

Matthew 9:24

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

He said unto them, Give place: for the maid is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed him to scorn.

Analysis

Jesus makes a shocking statement: 'Give place: for the maid is not dead, but sleepeth' (ἀναχωρεῖτε οὐ γαρ απεθανεῖ το κορασιον αλλα καθευδεῖ). He commands the mourners to leave ('give place') and declares the girl 'sleepeth' (καθευδεῖ) not dead (απεθανεῖ). Is Jesus saying she's not actually dead? No—Mark and Luke clarify she was truly dead. Rather, Jesus uses 'sleep' as euphemism for death from resurrection perspective. To one with power to raise the dead, death is temporary sleep before waking. This metaphor becomes standard Christian terminology (1 Thessalonians 4:13, 1 Corinthians 15:20). Jesus' statement reflects His authority over death—what others see as permanent tragedy, He sees as brief interruption. The assertion that death is sleep anticipates His resurrection victory, when death becomes defeated enemy, stripped of permanence and terror.

Historical Context

Sleep as metaphor for death appears in Old Testament (Psalm 13:3, Daniel 12:2) but Jesus radicalizes it by demonstrating power to wake the dead. Professional mourners' laughter ('they laughed him to scorn') shows they knew she was genuinely dead—Jesus seemed delusional or callous. In Jewish thought, death was serious, permanent separation (except rare prophetic resurrections). Jesus' casual treatment of death as sleep shocked observers. Early Christian use of 'sleeping' for dead believers (Acts 7:60, 13:36) reflects confidence in resurrection.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How does viewing death as 'sleep' transform Christian grief and hope?
2. What does Jesus' authority to wake the dead reveal about His power and identity?
3. How should resurrection hope affect how Christians approach death and dying?

Interlinear Text

λέγει αὐτοῦ Ἀναχωρεῖτε οὐ γὰρ ἀπέθανεν τὸ κοράσιον

He said **him** **Give place** **not** **for** **dead** **the maid**

G3004 G846 G402 G3756 G1063 G599 G2877

ἀλλὰ καθεύδει καὶ κατεγέλων αὐτοῦ

but **sleepeth** **And** **they laughed** **him**

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Additional Cross-References

Acts 20:10 (Parallel theme): And Paul went down, and fell on him, and embracing him said, Trouble not yourselves; for his life is in him.

Isaiah 49:7 (Parallel theme): Thus saith the LORD, the Redeemer of Israel, and his Holy One, to him whom man despiseth, to him whom the nation abhorreth, to a servant of rulers, Kings shall see and arise, princes also shall worship, because of the LORD that is faithful, and the Holy One of Israel, and he shall choose thee.

Isaiah 53:3 (Parallel theme): He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

Acts 9:40 (Parallel theme): But Peter put them all forth, and kneeled down, and prayed; and turning him to the body said, Tabitha, arise. And she opened her eyes: and when she saw Peter, she sat up.

John 11:4 (Parallel theme): When Jesus heard that, he said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby.

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