**“The Dead are Raised Up!”**

When John the Baptist was imprisoned, he sent word to Jesus by his disciples, desiring to confirm His identity. Jesus responded, “Go and report to John what you hear and see: The blind receive 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” (Matthew 11:2-5).

The resurrection of Jesus from the dead is the single most significant evidence underlying the faith of the Christian. Jesus’ life, teaching and miracles were unlike anything mortal men had ever encountered. His death on the cross was heartbreaking in its cruelty, infuriating in its injustice and exhilarating in its redemptive power, but the empty tomb of the Christ forever stands as the irrefutable declaration of His divinity and eternal preeminence.

We must keep in mind, however, that resurrection, per se, was not unique to Jesus of Nazareth. There were cases of people being raised from the dead both before and after the resurrection of Jesus. The purpose of this study is to consider these occasions and to clarify the aspects of the Lord’s resurrection that made it unlike any other event in human history.

**Elijah raised the widow’s son.** In 1 Kings 17, God had sent Elijah the prophet to Zarephath to lodge with a widow and her son. They were on the verge of starvation, but Elijah miraculously provided them with a virtually endless supply of flour and oil. However, some time later the woman’s son became ill and died. Verses 17-24 give the account of Elijah raising the boy from the dead and presenting him to his mother. Verse 24 shows that the miracle Elijah performed had the desired effect: “Then the woman said to Elijah, ‘Now I know that you are a man of God and that the word of the LORD in your mouth is truth.’”

**Contact with Elisha’s bones.** Elisha had succeeded Elijah as God’s prophet and was perhaps inclined to perform even more miracles than his predecessor. As with Elijah, the purpose of those signs was to confirm the messages that Elisha delivered on behalf of God. As all men do, Elisha died and was buried. Sometime later, the burial of another man was interrupted by a marauding band and the mourners hastily cast his body into Elisha’s grave so they could escape. 2 Kings 13:21 tells us that, when the man’s body touched the bones of Elisha, he revived and stood up on his feet! Again, this miracle simply further legitimized the work God had accomplished through His servant, Elisha while he was alive.

**Jesus raised the daughter of an official.** In Matthew 9, an official appealed to Jesus to raise his daughter from the dead. When Jesus arrived at the house, He suffered some ridicule for observing that the girl was just sleeping; His way of indicating His confidence in raising her. The unceremonious account simply says that He “took her by the hand, and the girl got up” (v25).

**Jesus raised Lazarus.** When Jesus heard that his friend, Lazarus was ill, He delayed before going to Bethany, to the end that the man had died and had been in the grave four days. The stench at the removal of the grave stone removed any doubt about whether or not Lazarus was truly dead! Jesus said a simple prayer, then shouted, “Lazarus, come forth!” (John 11:43) Lazarus struggled to make it to the mouth of the cave because of the burial wrappings; his friends and family had to unbind him!

**Peter raised Tabitha.** Even after the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus, His apostles continued to raise the dead. One account is found in Acts 9:36-42. A charitable disciple of Jesus named Tabitha died and Peter was called to the home where she was laid. Verse 40 says that Peter sent everyone out of the room, prayed, then turned to the body and said, “Tabitha, arise.” The woman opened her eyes, saw Peter and sat up!

**Paul raised Eutychus.** While Paul was preaching to the brethren in Troas, he got a little long-winded and a young man dosed off in a third story window sill and fell to his death. Acts 20:10 says that Paul went down, embraced him and presented him back to his family alive.

**So, what was so special about the resurrection of Jesus?** This is an important question and one that deserves a scriptural answer.

* Jesus is the only One who claimed to be divine. When Peter made the great confession, “You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God”, Jesus simply replied that His Father in heaven had revealed that information to Peter! (Matthew 16:17) Like other resurrections, the raising of Jesus was confirmation, but the message confirmed was that Jesus is the Son of God!
* Jesus raised Himself! In emphasizing the voluntary nature of His own sacrifice, Jesus made the point that the Father had given Him the authority, not only to lay down His life but also to “take it up again” (John 10:18).
* The resurrection of Jesus Christ was eternal. Men and women who were miraculously raised were given a new “lease on life” but they were destined to die again like every other human being. Jesus raised never again to suffer death, thus serving as the sign for all of the faithful: We can have confidence in our own eternal resurrection in the last day because Jesus did it first! (1 Corinthians 15:20)

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