and be saved; and He will do so again in the future!

This brings me to yet another important reason why Jesus healed people. I believe Jesus healed people ***in order to illustrate salvation***. Every one of Jesus' miracles depicts salvation in some beautiful way. In this case, we see that this woman had to come to Jesus "just as she was," with all her physical impurity: and likewise, to be saved, you must come to Jesus "just as you are"—with all your sin. You must be totally transparent with God, and admit that you are utterly helpless, and in need of His salvation. You can no more "clean up" your life than this woman could have cleaned up her physical impurity before coming to Jesus. She might have been able to put on a change of clean garments; but the impurity would have continued to issue forth from within her body. Similarly, *we* can clean ourselves up outwardly, and put on "clean clothes," spiritually speaking, to make ourselves look good to others; but the impurity continues to issue forth from our sinful hearts. Jesus said that "***from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness,***

wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride,” and *“foolishness.”* All these evil things, Jesus said, *“come from within, and defile the man.”* We cannot clean up our lives; and that is why we need a Saviour. Jesus changes us from the inside out!

This miracle also illustrates the *change* that takes place within our hearts, which others cannot immediately see. Just as Peter, and the other disciples, were unaware that a woman in that crowd had been healed internally, so Christians are oftentimes unaware of what God has been doing in a sinner’s heart. Sometimes, we are so focused on what God is doing in other quarters, that we are totally unaware of a soul, right in our midst, whom God has been drawing to Himself, and who has just believed on Jesus in his (or her) heart. Jesus said, *“The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.”* We can’t see the Holy Spirit come into a person’s heart; but we *can*, in time, see the change that God begins to make in that persons’ life (just as we can’t see the wind, but we can *hear* it)!

The healing of this woman also illustrates *our responsibility* toward the Lord Jesus Christ. Just as this woman had to come to Jesus *in faith* for physical healing, so we must come to Jesus *in simple faith* for salvation from sin and death. Just as Jesus assured this woman that she was now whole, and called her “daughter,” so those who come to Jesus in faith are given the assurance that their sins are forgiven, and that they are now called *“the sons of God”!* Like Charlotte Elliott, we who are saved can claim Jesus’ promise in **John 6:37**: *“All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.”*

II. Christ’s resurrection power (vv. 18-19, 23-26)

(Read Matthew 9:18-19, 23-26.) While Jesus was taking extra time to seek out the woman with the issue of blood, tragedy struck: Jairus’s twelve-year old daughter died. On the surface, it would *seem* that Jesus hadn’t given sufficient care to someone who was in dire need. Yet, how did Jairus react when he heard the news that his little girl was dead? Did He give out at Jesus? Did he bitterly ask Jesus why He had stopped to talk with a woman with a less immediate need, while his daughter was at the point of death? No. Nonetheless, Jairus was stricken with grief. Tenderly, Jesus turned to the man and said, *“Be not afraid, only believe.”* Jairus probably didn’t know *what* he was supposed to believe at this point; yet, his faith was apparent by the fact that he took Jesus back to his house without murmur or complaint.

You see, Jairus wasn’t merely looking for a “fix” to a crisis in his life: he was a true believer in Jesus Christ. Now, it was unusual for a *“ruler”* to believe on Jesus—and especially for a *religious* ruler to believe on Him. (It’s *still* that way to this day!) The Bible says that *“not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called.”* Yet, Jairus *was* one of those few “noble” men who believe. God *can and will* save anyone who will answer the call to salvation; and apparently, this man and his family *had* answered that call.

How do we *know* that Jairus was a believer? First of all, the very fact that this man, who was a ruler of the synagogue, came to Jesus for help, when other synagogue rulers were vehemently opposed to Jesus, indicates a sincere faith in Christ. He wasn't ashamed to be associated with this hated rabbi from Nazareth. His meek and humble spirit in Jesus' presence, even after his daughter died, indicates a genuine faith in Christ, as well. However, the *biggest* proof of his faith is in **verse 18**. (**Read Matthew 9:18 again.**) In the books of **Mark** and **Luke**, we are told that when Jairus first came to Jesus, his daughter was *almost* dead; however, Matthew says that she was "**dead.**" Who, then, was right? All of them! Matthew simply jumped ahead to the part of the story where Jairus had been informed by his servants that his daughter had actually died. Yet, even after his daughter was *actually dead*, he *still* believed that Jesus could raise her to life. That is a faith that even some of Jesus' most faithful disciples failed to have. There is no question that this man was a believer!

Now, how do we know that Jairus's *daughter* was a believer? Because Jesus raised her from the dead! The very fact that Jesus *brought this little girl back to life* shows that she had had genuine faith in Christ! If Jairus's daughter had been *an unbeliever*, Jesus would *not* have brought her back to life, and would *not* have given her a second chance to believe on Him. The stories that you hear on YouTube about people dying and going to hell, and coming back to life again, and then getting saved, do *not* agree with God's Word! The Bible says, "***It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.***" **There is no second chance for those who die without the Lord.** For the unbeliever, death is final; and the sentence to eternity in hell cannot be revoked. The implication of this truth, then, is clear: Jesus would *not* have raised any lost person from the dead—only a believer! By this, we know that this girl was a *believer*, and that she went to *Paradise* for the short time that she was dead. Did she *remember* anything from her time in Paradise? Probably not. Scripture doesn't indicate whether she revealed anything that she had seen or heard beyond the grave. God may have erased her memory; or He may have forbidden her to repeat what she had seen. But regardless of what she remembered or didn't remember, we know for certain that this girl "***died in faith,***" and that she was given the incredible privilege of coming back to life in this world for a little while longer.

Brethren, the fact of the matter is that, unless the Rapture should happen first, *all of us* will one day return to dust—for a little while. The death of our physical bodies is like physical sleep. That is why Jesus said, "***Give place; for the maid is not dead, but sleepeth.***" Throughout Scripture, "sleep" is used as a metaphor for *physical* death. Why? Because physical death, just like sleep, is temporary. Physical death is only a temporary state, from which everyone will one day "***awake.***" At some point in the future, both saved *and* unsaved people will experience a bodily resurrection. Jesus said, "***Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.***" Daniel said that one day, "***Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.***" These verses clearly teach that there are two kinds of bodily resurrection. Those who belong to God will receive a glorified body, which has no sin in it, and which is fit to live in God's presence in Heaven. However, those who reject God's gift of salvation, and die in

their sins, will receive inglorious, corpse-like bodies, which are fit for eternal torment in the Lake of Fire. Though their bodies will be living *physically*, they will forever be called “the dead,” because they will remain spiritually dead to God for all eternity.

Folks, I wish I could tell you that for those who die without Christ, death will be the end of their troubles. However, if I were to tell you this, I would be telling you a horrible lie. Death is only a portal to another realm! Down through the years, many false religions (such as the Jehovah’s Witnesses) have taught a heretical doctrine called “soul sleep.” “Soul sleep” means that a person’s very *soul* (his whole being, including his spirit) dies just like an animal, returns to the ground, and ceases to exist. Usually, religions that teach some version of “soul sleep” claim that those who belong to *their* religion will eventually receive either a “spirit resurrection,” or a bodily resurrection, and will exist again: but those who died *outside* their religion will continue on in blissful non-existence. My friends, nothing could be further from the truth! The moment we die, our spirits depart our bodies, and continue to exist in either one of two places—Heaven, or hell. For those who are saved, we have the blessed consolation of knowing that when we die, we will be *immediately* with the Lord!

Read Philippians 1:20-23.

Read 2 Corinthians 5:1-8.

A bodily resurrection is coming for all of us: and for those of us who are in Christ, the resurrection is our “**blessed hope.**” I believe that this is the other major reason that Jesus raised a few handfuls of people from the dead. As we have already seen, the first and foremost reason that Jesus healed people, and even raised some from the dead, was that people might *believe* on Him as Messiah, and be saved, so that God might be glorified. However, there was another reason. The other reason that Jesus raised some people from the dead was **to give us a glimpse of His resurrection plan.** The Bible does not teach reincarnation, or karma, or many lifetimes in many bodies; and neither does it teach “soul sleep.” The Bible teaches that there will be a bodily *resurrection* of every single soul, whether to eternal life with God, or to eternal separation from God. For the lost, the resurrection will usher them into an eternity of misery; but for those of us who are saved, the resurrection will be the *ultimate* completion of our salvation! All the promises of our salvation will be fulfilled on the day when we receive our immortal, sinless bodies, which will have no more pain or disease!

Now, before we close this morning, I would like to leave you with one last thought. How did the people respond when Jesus said, “**Behold, the maid is not dead, but sleepeth?**” They “**laughed him to scorn**”! You would *think* that if the ruler of the synagogue and his family believed on Jesus, then everyone else in Capernaum would be inclined to follow his example, and to believe on Jesus, too. (Or, at least, to be *respectful* toward Jesus.) Yet, such is not the case! Note the utter contempt of these mourners toward Jesus. They *laughed* at Him! For them to *laugh* in the presence of Jairus and his wife, at such a heart-wrenching moment, was the height of rudeness; yet, that is how much they disdained Jesus, and His word.

You see, despite Jesus' spending so much time in Capernaum, and despite His healing so many people there, and despite His casting out demons, and even raising some from the dead, *most of them still did not believe on Him*. Jesus later had to *condemn* Capernaum for their unbelief!

Read Matthew 11:20-24.

Brethren, you may be sure that as you try to tell lost folks that Jesus raises souls from spiritual death, people will laugh at you! You may be sure that when you speak of the resurrection of the body, and of judgment, people will laugh even harder. If, after 3 ½ years of Jesus' preaching, healing, and raising the dead, most of the people of Capernaum *still* rejected Jesus, then you may be sure that most people will reject *your* testimony for Christ. Yet, you may also be sure that until Christ returns, there *will* be some who will respond in faith. Don't give up! Don't grow weary in well doing. Even when people laugh in your face, don't stop telling others about Jesus! They need to hear the joyful sound that Jesus saves!

Conclusion: As we close this morning, I would ask: "Have you come to Jesus just as you are?" In faith, have you reached out to the hem of His garment, so that you might be cleansed from your sin? If not, I urge you to do so today! For those who are saved, I would ask, "Are you ashamed of the testimony of your Lord?" Or are you, like Peter, James, and John, willing to stand with Jesus, and to bear His reproach, so that some might believe, and be saved? Let Jesus have full reign in your heart!

¹ Charlotte Elliott, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charlotte_Elliott

² Robert J. Morgan, *Preacher's Sourcebook of Creative Sermon Illustrations* (Nashville, TN: -72.Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2007), pp. 71-72.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ "Just as I Am" (hymn) [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Just_as_I_Am_\(hymn\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Just_as_I_Am_(hymn))