

Mark 5:41

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And he took the damsel by the hand, and said unto her, Talitha cumi; which is, being interpreted, Damsel, I say unto thee, arise.

Analysis

And he took the damsel by the hand, and said unto her, Talitha cumi; which is, being interpreted, Damsel, I say unto thee, arise. This verse presents the resurrection miracle with striking simplicity. 'He took the damsel by the hand' (κρατήσας τῆς χειρὸς τοῦ παιδίου, kratēsas tēs cheiros tou paidiou) shows Jesus touching a corpse, rendering Himself ceremonially unclean by Jewish law (Numbers 19:11). Yet again, His holiness overcomes defilement rather than being contaminated by it. The physical touch demonstrates Jesus' humanity and compassion—not distant magical incantation but tender personal contact.

'Talitha cumi' (Ταλιθα κουμ) preserves Jesus' original Aramaic words—Mark's inclusion of the actual phrase emphasizes eyewitness authenticity and perhaps the words' tender intimacy. Talitha means 'little girl' or 'little lamb,' a term of endearment. Cumi means 'arise' or 'get up.' The translation provided ('Damsel, I say unto thee, arise') captures the gentle yet authoritative command. Jesus doesn't negotiate with death or plead with God—He commands and life obeys. This simple word conquers humanity's greatest enemy. The verbal economy (two words) contrasts with elaborate pagan magical formulas—Jesus' divine authority requires no complex ritual. His word alone accomplishes what all human effort cannot: resurrection from death.

Historical Context

Mark preserves more Aramaic phrases than other Gospels (see also 'Ephphatha,' 7:34; 'Abba,' 14:36; 'Eloi, Eloi,' 15:34), suggesting he had access to precise eyewitness testimony, likely from Peter. Aramaic was the common language of first-century Palestinian Jews, while Greek was the wider trade language. Mark's Gospel, written primarily for Gentile readers, translates these Aramaic phrases for non-Aramaic speakers. The preservation of 'Talitha cumi' suggests Peter vividly remembered Jesus' exact words and tone. The tender diminutive 'little lamb' shows Jesus' compassionate heart—not cold display of power but loving restoration of beloved child to grieving parents. Ancient magical papyri contain elaborate resurrection incantations with multiple divine names, complex gestures, and special ingredients—stark contrast to Jesus' simple, authoritative word. Early church fathers emphasized this distinction: Christ's resurrections (this girl, Lazarus, widow of Nain's son, and ultimately Himself) demonstrated divine authority, not magical technique. The simplicity proves deity—only God can call the dead to life with mere word.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. How does Jesus' tender address 'little lamb' combined with authoritative command 'arise' reveal the perfect balance of compassion and power in His character?
2. What does the simplicity of Jesus' resurrection command teach about the sufficiency of God's word to accomplish the impossible?

Interlinear Text

καὶ κρατήσας τῆς χειρὸς τοῦ παιδίου λέγω αὐτῇ
And **he took** G3588 **by the hand** G5495 **the damsel** G3813 **I say** G3004 **unto her** G846
G2532 G2902

Ταλιθα κουμι· ὃ ἐστὶν μεθερμηνευόμενον Τὸ
Talitha **cumi** **which** **is** **being interpreted** G3588
G5008 G2891 G3739 G2076 G3177

κοράσιον σοὶ λέγω ἔγειραι
Damsel **unto thee** **I say** **arise**
G2877 G4671 G3004 G1453

Additional Cross-References

Mark 1:31 (Parallel theme): And he came and took her by the hand, and lifted her up; and immediately the fever left her, and she ministered unto them.

Philippians 3:21 (Parallel theme): Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.

Psalms 33:9 (Parallel theme): For he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast.

Mark 1:41 (Parallel theme): And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth his hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou clean.

Romans 4:17 (Parallel theme): (As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were.

Genesis 1:3 (Parallel theme): And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.