

Resurrections

While miracles in the Bible took many forms, including power over disease and nature, the most stupendous of them all was the miracle of raising people from the dead. Even when Jesus sent out His twelve disciples, He made sure that they could raise the dead. Matthew 10:7-8 says, “And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give.”

Nine individuals in scripture are clearly presented in the Bible as being raised from the dead. In the Old Testament, Elijah resurrected the son of Zarephath's widow (1 Kings 17:17-24). Elisha resurrected the son of the great Shunammite woman (2 Kings 4:8-37). The Shunammite woman had no children. For a woman to be barren in those days was a great source of shame. The Bible says that her husband was old, which would imply he was unable to produce seed. However, because the Shunammite woman was genuinely kind and generous to the prophet Elisha, he told her she would have a child in one year's time. God healed her and her husband and she conceived and gave birth to a son. Later on while working out in the fields something disastrous happens to her son (a head injury or possibly heat stroke) and he dies. The Shunammite woman hastily went to the prophet Elisha, and she insisted he go to her son and raise him from the dead. Finally, a dead man came back to life when he touches Elisha's bones (2 Kings 13:21). Even after he was dead, the anointing still remaining in Elisha's bones raised someone from the dead. Earlier in 2 Kings 2:9, Elisha had boldly requested that he receive a double portion of Elijah's anointing. However, after Elisha died it looked like it was too late for him to raise twice as many people from the dead as Elijah. Who would have ever thought that touching Elisha's bones could raise someone from the dead; certainly not the men that were burying him! Clearly the seeds of faith we sow in the brief time we are in this world continue to grow and accomplish things even after we are long gone.

In the New Testament, Jesus raised three people: the widow's son at Nain (Luke 7:13-15), Jairus' daughter (Matthew 9:25; Mark 5:42; Luke 8:55), and Lazarus (John 11:43-44). When Jesus died on the cross, Matthew 27:52-53 records that many people arose and appeared to the people of Jerusalem. Of course, Christ Himself was resurrected from the dead (Matthew 28:5-7; Mark 16:1-8; Luke 24:1-11; John 20:1-10). In Acts, Peter raised a female disciple named Tabitha from the dead (Acts 9:36-42) and Paul raised Eutychus from the dead (Acts 20:9-12).

The resurrection of Christ is absolutely pivotal to the New Testament and its message of salvation from sin. Jesus was “... declared to be the Son of God with power ... by the resurrection from the dead” (Romans 1:4). Paul furthermore stated that the resurrection was a primary component of the gospel (1 Corinthians 15:1-4). The following verses (5-8) recount the importance of witnesses seeing Jesus raised from the dead. It is interesting that the crucifixion, while witnessed by many, does not depend on witnesses — this is only the case with the resurrection. Perhaps the reason is the importance of the resurrection to all of us: “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” (John 5:28-29). The Hebrew writer taught the same by saying, “Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection ...” (Hebrews 11:35). As Paul so succinctly put it: “And God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise up us by his own power” (1 Corinthians 6:14; cp. 2 Corinthians 4:14). Every resurrection in the Bible was an amazing miracle, but it merely foreshadows what awaits every Christian who can hold fast (Hebrews 4:14; 10:23).

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