

The Gospel According to

SAINT MATTHEW

SAINT MARK

SAINT LUKE

SAINT JOHN

NOTHING RECORDED	NOTHING RECORDED	CHAPTER 7, VERSES 11-17	NOTHING RECORDED
		<p>7:11 - And it came to pass¹ the day after², that he went into a city³ called Nain⁴; and many⁵ of his disciples⁶, went with him, and much people⁷.</p> <p>7:12 - Now when he came nigh⁸ to the gate⁹ of the city³, behold, there was a dead man¹⁰ carried out¹¹, the only son¹² of his mother¹³, and she was a widow¹⁴; and much people⁷ of the city³ was with her.</p> <p>7:13 - And when the Lord saw¹⁵ her, he had compassion¹⁶ on her, and said unto her, Weep not¹⁷.</p> <p>7:14 - And he came and touched¹⁸ the bier¹⁹; and they that bare him²⁰ stood still²¹. And he said, Young man²², I say unto thee, Arise²³.</p> <p>7:15 - And he that was dead²⁴ sat up²⁵, and began to speak²⁶. And he delivered him²⁷ to his mother¹³.</p> <p>7:16 - And there came a fear on all²⁸; and they glorified God²⁹, saying, That a great prophet³⁰ is risen up among us³¹; and, That God³² hath visited his people³³.</p> <p>7:17 - And this rumour³⁴ of him went forth³⁵ throughout all Judæa³⁶, and throughout all the region³⁷ round about³⁸.</p>	

CHRONOLOGY: Between April 11th and May 1st, 28cē

LOCATION: Departing Capernaum, traveling to Nain, and performing a great miracle outside the city of Nain.

COMMENTARY: Jesus had just performed a miracle in the vicinity of Capernaum involving the healing of a Roman Centurion's servant. For reasons undisclosed in the Gospel record, Jesus is compelled to travel to an obscure village in the Jezreel Valley. It is a journey of about 30 miles and would have taken about two days. We assume that He was led there by the spirit in divine answer to a widow's prayer. When Jesus arrives, He sees a typical Jewish funeral procession. A young man, probably under 30 years of age, had died. He was being carried on a pallet with woven wicker. There were probably paid mourners and musicians. The procession would have involved the entire village and all those in the nearby area. It was socially unacceptable not to participate. The body of the dead was probably wrapped in fine linen and adorned. The young man was the son of a widow. What was significant was the fact that he was her only son. The oldest son had responsibility to provide and care for his mother in the event that the father died. Women in those days had little privilege to earn money and provide for themselves. His mother was a widow, and would now be destitute and probably be left to beg for money at the gate of the town. One can imagine the prayers she must have uttered to God to save her son. The son died, and it would appear that the prayers were not answered, but God is faithful. Jesus approached the son's corpse. Touching it, Jesus commanded that the son arise. He did. He sat up and spoke. Jesus then delivered him to his mother. The people were justifiably amazed and spread the news of the miracle throughout the land. They believed that a great prophet had again been raised up in Israel, perhaps the promised Messiah.

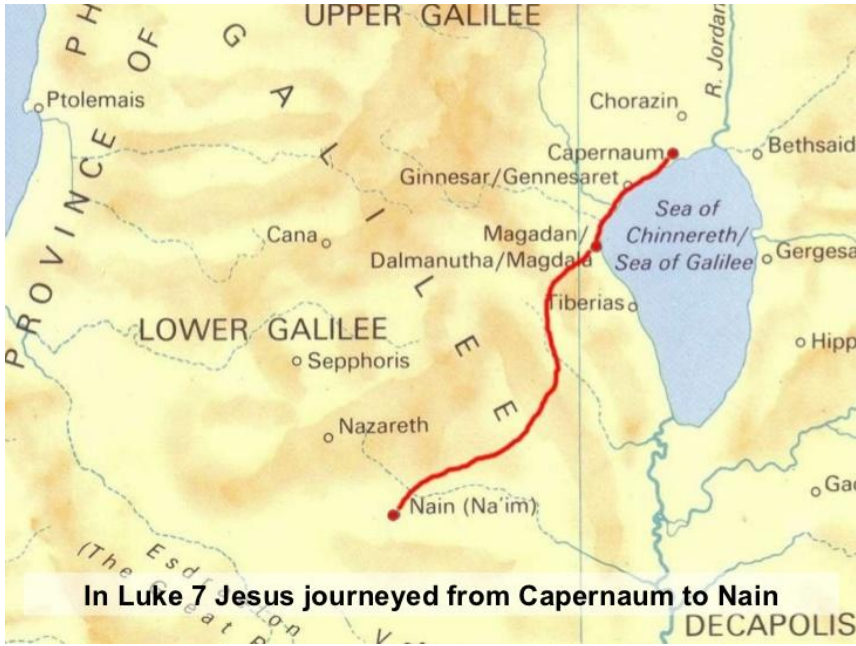
FOOTNOTES:

1- **And it came to pass** – The phrase “And it came to pass” is translated from the Greek word “γίνομαι” or “ginomai”. It means to become, i.e. to come into existence, begin to be, receive being. It can also mean to come to pass, happen, arise, or to be finished.

The phrase “And it came to pass” is a Hebrew idiom. Since ancient Hebrew lacked punctuation, it required literary markers to indicate a change of thought. The Hebrew equivalent to the Greek word “ginomai” is “וַיְהִי” or “vayehi”. The Bible uses the term “And it came to pass” 452 times, out of 31,102 verses. The term is contained in 1.45% of the biblical verses. The Greek form is used to open the story in Luke 7:11 indicating that a new event is being introduced.

2- **The day after** – The phrase “the day after” is translated from the Greek word “ἑξῆς” or “hexēs”. It means successively in order. It also means the next, following, or the next in succession. It has nothing to do with a day, but rather just the next event.





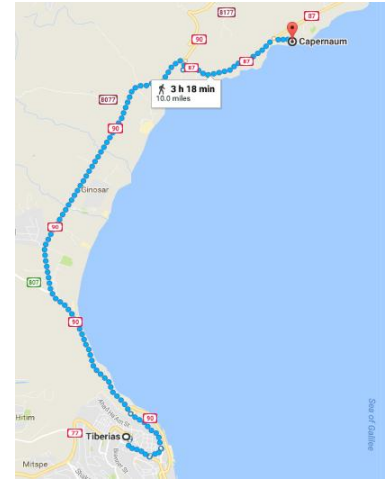
In Luke 7 Jesus journeyed from Capernaum to Nain

The question with this footnote is whether or not the term “the day after” is to be taken literal or figurative. As a point of reference, the term probably refer to the miracle Jesus performed in Capernaum regarding the Centurion’s servant. Gaskill wrote, “After healing the servant of the centurion, Jesus headed to a city called Nain.” (Miracles of the New Testament: A Guide to the Symbolic Messages, Alonzo L. Gaskill, page 103). Elder McConkie was more specific when he wrote, “It is now the day after the healing of the centurion’s servant in Capernaum.” (The Mortal Messiah: Volume 2, Collector’s Edition, Bruce R. McConkie, page 123).

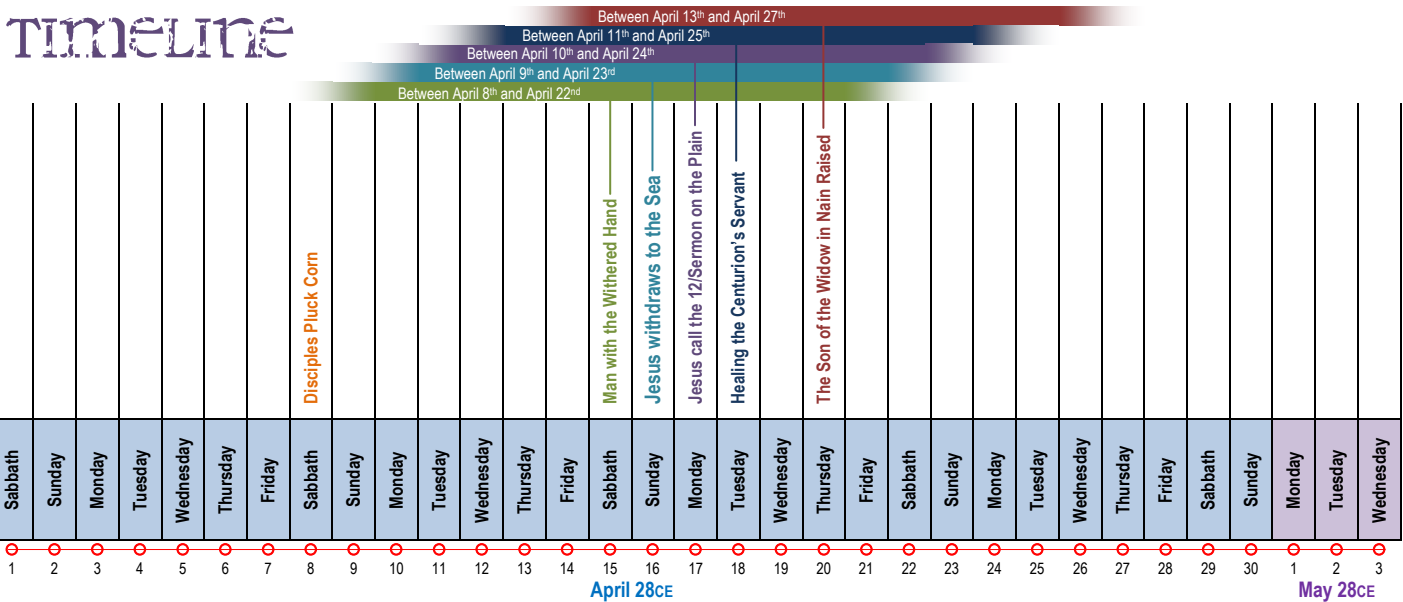
There are several routes which Jesus may have taken to Nain. The shortest route appears to be 29.7 miles, though most scholars simply record the route as over twenty-five miles. Regardless of the route, there is no route under 25 miles. This would be very problematic for having the miracle occur the “day after”. A day’s journey was between 11 and 18 miles depending on the difficulty of the terrain and the conditions. My experience with hiking tells me that this is true. One might question this knowing that one could surely walk much longer than that in a day. However, hiking requires that one carries all one’s needs along the way. It also requires that one stop to eat, which is time demanding as there were no restaurants along the way.

intervening temporal phrase the adv. *hexes*, ‘next’ is used as an adj. with the masc. art. To with which some noun like *chrono*, ‘time’, is to be understood.” (The Gospel according to Luke I-IX: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, page 658). Even if taken figuratively, it surely didn’t represent a long passage of time. It was most probably the passage of a few days. Edersheim wrote, “For our present purpose it matters little, whether it was the very ‘day after’ the healing of the Centurion’s servant, or ‘shortly afterwards,’ that Jesus left Capernaum for Nain.” (The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, Volume 1, Alfred Edersheim, page 552).

Another consideration may be given to the speculation surrounding the location of the Centurion’s home in the last chapter. Some would argue that even though the Centurion, or his representatives from the last chapter, approached Jesus in Capernaum, the Centurion may have had a home closer to Tiberias. Tiberias was a Roman stronghold and most Jews refused to live there because it was built over a cemetery; making the whole town unclean. We know that Jesus made His way to the Centurion’s home, but as He approached He was met by the Centurion asking Him not to come because the Centurion was unclean. Edersheim, speaking of the miracle in Nain, wrote, “Yesterday it was the sorrow of the heathen centurion which woke an echo in the heart of the Supreme Commander of life and death; faith called out, owned, and placed on the high platform of Israel’s worthies.” (The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, Volume 1, Alfred Edersheim, page 552). If the miracle Jesus wrought upon the Centurion’s servant was near Tiberias, it would have taken 10 miles or 3 hour 18 minutes off the journey to Nain the next day. Now the trip is a reasonable day’s journey. Of course, this line of thinking is contrary to all modern belief. Most scholars believe that Jesus journeyed from Capernaum to Nain. Farrar wrote, “If the common reading in the text of St. Luke be right, it was on the very day after these events that our Lord took His way from Capernaum to Nain.” (The Story of a Beautiful Life: Farrar’s Life of Christ, The New 20th Century Edition, 1900, Canon Farrar, D.D., F.R.S., page 187).



The timeline for this chapter is based on its recorded time relationship to the previous chapters. everything is relative to ones interpretation.



3- **went into a city** – The word “city” is translated from the Greek word “πόλις” or “polis”. It means a city. It can be used to refer to one’s native city, or the city in which one lives.

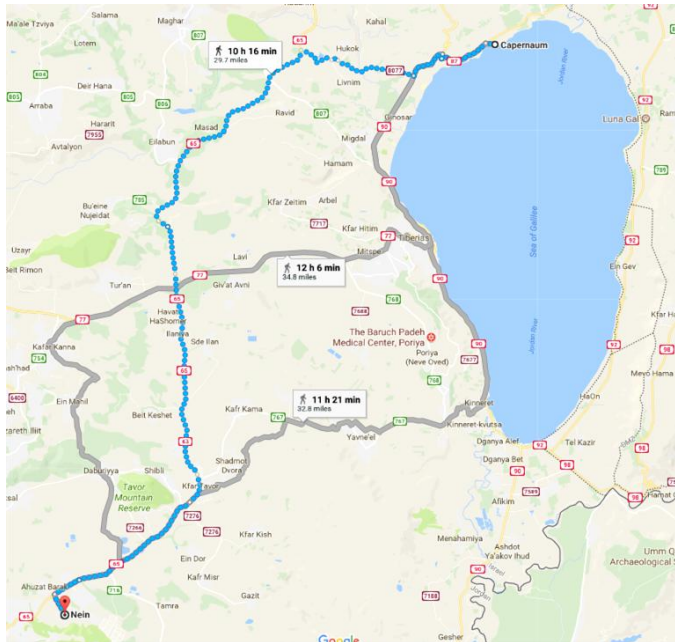
The city of Nain, which I believe better qualifies as a town or village, sits at 914 feet above sea level. In contrast to the sea of Galilee, which lies 319 feet below sea level, the city of Nain is situated nicely upon a hilltop. **“From the elevation on which the city stood we look northwards, across the wide plain, to wooded Tabor, and in the far distance to snow capped Hermon. On the left (in the West) rise the hills beyond which Nazareth lies embosomed; to the right of Endor; southwards Shunem, and beyond it the Plain of Jezreel.”** (The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, Volume 1, Alfred Edersheim, page 553). That being said, the final portion of Jesus’ journey from Capernaum to Nain required a climb or rather a steep hike. Ogden and Skinner wrote, speaking of Jesus, **“He had had a rigorous hike uphill of more than twenty miles to get to Nain ‘the day after.’”** (The Four Gospels - Verse by verse, D. Kelly Ogden and Andrew C. Skinner, page 229). Likewise, Farrar wrote, **“The coming King was climbing the narrow and rocky ascent which leads to the gate of Nain, they were met by another and a sad procession issuing through it to bury a dead youth outside the walls.”** (The Story of a Beautiful Life: Farrar’s Life of Christ, The New 20th Century Edition, 1900, Canon Farrar, D.D., F.R.S., page 188).



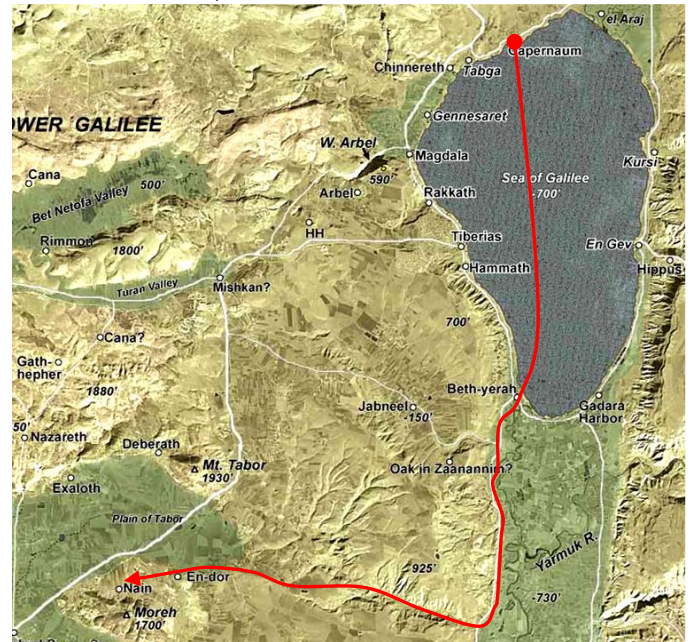
It is doubtful that the city had a wall, though there appears to have been one from a later date. It had but a dozen structures (assumedly all homes) in the city itself. It was obscure. Elder McConkie wrote, **“Jesus, his disciples, and a great multitude have traversed their weary way – a distance of twenty-five miles – to a little Galilean village of no particular note, a place called Nain.”** (The Mortal Messiah: Volume 2, Collector’s Edition, Bruce R. McConkie, page 123). It **“lay between Endor and Shunem”** (The Gospel of Luke, The Daily Study Bible Series - Revised Edition, William Barclay, page 86).

If we are to assume that Jesus, in fact, started His journey to Nain from Capernaum, we are left with several possible routes whereby He may have traveled. The common scholar figures that Jesus walked about 25 miles. Edersheim acknowledges that the journey was longer than 25 miles. He wrote, **“The way was long – as we reckon, more than twenty-five miles.”** (The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, Volume 1, Alfred Edersheim, page 552). The most probable walking routes to Nain are 29.7 miles, 34.8 miles, and 32.8 miles. We might assume that the travelers took the shortest route, especially in light of the fact that the scriptures would lead us to believe that they made the trip in one day. The 29.7 mile route would have required 10 hours and 16 minutes of continuous walking. This does not take into account stops for meals, resting, or bathroom breaks. Given this, I find it highly unlikely that any of these land routes could have been traveled in one day under normal circumstances.

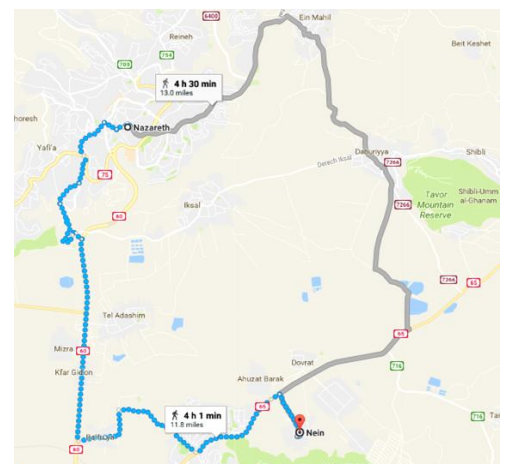
POSSIBLE ROUTES FROM CAPERNAUM TO NAIN



POSSIBLE SEA/LAND ROUTE FROM CAPERNAUM



Another travel option would be a land/sea route. Farrar supports this theory. He recorded, **“Starting, as Orientals always do, early in the cool morning hours, Jesus, in all probability, sailed to the southern end of the lake, and then passed down the Jordan valley, to the where the wadies of the Esdraelon slope down to it; form which point, leaving Mount Tabor on the right hand, and Endor on the left, He might easily have arrived at the little village soon after noon.”** (The Story of a Beautiful Life: Farrar’s Life of Christ, The New 20th Century Edition, 1900, Canon Farrar, D.D., F.R.S., page 188). This would mean that the route would need to be navigated in about 7 hours. The water route, though a viable option, doesn’t seem to be very advantageous. It would require a 32 mile journey, as opposed to a 29.7 mile journey solely by land, with only 12-13 miles by boat. That would leave 19-20 miles on foot. If we were to use an average hiking pace of 2.92 miles per hour, we would have 6.5 hours on foot. In addition, we would have the sea journey. Since we have no idea as to quality of type of boat they may have used, we must make some assumptions. The average fishing boat of the era is thought to have a speed of about 4 miles per hour. It is doubtful that any boat of the time could exceed 12 miles per hour. Conservatively speaking, a trip from Capernaum to a harbor at the south end of the Lake would take about 3.125 hours. The sea route would extend the length of the journey, but would shorten the travel time from 10.25 hours to 9.725 hours.



Another Interesting observation is how close Nazareth was to Nain. Jesus grew up in Nazareth, which was on the opposite side of the Plain of Tabor from Nain. Could it have been that Jesus knew the widow woman and her family? Surely the two towns would have had opportunity to trade and interact with each other. Nain was only 11.8 miles from Nazareth, and sat on opposite sides of the plain, both resting on hills. On a clear day they would have been able to see each other.

- 4- **Nain** – The name “Nain” is translated from the Greek word “Ναϊν” or “Nain”. Translated literally, it means “beautiful”. Though, many would argue that it means little more than “fair” or “pleasant”.

It is difficult to determine the exact size and population of Nain at the time of Jesus. Some scholars theorize that it was nothing more than a village of 6 or 7 families. Others say that there were only a dozen or so homes in the city itself. Then there are those that speculate that Nain was a good sized walled city. The ruins of Nain represent different structures from several centuries, making it difficult to determine those that stood at the time of Jesus. Farrar describes the village as follows: “Nain – now a squalid and miserable village – is about twenty-five miles from Capernaum, and lies on the northwest slope of Jebel el-Duhy, or Little Hermon. The name (which it still retains) means ‘fair’, and its situation near Endor – nestling picturesquely on the hill slopes of the graceful mountain, and full in view of Tabor and the heights of Zebulon – justifies the flattering title.” (The Story of a Beautiful Life: Farrar’s Life of Christ, The New 20th Century Edition, 1900, Canon Farrar, D.D., F.R.S., pages 187-188). Berrett and Ogden write, “Today Nain is an Arab town on the northwest slope of a mountain known as the Hill of Moreh, and 4 miles northeast of Afula.” (Discovering the World of the Bible, LaMar C. Berrett and D. Kelly Ogden, page 115). “It is all desolate now. A few houses of mud and stone with low doorways, scattered among heaps of stones and traces of walls, is all that remains of what even these ruins show to have been once a city, with walls and gates.” (The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, Volume 1, Alfred Edersheim, page 553).



RUINS OF ANCIENT NAIN

nain & THE JEZREEL VALLEY



The Via Maris was the major highway connecting Egypt to Damascus and the Fertile Crescent. It ran through the Jezreel valley, just north of Nain. One would think that a city in such close proximity to such a major highway would reap the vast benefits of trade and commerce among its travelers. Nain is actually **“at the northern foot of Mount Moreh in the eastern Jezreel Valley.”** (The Four Gospels - Verse by verse, D. Kelly Ogden and Andrew C. Skinner, page 229). It is perfectly situated for such trade. Elder McConkie notes, **“Aside from the fact there was a funeral in Nain today, the day has been no different from the ceaseless caravan of days that pass endlessly along in hundreds of the sleepy villages of Israel.”** (The Mortal Messiah: Volume 2, Collector’s Edition, Bruce R. McConkie, page 123).



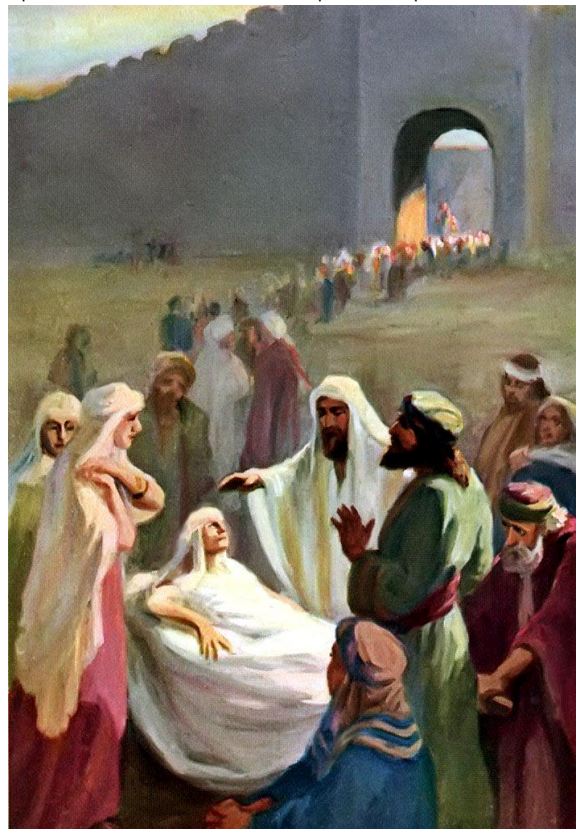
- 5- **many** – The word “many” is translated from the Greek word “ἱκανός” or “hikanos”. It means sufficient, many enough, enough or sufficient in ability.

We are left to wonder how many people accompanied Jesus to Nain. He often had hundreds of followers, and as we shall see there were occasions where thousands followed Him. On the trip to Nain, we assume that the twelve recently called Apostles accompanied Jesus. Additionally, other followers came with Jesus to Nain. The number of ordinary disciples is simply described as many. Though we are uncertain as to the precise number, surely it was large enough to make the sea/land route to Nain problematic.

“Along the road from Endor streamed the great multitude which followed the ‘Prince of Life.’ ” (The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, Volume 1, Alfred Edersheim, pages 557). As the “many disciple” approached Nain with Jesus, they were met with “another throng of people”. They came upon a funeral procession. **“Behind the bier walked the relatives, friends, and then the sympathizing ‘multitude.’ For it was deemed like mocking one’s creator not to follow the dead to his last resting-place.”** (The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, Volume 1, Alfred Edersheim, page 556). This would mean that all the local community was gathered for the funeral. They came from the countryside and neighboring villages. The **“two multitudes are about to meet: one sorrowing because the only son of his mother, a widow, has passed to the great beyond – sorrowing because such a promising Israelite, whose help was so much needed by a weeping mother, was about to be laid in a lifeless tomb; the other a joyful multitude – a group of believing, rejoicing disciples in whose bosoms the fires ignited on the Mount of Beatitudes still burned; a group who, but yesterday, had heard their prophet-leader command a centurion’s servant to arise from the paralytic bed, and it was so.”** (The Mortal Messiah: Volume 2, Collector’s Edition, Bruce R. McConkie, page 123).

- 6- **his disciples** – The word “disciples” is translated from the Greek word “μαθητής” or “mathētēs”. It means a learner, pupil, or disciples.

We need to understand that the word “disciple” is used much more casually in our day than it was at the time of Jesus. Today, we often consider ourselves disciples of Jesus if we belong to His church or believe in His existence. Anciently, a disciple was someone who had been accepted into and adhered to a great Rabbis tutelage. The great Rabbinical Schools carefully screened candidates applying to be disciples. The disciple would be a reflection of the specific Rabbi and/or the school. Prospective disciples needed to show proficiency with the Law (the Torah), the Oral Law (the Mishnah), moral standards, ritual cleanliness, and reputation. Once selected, a disciple was required to learn from his master. The disciple not only learned from scrolls, but learned to anticipate his master’s wishes and behavioral patterns. He followed the master everywhere he went, sought to meet his needs, and represented him in all that he did. The disciple hoped to someday become the master by emulating the traits that defined the master. When we speak of disciples of Jesus, we speak in terms of such devotion and commitment. Unlike many of the great Rabbis, Jesus was indiscriminate in His selection of disciples. It would appear that all who were willing were accepted, regardless of pedigree or knowledge base. A desire to learn and follow was what was needed. Many answered the invitation to discipleship, at least in the beginning of the ministry. Additionally, there were many who followed with great contemplation, **“at this bright and welcome period of His ministry, He was usually accompanied, not only by His disciples, but also by rejoicing and adoring crowds.”** (The Story of a Beautiful Life: Farrar’s Life of Christ, The New 20th Century Edition, 1900, Canon Farrar, D.D., F.R.S., page 188). All could learn from and be blessed by His presence.

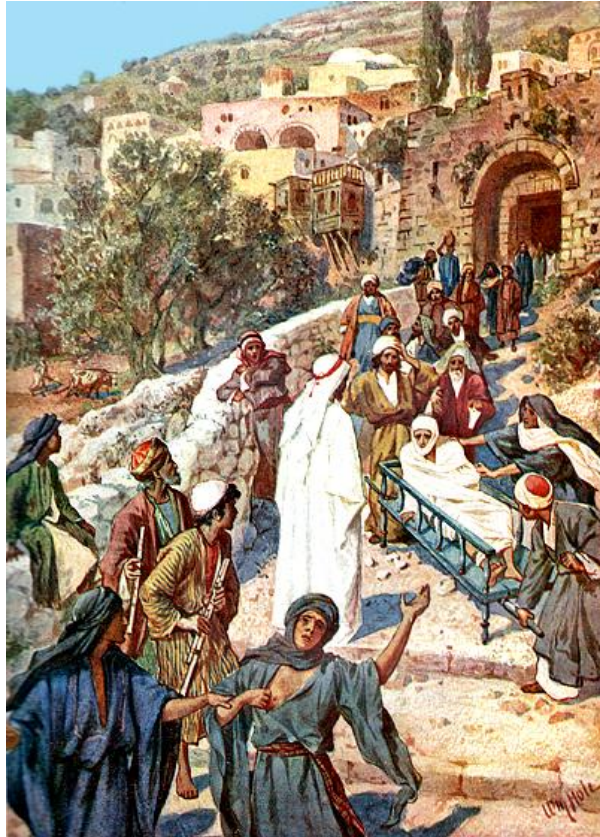


- 7- **much people** – The word “much” is translated from the Greek word “πολύς” or “polys”. It means many, much or large. The word “people” is translated from the Greek word “ὄχλος” or “ochlos”. It means a crowd, a casual collection of people, people flocking together, or a multitude. The Codex Sinaiticus translate the term “much people” as “great multitude”. (Codex Sinaiticus: The H.T. Anderson New Testament, Translated by Henry Tompkins Anderson, Luke, Chapter 7, Verse 11, page 116).

It seems odd to us that so many would gather for a simple funeral. The fact is, ancient customs required that all who saw a funeral contributed to the honoring of the dead and mourning with the living. It was not unconceivable that thousands of people gathered in Nain to do just that. Freeman wrote, **“It was usual for all who knew the deceased to accompany the body to the grave. There were several relays of men to take turns in carrying the bier. This was considered a privilege. Thus we are told that much people of the city was with the bereaved mother.”** (Manners and Customs of the Bible, James M. Freeman, pages 413-414). In addition, there were individuals who filled specific roles in the procession. Families were culturally required to hire professional mourners and musicians to honor the deceased. Barclay wrote, **“The funeral procession would be headed by the band of professional mourners with their flutes and their cymbals, uttering in a kind of frenzy their shrill cries of grief.”** (The Gospel of Luke, The Daily Study Bible Series - Revised Edition, William Barclay, pages 86-87).

Edersheim offers two rather lengthy descriptions of ancient Israelite funeral customs. They are definitely worth reviewing:

“From the account of the funeral procession at Nain, which the Lord of life arrested (Luke 7:11-15), many interesting details may be learned. First, burying-places were always outside cities (Matt 8:28, 27:7, 52, 53; John 11:30, 31). Neither watercourses nor public roads were allowed to pass through them, nor sheep to graze there. We read of public and private burying-places—the latter chiefly in gardens and caves. It was the practice to visit the graves (John 11:31) partly to mourn and partly to pray. It was unlawful to eat or drink, to read, or even to walk irreverently among them. Cremation was denounced as a purely heathen practice, contrary to the whole spirit of Old Testament teaching. Secondly, we know that, as at Nain, the body was generally carried open on a bier, or else in an open coffin, the bearers frequently changing to give an opportunity to many to take part in a work deemed so meritorious. Graves in fields or in the open were often marked by memorial columns. Children less than a month old were carried to the burying by their mothers; those under twelve months were borne on a bed or stretcher. Lastly, the order in which the procession seems to have wound out of Nain exactly accords with what we know of the customs of the time and place. It was outside the city gate that the Lord with His disciples met the sad array. Had it been in Judaea the hired mourners and musicians would have preceded the bier; in Galilee they followed. First came the women, for, as an ancient Jewish commentary explains— woman, who brought death into our world, ought to lead the way in the funeral procession. Among them our Lord readily recognized the widowed mother, whose only treasure was to be hidden from her forever. Behind the bier followed, obedient to Jewish law and custom, ‘much people of the city.’ The sight of her sorrow touched the compassion of the Son of Man; the presence of death called forth the power of the Son of God. To her only He spoke, what in the form of a question He said to the woman who mourned at His own grave, ignorant that death had been swallowed up in victory, and what He still speaks to us from heaven, ‘Weep not!’ He bade not the procession halt, but, as He touched the bier, they that bore on it the dead body stood still. It was a marvellous sight outside the gate of Nain. The Rabbi and His disciples should reverently have joined the procession; they arrested it. One word of power burst inwards the sluices of Hades, and out flowed once again the tide of life. ‘He that was dead sat up on his bier, and began to speak’—what words of wonderment we are not told. It must have been like the sudden waking, which leaves not on the consciousness the faintest trace of the dream. Not of that world but of this would his speech be, though he knew he had been over there, and its dazzling light made earth’s sunshine so dim, that ever afterwards life must have seemed to him like the sitting up on his bier, and its faces and voices like those of the crowd which followed him to his burying.” (Sketches of Jewish Social Life, Alfred Edersheim, pages 94-95).



“The Rabbis distinguish between the *Onen* and the *Avel*—the sorrowing or suffering one, and the bowed down, fading one, or mourner; the former expression applying only to the day of the funeral, the latter to the period which followed. It was held, that the law of God only prescribed mourning for the first day, which was that of death and burial (Lev 22:4,6), while the other and longer period of mourning that followed was enjoined by the elders. So long as the dead body was actually in the house, it was forbidden to eat meat or drink wine, to put on the phylacteries, or to engage in study. All necessary food had to be prepared outside the house, and as, if possible, not to be eaten in presence of the dead. The first duty was to rend the clothes, which might be done in one or more of the inner garments, but not in the outer dress. The rent is made standing, and in front; it is generally about a handbreadth in length. In the case of parents it is never closed up again; but in that of others it is mended after the thirtieth day. Immediately after the body is carried out of the house all chairs and couches are reversed, and the mourners sit (except on the Sabbath, and on the Friday only for one hour) on the ground or on a low stool. A three-fold distinction was here made. Deep mourning was to last for seven days, of which the first three were those of ‘weeping.’ During these seven days it was, among other things, forbidden to wash, to anoint oneself, to put on shoes, to study, or to engage in any business. After that followed a lighter mourning of thirty days. Children were to mourn for their parents a whole year; and during eleven months (so as not to imply that they required to remain a full year in purgatory) to say the ‘prayer for the dead.’ The latter, however, does not contain any intercession for the departed.” (Sketches of Jewish Social Life, Alfred Edersheim, page 96).



- 8 - **he came nigh** – The phrase “he came nigh” is translated from the Greek word “ἐγγίζω” or “eggizō”. It means to bring near, to join one thing to another, to draw or come near to, or approach. The word “nigh” is translated as “near” in the Codex Sinaiticus. (Codex Sinaiticus: The H.T. Anderson New Testament, Translated by Henry Tompkins Anderson, Luke, Chapter 7, Verse 12, page 117).



As Jesus came near, the scene would have been unmistakable. He would have heard clapping, and music, mingled with loud weeping and wailing. The professional mourners would have recited rehearsed words of lamentation in loud howling voices. “For, even if charity provided for an unknown wayfarer the simplest funeral, mourning-women would be hired to chant in weird strains the lament ‘Alas, the lion! Alas, the hero! Or similar words, while great Rabbis were wont to bespeak for themselves a warm funeral oration’ (Hesped, or Hespada). For, from the funeral oration a man’s fate in the other world might be inferred; and, indeed, ‘the

honor of a sage was in his funeral oration’. And in this sense the Talmud answers the question, whether a funeral oration is intended to honor the survivors or the dead.” (The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, Volume 1, Alfred Edersheim, page 555).

Culturally, it was forbidden to cross a funeral procession. One was required to assist, and join in. But Jesus could do far more. “Jesus could not enter Nain, and its people pass Him to carry one dead to the burying.” (The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, Volume 1, Alfred Edersheim, page 552). He came near to provide the comfort that only He could.

- 9 - **the gate** – The word “the gate” is translated from the Greek word “πύλη” or “pylē”. It means a gate, whether small or the large gate in a city wall or palace. Symbolically, a gate represents “...entrance; communication; entry into a new life; and communication between one world and another, between the living and the dead.” (An Illustrated Encyclopedia of Traditional Symbols, J.C. Cooper, pages 72-73). “In ancient Egyptian, Canaanite, Phoenician, and Oriental religions, a doorway or gate to a temple symbolized the entrance to the divine realm, the transition between sacred and profane space.” (Encyclopedia of Traditional Jewish Symbols, Ellen Frankel and Betsy Platkin Teutsch, pages 60-61).



City gates were not as elaborate as one might think. They were often just an archway or a door. Sometimes they served a protective or security feature for the city. Other times they served as a symbol. The gate of the city represented the divine. Consequently, a town without a synagogue used the city gate as a sacred place for the elders to meet and conduct town business. Legal, as well as temporal, matters were discussed at the city gate.

The city symbolizes the living, while the grave symbolizes the dead. The gate symbolizes the passage from life to death. Interestingly, Jesus stood at the gate. He is the mediator before the Father. In His role, He has power over death unto the resurrection of all mankind. Similarly, He has power over spiritual death, offering exaltation to all who come unto Him and accept His terms. The burial at Nain became a powerful representation of Jesus’ role as Savior and Redeemer.

Graves were located outside of the city and away from the city gate. This was done purposefully because the dead, and their resting places, were considered ritually unclean. The funeral procession was exiting the city gate, and heading towards the cemetery. “At the grave, on the road to which the procession repeatedly halted, when short addresses were occasionally delivered, there was a funeral oration. If the grave were in a public cemetery, at least a foot and a half must intervene between each sleeper. The caves, or rock-hewn sepulchers, consisted of an ante-chamber in which the bier was deposited, and an inner or rather lower cave in which the bodies were deposited, in a recumbent position, in niches. According to the Talmud these abodes of the dead were usually six feet long, nine feet wide, and ten feet high. Here there were niches for eight bodies: three on each side of the entrance, and two opposite. Larger sepulchers held thirteen bodies. The entrance to the sepulchers was guarded by a large stone or by a door (Matt 27:66; Mark 15:46; John 11:38, 39).” (Sketches of Jewish Social Life, Alfred Edersheim, page 95).

- 10 - **a dead man** – The term “dead man” is translated from the Greek word “θνήσκω” or “thnēskō”. It means to die, or to be dead. “The deceased son in this miracle can represent those who are spiritually dead – those heading down a road that would make repentance difficult indeed (as he was about to be buried). But, as with the story of Lazarus (John 11), even once entombed in the grave, Christ can still raise the dead. Thus, even the worst of sinners can be redeemed through faith in Christ and sincere repentance.” (Miracles of the New Testament: A Guide to the Symbolic Messages, Alonzo L. Gaskill, page 104).



Customs surrounding death and burial vary between cultures and time periods. The Jews at the time of Jesus definitely had their own customs.

The illnesses and sicknesses associated with death were viewed as divine consequence for sin. The Jews even went as far as to link specific illnesses with specific sins. Sadly, the ill were often wrongly judged as sinners. Because illnesses were linked to sin, the cure was always associated with divine forgiveness and intervention. Any healing was considered a

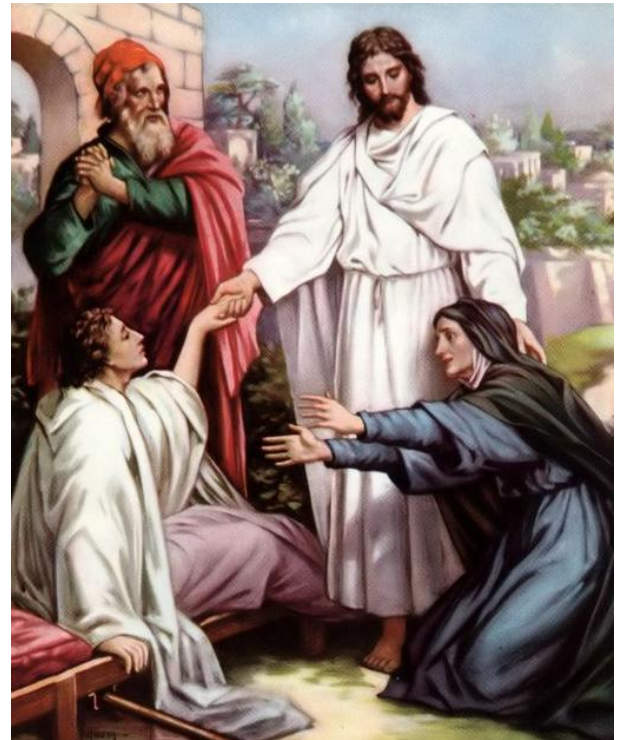
miracle. Hence, the Jewish medical doctors were nearly non-existent. Rabbis were schooled in herbs and remedies, as the people looked to them for miraculous healings. **“Jewish ingenuity and wisdom would resort to remedies real or magical.”** (The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, Volume 1, Alfred Edersheim, page 554). Unfortunately, few were ever healed from serious illnesses.

Families who feared the loss of a loved one to an illness were often left to their own prayers and faith. In the case of the mother in Nain, many have stated that the healing of her son was done without any act of faith. Because the gospel record does not contain any evidence that she approached Jesus, or sent word to Him for a miracle, many assume that Jesus' miracle was unsolicited. I think many rule out the possibility that the mother had prayed in faith to the God of Heaven for help. If this be the case, we can safely say that God answered her prayer by sending His Beloved Son, who was endowed with heavenly power to heal. This blessing may have come after the trial of her faith, as her son was now dead. Elder McConkie wrote, **“The sorrowing mother has suffered through the siege of sickness; every mortal means has been used to stay the grim reaper's hand. We cannot but think that she importuned in faith, before the Eternal Throne, for the life of her son, her only son; but death, in the end, has come off victorious.”** (The Mortal Messiah: Volume 2, Collector's Edition, Bruce R. McConkie, page 124).

According to Jewish culture at that time, the woman nearest to the deceased man would have had responsibility to dress and prepare him. For modesty reasons, a naked body, even deceased, was not to be unnecessarily viewed. Therefore, a deceased man was to be dressed by his wife. If he was not married he was to be dressed by his mother. The person preparing the body would wash it and anoint it with oils and spices. The best cloths were placed on the body, though some would suggest that the naked body was simply covered with fine linens. The nails would be cut and the hair dressed. Great care was given to the body in one final act of service. Edersheim wrote, **“The last sad offices have been rendered to the dead. The body has been laid on the ground; hair and nails have been cut, and the body washed, anointed, and wrapped in the best the widow could procure; for, the ordinance with directed that the dead should be buried in ‘wrappings’ (Takhrikhin), or, as they significantly called it, the ‘provision fro the journey’ (Zevadatha), of the most inexpensive linen, is of later date than our period. It is impossible to say, whether the later practice already prevailed, of covering the body with metal, glass, or salt, and laying it either upon earth or salt.”** (The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, Volume 1, Alfred Edersheim, pages 554-555).

The body of the dead was covered largely for viewing. **“Commonly, though not in later practice, the face of the dead body was uncovered. The body lay with its face turned up, and his hands folded on the breast.”** (The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, Volume 1, Alfred Edersheim, page 556). Though great detail was taken to prepare the dead for presentation, it was also done in somewhat haste. **“Burial followed generally as soon as possible after death (Matt 9:23; Acts 5:6, 10, 8:2), no doubt partly on sanitary grounds. For special reasons, however (Acts 9:37, 39), or in the case of parents, there might be a delay even of days.”** (Sketches of Jewish Social Life, Alfred Edersheim, page 93).

The Jews were mostly apostate in their beliefs at the time of Jesus. The Sadducees didn't even believe in the resurrection. Though the Pharisees believed in resurrection, their understanding of the next life was extremely limited. The lack of knowledge regarding death created an atmosphere of dread and trepidation. To some it even became fear. Edersheim wrote, **“But here we have, besides, the Jewish thoughts of death and after death; knowledge just sufficient to make afraid, but not to give firm consolation, which would make even the most pious Rabbi uncertain of his future.”** (The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, Volume 1, Alfred Edersheim, page 554).



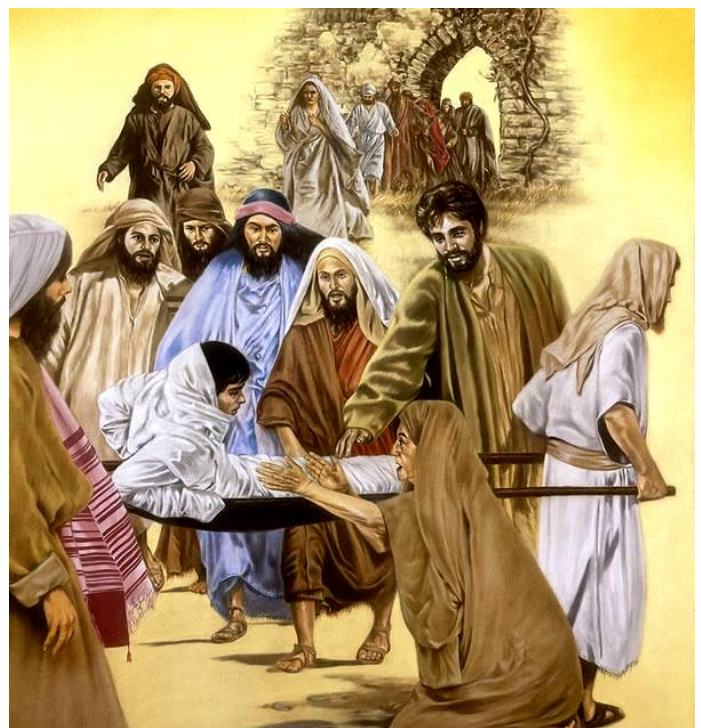
- 11 - **carried out** – The phrase “carried out” is translated from the Greek word “ἐκκομίζω” or “ekkomizō”. It means to carry out, specifically a dead man for burial. **“As Jesus and His followers approached the town, they met a funeral cortege of many people; the only son of a widow was being borne to the tomb; the body was carried according to the custom of the day on an open bier.”** (Jesus the Christ, James E. Talmage, page 187).

Male family members and friends assisted in carrying the bier that supported the deceased's body. It was a great honor to perform this service, even if it rendered one unclean. The need for ritual washing was inherently part of the service rendered.

Those carrying the body would stop occasionally on their way to the cemetery to allow the customary chanting, wailing, and prayers. Even so, it was considered inappropriate for the bier to be set down upon the ground until it had reached its final resting place.

For centuries, the cemetery of Nain was hidden amongst the dirt and history of the years. An English clergyman and biblical scholar by the name of Henry Baker Tristram discovered an ancient cemetery near Nain in the late 1800's. Archeology has since dated the cemetery to the time of Jesus. **“Hence there can be little doubt, that Canon Tristram correctly identifies the now unfenced burying-ground, about ten minutes' walk to the east of the widow's son. On the path leading to it the Lord of Life for the first time burst open the gates of death.”** (The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, Volume 1, Alfred Edersheim, page 553). The area is rocky and not noteworthy. Barclay wrote, **“To this day, ten minutes' walk from Nain on the road to Endor there is a cemetery of rock tombs in which the dead are laid.”** (The Gospel of Luke, The Daily Study Bible Series - Revised Edition, William Barclay, page 86).

The cemetery is typical for the time. It is outside of the city gate, and away from the residence of people. It is in a rocky area where tombs could be carved out for the rich and graves could be dug for the poor. Freeman taught, **“It was customary, and still is, to bury the dead outside the limits of the city. Heathen nations as well as**



Jewish observed this usage. Rare exceptions were sometimes made in the case of royal personages. Thus it was that Jesus saw the dead man carried out of the gate.” (Manners and Customs of the Bible, James M. Freeman, page 413).

As they carried the dead man, there would have been hired mourners and musician. “If it was deemed duty for the poorest Jew, on the death of his wife, to provide at least two flutes and one mourning woman, we may feel sure that the widowed mother had not neglected what, however incongruous or difficult to procure, might be regarded as the last tokens of affection.” (The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, Volume 1, Alfred Edersheim, page 555). Additionally, people were required to clap and participate in the mourning. The louder the morning, the more honor and respect you paid to the dead and their family.

The mourning didn't stop until the carrying of the body to the grave was complete. Though the hired mourners may have completed their services, the family continued ritual mourning for a prescribed period of time. “The mourning up to the time of burial or during the first day was termed Aninah (widowed mourning or moaning). The following three, seven and thirty days were those of Ebhel, ‘mourning’.” (The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, Volume 1, Alfred Edersheim, page 555).



- 12- **the only son** – The word “only” is translated from the Greek word “μονογενής” or “monogenēs”. It means single of its kind, or only. “We do not know if the widow had other children, but we do know this was her only son. Consequently, about to be buried was not only one whom she loved but also her primary means of temporal support.” (Miracles of the New Testament: A Guide to the Symbolic Messages, Alonzo L. Gaskill, page 103).

The concept of an eldest son, and even more importantly an only son, has lost its significance in our modern society. Anciently, at the time of Jesus, and through much of the Old Testament, the eldest living son was responsible for the care and maintenance of the parents. This became extremely significant once the father died. A woman was not allowed to earn money or hold an occupation. She could work, but not in the sense of earning income. Consequently, an only son to a widow would represent the only way whereby the widow could be sustained. Once the son died, it is most sure that the widow would find herself begging for money and most probably destitute. Such destitution was mentioned by Old Testament prophets. Jeremiah wrote, “O daughter of my people, gird thee with sackcloth, and wallow thyself in ashes: make thee mourning, as for an only son, most bitter lamentation: for the spoiler shall suddenly come upon us.” (Jeremiah 6:26).

One cannot read the account of the widow in Nain without seeing the foreshadowing of the Savior's own death. The prophet Zechariah, in the Old Testament, saw the Savior's death. Jesus was the only begotten of the Father and the oldest son of His mother Mary. Zechariah wrote, “And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.” (Zechariah 12:6). Figuratively, Jesus is the older son in whom we are all dependent upon for our support. Without Him we are all lost and subject to terminal effects of spiritual and physical death.

- 13- **his mother** – The word “mother” is translated from the Greek word “μήτηρ” or “mētēr”. It means a mother.

Early in the Gospel of Luke, the aged Priesthood holder Simeon blessed the baby Jesus and Mary shortly after His birth. In that blessing, Simeon prophetically declared, “And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against; (Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.” (Luke 2:34-35). Jesus may very well have already seen His own death. The spirit of revelation abounded in Him. He may have already been aware of the pain that Mary would endure at His death. Could it be that the pain He saw in the widow of Nain's



eyes caused Him to reflect on His own mother? Mary, we suspect, was a widow herself. She probably relied on Jesus for her support. He was the oldest son.

The widow at Nain was a mother. Inherently, mothers love their children. This affection is built into the very building blocks of their souls, and is a divine quality. The mother, after losing her son, mourned in two distinct senses. First, she mourned because that was the feelings that filled her heart. Second, she mourned because that was the required tradition. Edersheim wrote, "And now the mother was left *Onenth* (moaning, lamenting) – a term which distinguished the mourning 'before' from that 'after' burial. She would sit on the floor, neither eat meat, nor drink wine. What scanty meal she would take, must be without prayer, in the house of neighbor, or in another room, or at least with her back to the dead." (The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, Volume 1, Alfred Edersheim, page 555). The poor mother was suffering both internally and externally.

14 - a widow – The word "widow" is translated from the Greek word "χήρα" or "chēra". It means a widow. A widow is a woman who has lost her spouse by death and has not remarried. We have no information regarding the widow of Nain's husband, or what happened to him. We can only deduce that he had passed away. Having lost her husband, the death of her only son must have been especially hard. Edersheim wrote, "But in all this painful pageantry there was nothing for the heart of the widow, bereft of her only child." (The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, Volume 1, Alfred Edersheim, page 555).

The gospel of Jesus Christ has a special relationship to the widows and at the same time an obligation to them. As one enters into covenants with the Lord, one promises to care for the needy and the widows. Erastus Snow once said, "Blessed are those who remember the high calling of God whereunto they are called. Blessed are those who seek to learn the ways of the Lord and walk in his paths. Blessed are those who seek to magnify the high calling of God which is upon them as Elders of Israel, to bear witness of the truth, and exemplify it in their lives and conduct; who deal justly, love mercy, walk humbly before their God, visit the fatherless and *the widow in their affliction*, and keep themselves unspotted from the world. Blessed are all such of the sons and daughters of Zion, for they shall prosper and their children after them. *They shall become saviours upon Mount Zion*, and they shall be found worthy to stand when he appears, and their names and their generations after them shall be had in honorable remembrance in the Temples of the Lord our God." (Journal of Discourses, Volume 16, Erastus Snow, September 14, 1873, page 208).

All men called of God to service in His kingdom have an obligation to care for the widows. Those called in positions with priesthood keys are especially obligated. In training these men, President John Taylor said, "I would say to the Presidents of Stakes, and to the Bishops, see that there is no oppression of any kind, or anything approaching arbitrary measures, or anybody interfered with; let everything be done righteously, properly, and voluntarily. Instead of oppressing the poor, feed them. Instead of taking from the naked, clothe them. *Be merciful to the widow* and the fatherless and the orphan, and all who may be in distress; *dry up their tears, and pour balm into their wounds, and be full of compassion, and kindness, and the love of God*, and let it bubble and flow from you like a river of life. These are the feelings that ought to exist among the Saints; nothing like oppression or wrong of any." (Journal of Discourses, Volume 19, John Taylor, October 7, 1877, page 129). The Good News, which we translate as the Gospel, is that Jesus saved us from all our afflictions; both physically and spiritually. He expects us, as disciples, to follow Him and to try and emulate Him in all that we do.



This means that we must try, however feeble our attempts are, to save those that suffer. We currently lack His capacity; however, without pressing forward in our own individual capacities we will never gain what he has. This is the signature trait of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Erastus Snow once said, "I said our religion was eminently practical, as true religion cannot be separated from true practice. It teaches us to visit the fatherless and the widow in their affliction, and to keep ourselves unspotted from the world; it teaches charity and love one toward another, and to assist to bear each other's burdens, and be one in Christ Jesus. Just before the Savior was offered up upon the cross he prayed to his Father in behalf of his disciples and those who should believe on him through their ministrations, that they might be one with him as he was one with the Father." (Journal of Discourses, Volume 23, Erastus Snow, April 7, 1882, page 84).

It is of little wonder that Christ often used the symbolic comparison of His church to a bride, with Him being the bridegroom. When Jesus died, the church symbolically became a widow, depending

on righteous sons of God to protect and watch over it. Gaskill wrote, “The widow in the miracle story seems an apt type of the bride of Christ – the Church, which weeps at the loss of each sinner. Just as the widow felt she could not survive without the aid of her son, so also the Church feels a great loss when any stray and are no longer able or willing to serve in the kingdom.” (Miracles of the New Testament: A Guide to the Symbolic Messages, Alonzo L. Gaskill, page 104).

- 15 - **saw** – The word “saw” is translated from the Greek word “εἶδω” or “eidō”. It means to see or perceive with the eyes. In Jesus’ case, His vision was expanded beyond what was physically visible. He could see things of the spirit, of the heart, and of the mind.



Barclay seems to lessen the miracle Jesus performed by speculating that the widow’s son merely slept. He would restate the story saying that the miracle was in fact centered on the idea that Jesus saw that the son was not dead, and merely brought everyone else’s attention to it. Barclay wrote, “It may well be that here we have a miracle of diagnosis; that Jesus with those keen eyes of his saw that the lad was in a cataleptic trance and saved him from being buried alive, as so many were in Palestine. It does not matter; the fact remains that Jesus claimed for life a lad who had been marked for death. Jesus is not only the Lord of life; he is the Lord of death who himself triumphed over the grave

and who has promised that, because he lives, we shall live also (John 14:19).” (The Gospel of Luke, The Daily Study Bible Series - Revised Edition, William Barclay, page 88). We understand that the Jesus saw the widow’s son and saw that he was literally dead. What he saw was not figurative, or a guise for something else.

There are also scholars that propose that Jesus’ miracle was an act of spontaneity. They believe that the widow never asked Jesus to heal her son but that He observed her need and then helped fulfill it. The suggestion here is that the word “saw” implies a random act of service. I would suggest that faith always precedes the miracle. The Book of Mormon teaches, “For if there be no faith among the children of men God can do no miracle among them; wherefore, he showed not himself until after their faith.” (Ether 12:12). Faith is more than belief. By its very definition, faith requires action. James wrote, “Even so faith, if it have not works is dead, being alone.” (JST James 2:17). Therefore, we must assume that the widow had faith, and had at some point acted on it. Her faith must have been in God’s ability to heal her son. We can only assume that she had prayed for a miracle and God sent Jesus in answer to that prayer. When Jesus saw the widow and her son, He would have recognized them as the family He was sent to minister to.

- 16 - **compassion** – The word “compassion” is translated from the Greek word “σπλαγχνίζομαι” or “splagchnizomai”. It means to be moved as to one’s bowels, hence to be moved with compassion, have compassion (for the bowels were thought to be the seat of love and pity). The Codex Sinaiticus translated the word “compassion” as “pity”. (Codex Sinaiticus:

The H.T. Anderson New Testament, Translated by Henry Tompkins Anderson, Luke, Chapter 7, Verse 13, page 117). In our modern language, being moved in one’s bowels doesn’t seem very pleasant. A better saying might be “butterflies in the stomach”. It is a saying that describes the feeling one has when one experiences love. Though Jesus did not have a romantic love for the widow, He did have feelings of compassionate and love for the widow. President Monson said, “Few accounts of the Master’s ministry touch me more than His example of compassion shown to the grieving widow at Nain... What power, what tenderness, what compassion did our Master thus demonstrate! We, too, can bless if we will but follow His noble example. Opportunities are everywhere. Needed are eyes to see the pitiable plight and ears to hear the silent pleadings of a broken heart. Yes, and a soul filled with compassion, that we might communicate not only eye to eye or voice to ear but, in the majestic style of the Savior, even heart to heart.” (Ensign, “Meeting Life’s Challenges”, Thomas S. Monson, November 1993, page 71). To serve like Jesus served, we must love as He loved. He loved conditionally.



As we strive to love others, we must often try to understand their plight and feel what they feel. Having the proper empathy, allows us to love those who are different



from us, or whose circumstances are significantly dissimilar. This was part of Jesus' earthly mission. The Book of Alma records, "And he will take upon him death, that he may loose the bands of death which bind his people; and he will take upon him their infirmities, that his bowels may be filled with mercy, according to the flesh, **that he may know according to the flesh how to succor his people according to their infirmities.**" (Alma 7:12). There are many that suggest that Jesus had compassion on the widow because He had empathy on His own mother. "Robert J. Matthews offered an interesting suggestion as to the provocation behind this healing: 'Jesus had compassion on the mother. One wonders if he foresaw his own mother, and his own death, and her sorrow. A prophecy had been uttered that when the spear pierced him it would be the wounding of her own soul and Jesus may have been additionally moved on this occasion because of regard for his mother.'" (Miracles of the New Testament: A Guide to the Symbolic Messages, Alonzo L. Gaskill, pages 103-104).

Whether Jesus acted spontaneously or under a specific direction from Heaven, and I believe it was the latter, it is sure that He acted out of deep love. "The sight of this terrible sorrow appealed irresistibly to the Savior's loving and gentle heart." (The Story of a Beautiful Life: Farrar's Life of Christ, The New 20th Century Edition, 1900, Canon Farrar, D.D., F.R.S., page 188). The love that Jesus has for us is deeper and more meaningful than any love we have experienced. He loves beyond bounds, and in spite of imperfections.

- 17 - **Weep not** – The word "weep" is translated from the Greek word "κλαίω" or "kaiō". It means to mourn, weep or lament. Weeping was seen as a sign of pain and grief for something (i.e. for the pain and grief). Weeping symbolizes "Grief; mourning." (An Illustrated Encyclopedia of Traditional Symbols, J.C. Cooper, page 190). Fitzmyer says that the Greek word "kaiō" is translated "Literally 'do not go on crying', as the pres. impv. Would imply Jesus does not forbid a mother's grief, but counsels the woman in view of his coming action." (The Gospel according to Luke I-IX: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, page 659).

Weeping and death were legally connected in Jewish law. The Oral Law even goes as far as dictating the behaviors of those who mourn. Mourners were not to be provided comfort. It is as though the Law wanted to preserve the sadness and despair associated with mourning. The Mishnah records,

- "3:7 I A. They do not tear their clothing, bare the shoulder, or provide food for mourners, except the near relatives of the deceased.
 II B. And they do not provide mourners food except on an upright couch.
 III C. They do not bring [food] to a house of mourning on a tray, salver, or flat basket, but in plain baskets.
 IV D. And they do not [in Grace after meals] say the blessing for mourners during the intermediate days of the festival.
 E. But [the mourners] do stand in a line and offer consolation and dismiss those that have gathered together."

(The Mishnah: A New Translation, Moed Qatan, The second Division: Appointed times, 3:7, Translated by Jacob Neusner, page 328).

According to Jewish tradition, and human tendency, the funeral procession was accompanied by great sadness and weeping. Edersheim writes, "We can now transport ourselves into that scene. Up from the city close by came this 'great multitude' that followed the dead, with lamentations, wild chaunts of mourning women, accompanied by flutes and the melancholy tinkle of cymbals, perhaps by trumpets, amidst expressions of general sympathy." (The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, Volume 1, Alfred Edersheim, pages 556-557).

The Jews of the time lacked a true understanding of death. Sadly, many suffer from the same condition centuries later. "Those bitter, silent tears which blinded her eyes were the strongest language of despair and utmost need, which never in vain appeals to His heart, Who has borne our sorrows." (The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, Volume 1, Alfred Edersheim, pages 557). Death does not need to be sad once we understand the Savior's role in death, and how death really works. Death is not the end, but a grand step in our progression. When we think in temporal terms, death is often inconsolable. When we think in spiritual terms, death is merely a celebration of life. Even so, Jesus has a desire to comfort the lost soul. In the story of the widow in Nain "all of us learned a valuable lesson. Like the widow of Nain and her son, all of Heavenly Father's children have needs. Most often money is not what addresses those needs, that helps comfort, enrich, and enliven the soul. Rather, it is the gift that the Savior gave in Nain... time, attention, little kindnesses, and love." (The Four Gospels - Verse by verse, D. Kelly Ogden and Andrew C. Skinner, page 231).

We need not weep when we believe in Jesus. He is mighty to save, and will not forsake those who believe in Him and follow after His commands. The prophet Isaiah taught, "For the people shall dwell in Zion at Jerusalem: thou shalt weep no more: he will be very gracious unto thee at the voice of thy cry; when he shall hear it, he will answer thee." (Isaiah 30:19).

- 18 - **touched** – The word "touched" is translated from the Greek word "ἅπτομαι" or "haptomai". It means to fasten one's self to, adhere to, or to cling to. It can also be used to mean to touch.

It is difficult to say where and how Jesus touched the bier. Regardless of where He touched, it would have been ritually unclean. Jewish law pronounced a dead body or corpse unclean, and anything that comes in

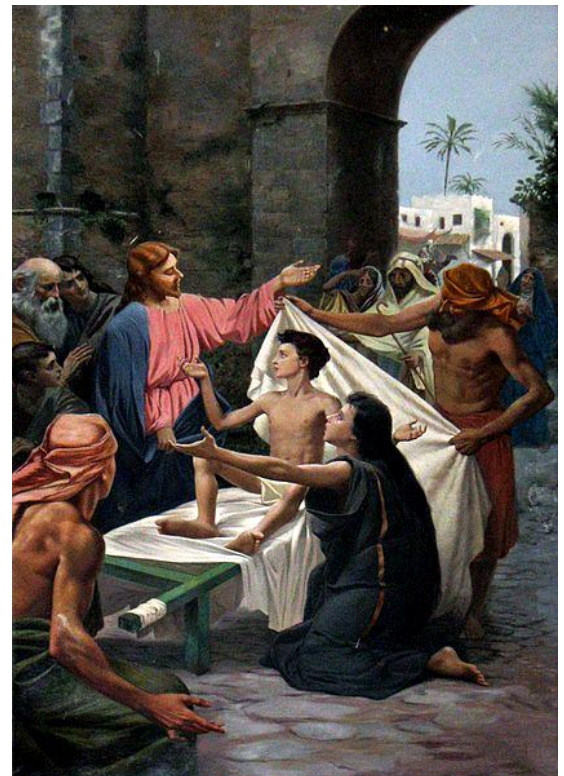


contact with it also becomes unclean. Isaiah wrote, “Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence, touch no unclean thing; go ye out of the midst of her; be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord.” (Isaiah 52:11). That means the bier or any other utensil or objects that made contact with the body was ritually unclean. And yet Jesus “approached, and – heedless once more of purely ceremonial observances – touched the bier, or rather the open coffin in which the dead youth lay.” (The Story of a Beautiful Life: Farrar’s Life of Christ, The New 20th Century Edition, 1900, Canon Farrar, D.D., F.R.S., page 188).

Many of us are afraid of coming in contact with sin, for fear that we might become sinful ourselves. In our mortal weakness, we often counsel one another to avoid sin in all its various forms. Jesus, however, feared no sin. His righteousness and light caused sin and darkness to flee before Him. Notice, He was not made ritually unclean by contact with the corpse, but rather the corpse became clean, and did live again. “And as He touched the bier, they who bore it stood still. They could not have anticipated what would follow. But the awe of the coming wonder – as it were, the shadow of the opening gates of life, had fallen on them.” (The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, Volume 1, Alfred Edersheim, page 557).

Symbolically, we can all be touched by the Lord and be healed. The greatest miracle for us is the healing of our transgressions and sins. When the prophet Isaiah was called, he immediately recognized that he was imperfect and fell short of the level of righteousness required for his call. As he admitted this to the Lord, the Lord sent an angel with a hot coal from the altar to touch Isaiah’s lips. “And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged.” (Isaiah 6:7). Miraculous as the raising of the widow’s son in Nain, Isaiah’s sins were forgiven, and so might ours be as well.

Edersheim describes the scene by saying, “He touched the bier – perhaps the very wicker basket in which the dead youth lay.” (The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, Volume 1, Alfred Edersheim, page 557). And the man did live. With Jesus, the same may be said of all mankind.



- 19 - **bier** – The word “bier” is translated from the Greek word “σποδός” or “soros”. It means the funeral couch or bier on which the Jews carried their dead forth to burial. “The Greek soros properly means a vessel for holding the remains of a dead person, often made of stone, like a cinerary urn or an ossuary for holding the remains of a dead person. It also denoted a ‘coffin’, but here it may have rather the meaning of ‘bier’.” (The Gospel according to Luke I-IX: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, page 659). Ogden and Skinner write that the bier was a wooden pallet used to carry the dead. They said, “The word ‘bier’ in verse 14 refers to a wooden frame or platform used to carry a coffin or corpse to a burial place.” (The Four Gospels - Verse by verse, D. Kelly Ogden and Andrew C. Skinner, page 230). Edersheim, on the other hand, sees the bier as a wooden coffin. He wrote, “The body was not, as afterwards in preference, carried in an ordinary coffin of wood (Aron), if possible, cedarwood – on one occasion, at least, made with holes beneath; but laid on a bier, or in an open coffin (Mittah).” (The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, Volume 1, Alfred Edersheim, page 555).



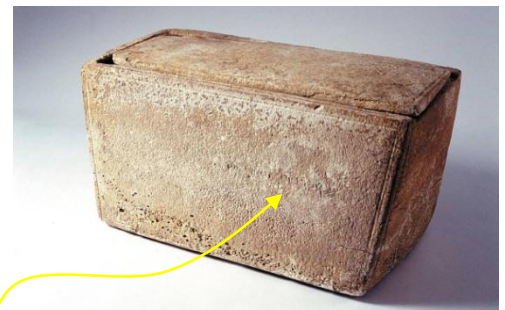
ancient wicker bier



MODEL OF AN ANCIENT WOODEN COFFIN



ancient pallet bier with wicker platform



ANCIENT STONE OSSUARY BOX BELIEVED TO BE JAMES THE BROTHER OF JESUS.

READ FROM RIGHT TO LEFT
 JESUS (YESHUA) BROTHER OF JOSEPH (YOSEF) SON OF JAMES (YAKOV)

יֵשׁוּעַ בְּרֹתוֹ יוֹסֵף בֶּן יַעֲקֹב



ancient Jewish cemetery

As may be apparent, there are many opinions as to what an ancient Jewish bier might have looked like at the time of Jesus. It might help to understand the actual burial practices before settling on a theory. The Jews took the corpses of the dead and temporarily entombed them for the first year after death. The rich were placed in above ground stone tombs that were made from natural caves or actually chiseled out of the local limestone. The poor were placed in the ground or in less suitable tombs. The bodies were placed on a slant allowing the liquids of the body to drain while they decomposed. After a year, the family would open the tomb and collect the bones. The bones were placed in a stone ossuary box that was just large enough to contain the bones of one body if packed properly. The femurs were placed in the box running from the upper corner of the box to the lower corner on the opposite side of the box. The stone box was then placed in the cemetery.

The poor were often buried in the ground due to the cost of a stone tomb. In such cases, wicker or wooded caskets were used. In extreme cases, the bones were never collected and placed in ossuary boxes. Freeman suspects that the widow’s son in Nain was carried on a wooden pallet resembling a stretcher. These were often adorned, if one could afford the cost. When the body reached the cemetery it was placed into its resting place.



was not observed in the burial of women.” (The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, Volume 1, Alfred Edersheim, page 556).

Freeman wrote, “The bier is a wooden frame, partly resembling a coffin and partly a handbarrow. The deceased is arrayed in grave-clothes, the ankles are bound, the hands are laid on the breast, and a shawl is thrown across the face. Miss Rogers says of a bier she saw: ‘It was a painted wooden stand, about seven feet by two, raised slightly on four legs, with a low gallery round it, formed of uprights far apart and two cross-bars. Two strong poles projected at each end from the corners. Above it a canopy was raised, made of freshly-gathered elastic palm-branches. They were bent like half-hoops, and then interlaced and secured lengthways with straight fronds.’ Domestic Life in Palestine, p. 162. The bier was lifted by four men who bore it aloft, the poles resting on their shoulders.” (Manners and Customs of the Bible, James M. Freeman, page 414).

Since the story of the widow’s son records that the body was carried, a stone coffin is unlikely. Consequently, Jesus has nearly immediate access to the body and the son arose when commanded to do so. This makes a closed wooden coffin or even a closed wicker coffin, a doubtful candidate, though the bottom of a wicker coffin is appealing. It is most probable that the son was carried on a funeral stretcher. Edersheim stated, “We cannot, then, be mistaken in supposing that the body of the widow’s son was laid on the ‘bed’ (Mittah), or in the ‘willow basket’ (Kelibha, from Kelubh). Nor can we doubt that the ends or handles were borne by friends and neighbors, different parties of bearers, all of them unshod, at frequent intervals relieving each other, so that as many as possible might share in the good work. During these pauses there was loud lamentation; but this custom

- 20 - **bare him** – The word “bare” is translated from the Greek word “βαστάζω” or “bastazō”. It means to take up with the hands, to take up in order to carry or bear, or to bear what is burdensome. The friends, neighbors, and acquaintances took turn bearing the body to the cemetery. Each person symbolically bearing the burden that death places on the living. Edersheim taught, “Nor was the service of love to stop here; for, as we have seen, the burial of the dead was quite as urgent a duty as the visitation of the sick. As the funeral procession passed, every one was expected, if possible, to join the convoy. The Rabbis applied to the observance of this direction Proverbs 14:32, and 19:17; and to its neglect Proverbs 17:5 (Ber. 18 a). Similarly, all reverence was shown towards the remains of the dead, and burying-places were kept free from every kind of profanation, and even from light conversation.” (Sketches of Jewish Social Life, Alfred Edersheim, page 93).

In similar fashion, Jesus expects His disciples to bear up the burdens of those around them. They are to care for the afflicted, serve the widow, and feed the poor. The funeral procession was a display of Christ like service.

- 21 - **stood still** – The term “stood still” is translated from the Greek word “ἵστημι” or “histēmi”. It means to cause or make to stand, to place, put, or set. The Codex Sinaiticus translates the term “stood still” as “stopped”. (Codex Sinaiticus: The H.T. Anderson New Testament, Translated by Henry Tompkins Anderson, Luke, Chapter 7, Verse 14, page 117).

It was normal for an ancient funeral procession to stop along the way. They did so to allow prayers to be said, and wailing to be performed. It was part of honoring the dead and the survivors. Even so, the corpse was not to be placed on the ground until it reached the cemetery. This would have been cause for extreme lamentation, as if saying there was no one willing to bear up the dead or their family. The Oral Law reads;

- “3:8 V A. They do not set the bier down in the street.
 B. so as not to give occasion for lamentation.
 C. And under no circumstances do they set down the bier of women in the street, on account of respect.
 D. Women on the intermediate days of a festival wail but do not clap their hands E. R. Ismael says, ‘Those who are near the bier clap their hands.’”
 (The Mishnah: A New Translation, Moed Qatan, The second Division: Appointed times, 3:8, Translated by Jacob Neusner, page 328).

After the dead are buried, the wailing and clapping are to cease. The survivors will mourn, but they do so with less noise and circumstance. The Orals Law states;

- “3:9 III C. Once the deceased has been buried, they do not wail or clap their hands.”
 (The Mishnah: A New Translation, Moed Qatan, The second Division: Appointed times, 3:9, Translated by Jacob Neusner, page 328).

This brings to mind the scripture by the psalmist that reads, “Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth.” (Psalms 46:10). Typically, the widow and other grieving persons would return home to the quite their homes. There, in the stillness of their prayers, they would come to know God. In the case of the widow in Nain, the procession stopped as Jesus approached. In the stillness of the moment was manifest the God of the Old Testament. A spirit must have filled their hearts as He approached. I wondered if the music stopped and wailing ended. I can imagine that all eyes were fixed upon the Master. They may not have known Jesus, but surely they felt of His majesty. I can imagine the silence as He did what He was called to do; save us from death.

As Jesus approached the corpse of the widow’s son, He would have looked upon one prepared for burial. It would have been wrapped in linens, and adorned with the best the widow could afford. Edersheim described the possible adornment that would seem to be required, even of the poorest soul. He wrote, “At one time the wasteful expenditure connected with funerals was so great as to involve in serious difficulties the poor, who would not be outdone by their neighbours. The folly extended not only to the funeral rites, the burning of spices at the grave, and the depositing of money and valuables in the tomb, but even to luxury in the wrappings of the dead body. At last a much-needed reform was introduced by Rabbi Gamaliel,” (which happened after Jesus) “who left directions that he was to be buried in simple linen garments. In recognition of this a cup is to this day emptied to his memory at funeral meals. His grandson limited even the number of grave clothes to one dress. The burial-dress is made of the most inexpensive linen, and bears the name of (Tachrichin) ‘wrappings,’ or else

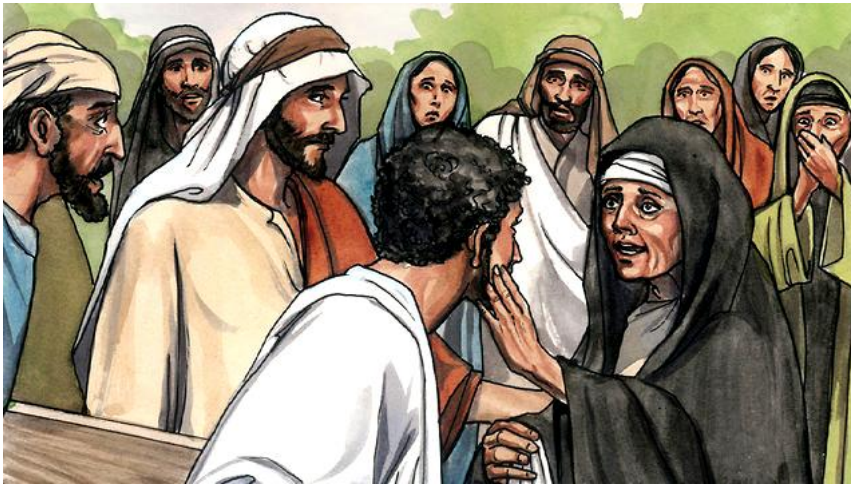


the 'travelling-dress.' At present it is always white, but formerly any other colour might be chosen, of which we have some curious instances. Thus one Rabbi would not be buried in white, lest he might seem like one glad, nor yet in black, so as not to appear to sorrow, but in red; while another ordered a white dress, to show that he was not ashamed of his works; and yet a third directed that he should have his shoes and stockings, and a stick, to be ready for the resurrection! As we know from the gospel, the body was wrapped in "linen clothes," and the face bound about with a napkin (John 11:44, 20:5, 7)." (Sketches of Jewish Social Life, Alfred Edersheim, pages 93-94).

22 - Young man – The word "Young man" is translated from the Greek word "νεανίσκος" or "neaniskos". It means a young man or a youth.

We are not given the age of the widow's son. He was not called a child, but rather a youth or a young man. The Jews did not consider a male to be a grown man until he reached the age of thirty. While he was in his twenties, he was still considered in his youth and definitely referred to as a young man. We may assume that he was under age thirty, and may have been a old enough to work and adequately provide for a family and his widow mother.

23 - Arise – The word "Arise" is translated from the Greek word "ἐγείρω" or "egeirō". It means to arouse or cause to rise. It means to arouse from sleep or to awake. In the case of this chapter, it means to recall the dead to life. "Literally, 'to you I say, Get up!'" (The Gospel according to Luke I-IX: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, page 659). Jesus was commanding, by priesthood authority, the spirit of the widow's son to reenter the physical body, and resume its earthly state. Elder McConkie wrote, "To raise the dead is to call back the spirit from the abode of the departed spirits so that mortal life again continues for the person so raised. Men, in this sphere of their unending existence, are mortal beings, meaning that body and spirit are temporarily united. The natural and the temporal death consists in the separation of the body and the spirit. That is, the life which is in the body departs, the body returns to the dust, and the spirit goes to a world of waiting spirits to await the day of resurrection." (The Doctrinal New Testament Commentary, Volume 1: The Gospels, Bruce R. McConkie, page 256). We learn from Elder McConkie that the widow's son was not resurrected, and that he was not blessed with an immortal body, but rather returned to the state of mortality.



Even so, the miracle in Nain was a definite foreshadowing of the death of another widow's son, namely Jesus Himself. He too would rise from the dead, but His rising would break the bands of mortal death. He would rise in glory and majesty. His rising would be one of exaltation and immortality. His rising would open the doors for all to follow. The widow's son in Nain would someday die again, but after Jesus' death he would have the blessing of a future resurrection. Elder McConkie taught, "And is not this first known instance of calling mortals from death to life by Jesus but a type and shadow – a heaven-sent similitude – of what this same Jesus shall do for all his people at an appointed time? Will he not say to all, 'Come forth from your graves; step out of your tombs; arise from your briers. Live again – this time in glorious immortality, never to suffer the pangs of death again? And will he not then deliver the righteous into the arms of their mothers and fathers and loved ones?'" (The Mortal Messiah: Volume 2, Collector's Edition, Bruce R. McConkie, page 124).

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Trying to understand Jesus' ability to raise the dead, and even more astonishing, the ability to raise the dead to a higher state is beyond our mortal understanding. We understand it only as far as the spirit reveals. To many, we receive only the confirmation of the spirit that it occurred. To others, the spirit reveals more, and to others the Lord calls to participate in the work. At times mortal men, called and authorized by God, have raised the dead as directed by heaven. No man performs such miracles of his own desire. "The living die and the dead live again – because He wills it. There was no importuning of God, nor was there need for such. Jesus did it. Jehovah was there. His words were 'I say unto thee Arise' He was claiming divinity, Messiahship, eternal godhood – and proving his claim (there was no blasphemy here!) by raising the dead!" (The Mortal Messiah: Volume 2, Collector's Edition, Bruce R. McConkie, page 124).

24 - dead – The word "dead" is translated from the Greek word "νεκρός" or "nekros". It means one that has breathed his last, lifeless, deceased, departed or dead. Death, as we understand it, is the temporary separation of our spirit from our mortal body. Those who lack understanding and faith in God's plan for His children often see death as a terminal condition. Many don't believe there is a spirit and see death as the end of their existence. To those, death is a state of extreme sorrow and sadness. The Jews lack the proper understanding of death in varying degrees. To most Jews, death was a time of great sadness. "From the time the death a wail is heard, until the burial takes place, relatives and friends continue their lamentation." (Manners and Customs in the Bible, Victor H. Matthews, page 189).

Without proper embalming, a dead body begins to decompose almost immediately. Therefore, "The burial of the dead in the East takes place soon after death, usually the same day. The people of these regions have a primitive idea that the spirit of the one who dies, hovers near the body for three days after death. Mourners think of this spirit as being able to hear the wailing calls of grief." (Manners and Customs in the Bible, Victor H. Matthews, page 191). Because of this tradition, tombs are visited and not fully sealed until three days have passed. To protect the family, and the town, the dead were traditionally taken to the grave soon after death. "In Syria the custom has prevailed of wrapping the dead. Usually the face is covered with a napkin, and then the hands and feet are bound round with linen cloth. The body is then put upon a bier, with a pole at each corner, and thus carried on the shoulders of men to the tomb for burial." (Manners and Customs in the Bible, Victor H. Matthews, page 191).

Another reason for a quick removal of a corpse is the fact that the Law specified any contact with it made the person ritually unclean. Additionally, any object that touched the corpse was also rendered ritually unclean. The Oral Law states;

"1:1 E. A man who touches a corpse is unclean with the uncleanness of seven [days], and a man who touches him is unclean with the uncleanness [that passes at] evening."
(The Mishnah: A New Translation, Ohalot, The Sixth Division: Purities, 1.1, Translated by Jacob Neusner, page 950).

"1:3 B. Utensils which touch the corpse, and a man [who touches] utensils, and utensils [which touch] man are unclean with the uncleanness of seven [days]."
(The Mishnah: A New Translation, Ohalot, The Sixth Division: Purities, 1.3, Translated by Jacob Neusner, page 950).

"15:10 A. He who touches the corpse and touches the utensils, [or] he who overshadows the corpse and touches the utensils – they are unclean."
(The Mishnah: A New Translation, Ohalot, The Sixth Division: Purities, 15:10, Translated by Jacob Neusner, page 976).

When someone died, the Jews found it customary to fast as part of their grieving and mourning. Matthews taught, **“In Bible times it was quite customary for the sorrowing ones to fast up to the time of burial. Then, following the funeral, they would be offered bread and wine as a comforting refreshment. Such was called a mourning feast, which had as its real purpose the comforting of the mourners.”** (Manners and Customs in the Bible, Victor H. Matthews, page 192). Death was a time where people sought comfort through prayer and fasting.

Once the spirit was believed to have left the body (an apostate teaching that the spirit hung out with the body for three days after death), the grave was sealed and the families went home. The cemeteries were considered unclean places, since they housed the dead. **“Today there are thousands of rock-cut tombs scattered over the land of Palestine, to bring to mind past decades. Such tombs were made by the wealthy. Not being able to afford these, the poorer folks buried their dead in graves. Some of these tombs had many chambers in them.”** (Manners and Customs in the Bible, Victor H. Matthews, page 192). Regardless of their prestige, graves were never to be built over, or be used for other purposes. To many of the Jews, death seemed to be a permanent condition. Jesus taught something different, and to the Jews in Nain they witnessed first hand the truthfulness of His doctrine. **“Where there was death, with all its decay and sorrow, there will be life, with all its growth and joy. This is the day when the Prince of life will smite the angel of death with the breath of his lips, and that which was cold and stiff and lifeless will rise in warmth and vigor and all the strength and beauty of youth.”** (The Mortal Messiah: Volume 2, Collector's Edition, Bruce R. McConkie, page 123).

25 - sat up – The word “sat” is translated from the Greek word “ἀνακαθίζω” or “anakathizō”. It means to raise one’s self and sit upright, to sit up, or erect. **“The word used for sitting up is the technical term for a patient sitting up in bed.”** (The Gospel of Luke, The Daily Study Bible Series - Revised Edition, William Barclay, page 86).

The people must have been astonished when the dead arose, but this is the power and majesty that is Jesus.

26 - began to speak – The word “speak” is translated from the Greek word “λαλέω” or “laleō”. It means to speak.

What the widow’s son spoke we do not know. I might imagine him testifying of the things and people he saw while in the world of the spirits. Maybe he praised God knowing that he was dead, but now lives. Moved by the spirit, the widow’s son may have testified of divine truths. Unfortunately, the words of the son are currently lost in history.

27 - delivered him – The word “delivered” is translated from the Greek word “δίδωμι” or “didōmi”. It means to give, to grant, or to bestow a gift. The Codex Sinaiticus translates the term “delivered him” as “gave him”. (Codex Sinaiticus: The H.T. Anderson New Testament, Translated by Henry Tompkins Anderson, Luke, Chapter 7, Verse 15, page 117).



Jesus delivered the widow’s son from death and delivered him to his mother. This too is a foreshadowing of things to come. Jesus’ role as Savior and Redeemer includes a deliverance from physical death to all who were born into mortality and a deliverance from spiritual death to all those who come unto Him. Jesus is called to deliver us from these deaths, and deliver us back to our Heavenly Parents. The raising of the widow’s son was a foreshadowing of fully overcoming death. **“A mortal person raised from the dead does not by that act gain immortality; rather, he becomes mortal a second time, must again die, and will finally be raised in immortality in the resurrection.”** (The Doctrinal New Testament Commentary, Volume 1: The Gospels, Bruce R. McConkie, page 124). The miracle in Nain is a sign of greater things to come.

Being delivered from something is to be spared its consequences. The atonement of Jesus delivers us from the consequences of sin, if we will but repent and come unto Jesus. As we repent, we begin to emulate the Savior. We subsequently have an overwhelming desire to deliver others from sorrow and grief. As President Eyring journeyed down this path, he received some choice advice. He was told, **“When you meet someone, treat them as if they were in serious trouble, and you will be right more than half the time.”** (Ensign, “In the Strength of the Lord”, Henry B. Eyring, May 2004, page 16). The truth is, we all need to be delivered. We deliver others by bringing them unto Jesus, because only He is capable of such deliverance.

28 - fear on all – The word “fear” is translated from the Greek word “φόβος” or “phobos”. It means fear, dread or terror. The Codex Sinaiticus translates the term “fear on all” as “fear seized them all”. (Codex Sinaiticus: The H.T. Anderson New Testament, Translated by Henry Tompkins Anderson, Luke, Chapter 7, Verse 16, page 117). Fitzmyer taught that it translates **“Literally ‘fear seized all’, referring to those mentioned in vv. 11-12. Luke often uses phobos, ‘fear’, to express the reaction of bystanders to a heavenly intervention or a manifestation of Jesus’ power. A cringing attitude of fear would be too strong an explanation of what is meant; hence the translation ‘deep awe’. Joined to the glorification, it is intended as a sort of Greek-chorus-like reaction to the miracle that has been wrought.”** (The Gospel according to Luke I-IX: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, page 659). Ogden and Skinner agree that **“the term ‘fear’, rather than meaning fright and trembling, means reverence and awe.”** (The Four Gospels - Verse by verse, D. Kelly Ogden and Andrew C. Skinner, page 230).

The power of God, once realized, is beyond our mortal comprehension. All accounts of mortal men experiencing divine power result in extreme reverence, amazement, and awe. The prophet Enoch was endowed with heavenly presence. **“And it came to pass when they heard him, no man laid hands on him; for fear came on all them that heard him; for he walked with God.”** (Moses 6:39). Such was the case in Nain so many centuries ago. The power of God was manifest. **“But on those who saw this miracle at Nain fell the fear of they felt Divine Presence, and over their souls swept the hymn of Divine praise: fear, because a great Prophet was risen up among them; praise, because God had visited His people.”** (The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, Volume 1, Alfred Edersheim, page 560).

The power of God was real. Those present must have been overwhelmed with emotion. It is possible that some felt true fear over their own sins and lack of worthiness. They may have wondered how they could stand in the presence of Jesus. They may have even wonder who He was. Farrar wrote, **“No wonder that a great fear fell upon all. They might**

have thought of Elijah and the widow of Sarepta; of Elisha and the lady of the not far distant Shunem. They too, the greatest of the Prophets, had restored to lonely women their dead only sons.” (The Story of a Beautiful Life: Farrar’s Life of Christ, The New 20th Century Edition, 1900, Canon Farrar, D.D., F.R.S., page 188). This Jesus who had come among them must be a great prophet or even one of the great Old Testament prophets returning to them. The Jews did believe that Elijah would one day return. Could this be Him? Of course not, but these kinds of thoughts may have raced through the thoughts of those present that day in Nain.

- 29 - **they glorified God** – The word “glorified” is translated from the Greek word “δοξάζω” or “doxazō”. It means to think, suppose, or be of an opinion. It is also used to mean to praise, extol, magnify, celebrate, to honor, do honor to, or hold in honor. Finally, it can mean to make glorious, adorn with luster, or clothe with splendor. We can only imagine what this looked like. Did they sing songs of praise? Did they pray words of thanks to the God of Heaven? Did they express their gratitude and thanks to Jesus Himself? These facts are left out of our recorded scriptures.
- 30 - **a great prophet** – The word “great” is translated from the Greek word “μέγας” or “megas”. It means great; in mass, weight, measure, stature or age. The Jews had various prophets classified as “great”. They were Moses, Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah and so forth. This statement within the accounting of the raising of the widow’s son suggests that the miracle may have prompted people to note similarities between the ministries of the Savior and two ancient prophets. Centuries earlier, Elijah had restored to life the son of a widow at Zarephath (see 1 Kings 17:17–24), and Elisha had raised the son of a widow in the village of Shunem, just three miles (five kilometers) northwest of Nain (see 2 Kings 4:17–22, 32–37). Elder McConkie recounts, “Various prophets have raised the dead, among them Elijah (1 Kings 17:17-24), Elisha (2 Kings 4:18-37), Peter (Acts 9:36-43), Paul (Acts 20:7-12), and Nephi, the disciple (3 Nephi 7:18-20). But none ever acted with such awesome majesty as the Lord Jesus who, stopping the funeral cortege, said with simplicity: ‘Young man, I say unto thee, Arise.’” (The Doctrinal New Testament Commentary, Volume 1: The Gospels, Bruce R. McConkie, page 124).

To be compared to the great prophets was a high honor. So great was Elisha that he brought miracles even after his death. In one account, Elisha’s dead body was able to bring down the powers of heaven. The Old Testament records, “**And it came to pass, as they were burying a man, that, behold, they spied a band of men; and they cast the man into the sepulchre of Elisha: and when the man was let down, and touched the bones of Elisha, he revived, and stood up on his feet.**” (2nd Kings 13:21). Jesus is seen, at the very least, as one of the great prophets. Those with spiritual eyes would see that Jesus is greater even than these. All the ancient prophets worshipped Him and received their power and authority at His hands. Even so, “**Jesus is seen as ‘a great prophet’ in the service of God’s people. His ministry extends not only to the poor, the imprisoned, the blind, and the downtrodden, but even to those in the grip of death.**” (The Gospel according to Luke I-IX: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, page 660).



- 31 - **risen up among us** – The term “risen up” is translated from the Greek word “ἐγειρω” or “egeirō”. It means to arouse or cause to rise. It means to arouse from sleep or to awake. In the case of this chapter, it means to recall the dead to life. The Jews had gone centuries without a prophet. This was due to their wickedness and apostate condition. To have a prophet raised among them again would represent a return to Israel’s days of glory. It meant a return to a time when God’s power dwelt among them.
- 32 - **That God** – The word “God” is translated from the Greek word “θεός” or “theos”. It is used as a general name for deity and divinity.

“**Can there be any doubt that mother and son henceforth owned, loved, and trusted Him as the true Messiah?**” (The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, Volume 1, Alfred Edersheim, page 558). The great Jehovah had come among them, and blessed them with a miracle beyond their understanding. We would hope that their testimony was strengthened and they followed Him throughout their days. Unfortunately, we know that miracles don’t establish faith. Miracle only strength existing faith. We must assume that the widow and her son had the faith to be healed and consequently received great strength and confirmation of that faith with which Jesus’ performed a miracle for them. Many who have lacked faith throughout history have been blessed with miracles that had no effect on them. The Book of Mormon tells of Laman and Lemuel who saw angels and experienced divine power and miracles, and yet they never developed enough faith to repent and follow God. They were fortunate to partake in such manifestations because of the faith of their father and brothers. We assume the widow and her son to be faithful followers.
- 33 - **visited his people** – The word “visited” is translated from the Greek word “ἐπισκέπτομαι” or “episkeptomai”. It means to look upon or after, to inspect, or examine with the eyes. The Lord may visit His people in many ways. Such visitation may be a manifestation of the Holy Ghost within our hearts, it may be the presence of an authorized representative speaking on His behalf, it may be an angel carrying out divine instruction or it may be the physical appearance of God Himself. In the case of Moses and the children of Israel, God visited the Israelites in Egypt by calling and sending Moses. We read, “**Go, and gather the elders of Israel together, and say unto them, The Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, appeared unto me, saying, I have surely visited you, and seen that which is done to you in Egypt:**” (Exodus 3:16). In the latter days, the Lord asked His saints to build a temple, that there would be a place for Him to come and visit His people. The scriptures record, “**For behold, I have accepted this house, and my name shall be here; and I will manifest myself to my people in mercy in this house.**” (Doctrine and Covenants 110:7). We must believe that where there is true faith, we will find the visitation of God. “**This reaction of the people now echoes a motif sounded in the infancy narrative. God’s compassionate and gracious visitation of his people is seen in the manifestation of Jesus’ miraculous power.**” (The Gospel according to Luke I-IX: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, page 660).
- 34 - **rumor** – The word “rumor” is translated from the Greek word “λόγος” or “logos”. It means speech, word, decree, or utterance. The Codex Sinaiticus translates the term “this rumour of him went forth” as “this saying concerning him went forth”. (Codex Sinaiticus: The H.T. Anderson New Testament, Translated by Henry Tompkins Anderson, Luke, Chapter 7, Verse 17, page 117). Rumor has such a negative connotation in our society that it hardly makes for a proper translation here. The fact was, people bore testimony about the miracle they experienced. So great was the accounting, and miraculous the feat, that the story quickly carried from house to house and city to city.
- 35 - **went forth** – The term “went forth” is translated from the Greek word “ἐξέρχομαι” or “exerchomai”. It means to go or come forth of. This carries the idea that the accounting of Jesus’ miracle in Nain was not contained in the little village, but was told throughout the land and beyond. It truly went forth.

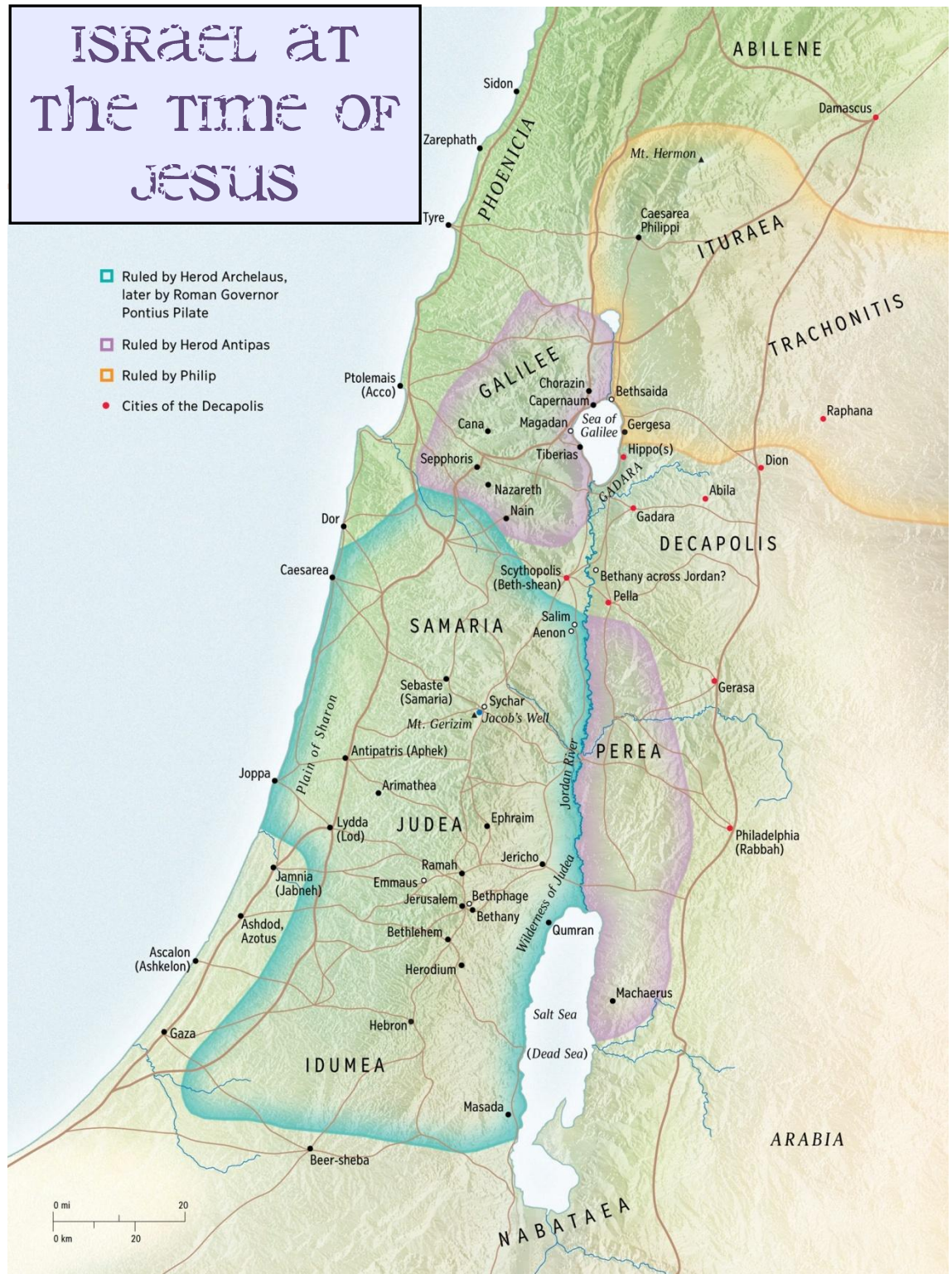
36 - **throughout all Judæa** – The word “throughout” is translated from the Greek word “έν” or “en”. It means in, by, with, etc.

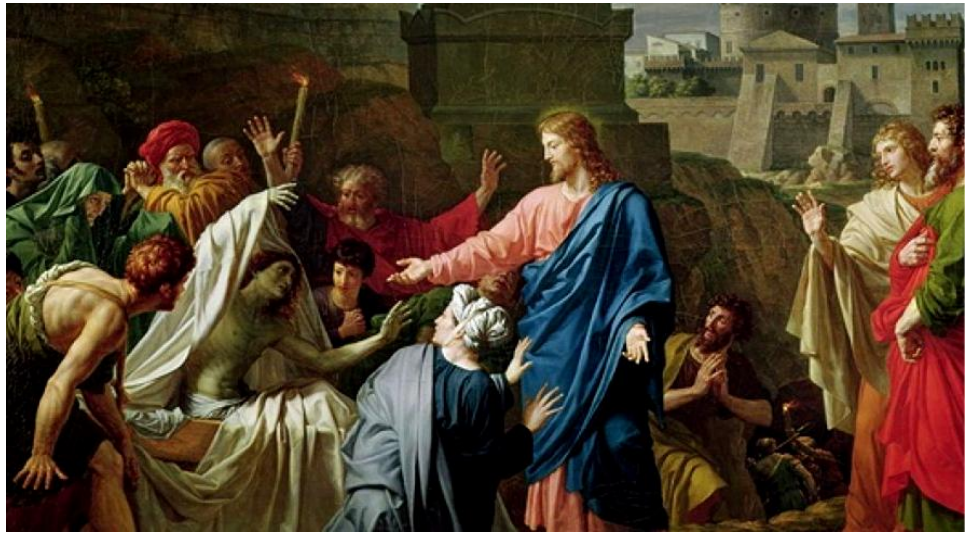
The miracle in Nain took place in the Roman Province of Galilee in its southern border. Edersheim wrote, “And further and wider spread the wave – over Judæa, and beyond it, until it washed, and broke in faint murmur against the prison-walls, within which the Baptist awaited his martyrdom.” (The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, Volume 1, Alfred Edersheim, page 560).

37 - **throughout all the region round about**– The term “the region round about” is translated from the Greek word “περιχωρος” or “perichōros”. It means lying round about, or neighboring. “This would then give a broader meaning to perichoros, ‘countryside,’ going beyond the bounds of the land of the Jews. Jesus’ reputation is in any case widespread.” (The Gospel according to Luke I-IX: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, page 660).

We would assume that the story of Jesus’ miracle in Nain spread through Samaria, the province of Judea, Perea, Decapolis, Phoenicia, and present day Syria. Perhaps it traveled to distant lands. It may have been discussed in Egypt or even Rome.

We may under value the miracle in Nain because we are so familiar with it. We speak little of it today, but the truth is it is still a miracle of tremendous magnitude and importance. It carries with it important foreshadowing and vital doctrines pertinent to the faithful disciple.





The miracle at nain

