

# The Three Raisings of the Dead.

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**Mark 5: 22-43; Luke 7: 11-16; John 11.**

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Three times only, as far as we know, did the Lord Jesus, while upon earth, raise the dead to life; viz., the daughter of Jairus, the son of the widow of Nain, and Lazarus. Each of these cases has its special characteristics and instruction. The daughter of Jairus had but just expired when the Lord entered the chamber, and turned the weeping of the night into the joy of the morning. The son of the widow of Nain was being carried to his grave when the procession of death was arrested by the Prince of Life; and Lazarus was in his tomb, had been dead four days, ere, at the bidding of Him who was the Resurrection and the Life, he came forth again into the light of day. Thus did Christ vindicate His power as the Son to quicken whom He would, for "the hour," said He, "is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God and they that hear shall live." (John 5: 25.)

There was a divine reason, too, for the selection of these cases. Had the Lord raised only the child of the Jewish ruler of the synagogue, infidelity, in its shameless presumption, might have questioned the reality of the death; and so also in the instance of the son of the widow. The case of Lazarus, therefore, was of another kind — one whom death had claimed, and retained for four days, so that even his sister exclaimed, "Lord, by this time he stinketh." But he who stood by the grave had "life in Himself" (John 5: 27), and was about to die, and rise again, that He might be Lord both of the dead and living. (Rom. 14: 9.) Death therefore had no power, nay, *could not exist*, in His presence; and He, in His condescension and grace, has proved it for us by meeting and overcoming death in every stage of decay and corruption. He will prove it again, in a still more wondrous and victorious way, at a later time, when "*all* that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation" (judgment). (John 5: 29.)

The motives also, it may be remarked, of the Lord's action in these respective instances were different; that is to say, His motives as revealed in the several scriptures. He went to the house of Jairus at the earnest request of the sorrowing father. "He fell at His feet. and besought Him greatly, saying, My little daughter lieth at the point of death: [I pray thee,] come and lay thy hands on her, that she may be healed; and she shall live." (Mark 5: 23.) It was faith, so to speak, laying hold of the heart of Christ, and constraining Him to answer its appeal. It was the heart of Christ delighting to meet the need of one who in all confidence was casting his burden of sorrow upon Him. What consolation! yea, what encouragement to every poor burdened soul — burdened with whatever grief or anguish — to come to Christ and evoke the sympathy and

succour of His unfailing and inexhaustible grace and love! Truly all such shall find that He has a heart for every woe.

But there was no appeal from the widow of Nain. Whatever her sorrows, exercises and desolation, they are all unrevealed, save in her circumstances. They are left to be gathered from that one pathetic word, "The only son of his mother, and she was a widow." But this one word is enough. It is a living picture of unequalled sorrow and heart-breaking grief. Divine sustainments there may have been; but if we speak after the manner of men, it is a picture of dark and hopeless desolation. Knowing therefore something of the heart of Christ, we do not wonder that it says, "When the Lord saw her, He had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not" (Luke 5: 13.) We have said that this poor widow made no appeal to Christ. Nay, her hopeless sorrow, her total bereavement, constituted her appeal. The Lord saw her, estimated as no other could the depth of her need, and thus, moved by His own heart, He went to her relief. We do not sufficiently understand this. All can comprehend that the Lord should listen to the cries of His people, but how many of us live in the power of the blessed remembrance of the fact, that our own griefs and sorrows find an answering response in His heart? "In all their affliction He was afflicted." (Isa.43: 9.) "We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are — without sin" (sin apart). (Heb. 4: 15.) If a parent bends over his suffering child with yearning pity, "like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him." (Psalm 103: 13.) Some who read these lines may be lying on beds of pain and affliction; others, bereaved, may be weeping over their dead; and others again may be mourning over those who are dead in sins. Surely, then, it will be a comfort to all such to remember, that He who, when He saw the widow of Nain following the bier of her only son, had compassion on her, has the same heart for their griefs; that He stands by them with infinite tenderness, waiting both to succour and to console.

"His heart is filled with tenderness,

His very name is Love."

The case of Lazarus differs from both. There was not the faith in the heart of Martha, or even in Mary, that characterized Jairus. They had faith; but it only embraced the power of Christ to raise up from sickness. Both alike said, "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." (John 11: 21-32.) Nor did the Lord, as in the case of the widow of Nain, act from His own heart. On the other hand, He refused the appeal to His affections. The message of the sisters was, "Lord, behold, he whom Thou lovest is sick." (John 11: 3.) No doubt they concluded that this constituted the most effectual entreaty they could make, believing that they were laying hold of those strong cords of love that bound Him to Lazarus. They made no mistake as to the fact of His affection; for the Spirit of God carefully adds: "Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus." (v. 5.) But still the Lord refused the motive presented. It says, "When He had heard therefore that he was sick, He abode two days still in the same place where He was." Wherefore this delay? It was not, as we have seen, that He had no heart for Lazarus, nor that His heart would not prompt Him to speed to the succour of the one He had honoured with His love, but it was because the sickness of Lazarus was "not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby." (v. 4.)

Every word He spake, and every act He performed, was for the glory of God; for it was His meat to do His Father's will, and to finish His work. But it has pleased God to unfold to us the different ways in which the Lord acted for that glory, and thus to display the manifold perfections, and the varied moral glories, of His beloved Son. Here therefore we see Him losing sight, as it were, even of those He loved, that it might be known that He was actuated in this wondrous exhibition of resurrection power solely by the glory of God. Hence it was that He abode two days still in the place where He was, after the cry of these sorrowing hearts had reached Him; for though He was the eternal Son, the Word that was with God, and was God, the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us. And in coming down to this scene, He came not to do His own will, but the will of Him that sent Him. (John 6: 38.) He would not therefore act at the promptings of His own heart, because He had taken the place of obedience, and thus waited for the Father's word before He responded to the appeal. Cold must be the heart that is not moved by this outshining of His moral glory, this combination of infinite greatness with the lowliest grace and humility. It is, in fact, the revelation of what He was.

What needed lessons are thereby conveyed! Human affection would have prompted to instant succour; but allowing death to come in first, brought, in raising Lazarus, as nothing else could do, not only glory to God, but also to Christ Himself; for if this sickness was for the glory of God, it was also "that the Son of God should be glorified thereby." How then it should still our hearts in the presence of God when He seems to delay to answer our cries! Urgent need or pressing danger is generally importunate and impatient. "Has not God said," we repeat at such times, "that He will hear our prayers?" How then is it that we have cried in vain? Ah, no! we never cry to Him in vain; "for the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and His ears are open unto their prayers." (1 Peter 3: 12.) If the Lord wait, He waits only for His own glory, and our fuller blessing.

Martha and Mary would naturally conclude, that if Lazarus died the case was hopeless; for they had not counted upon resurrection power. In like manner we often limit God, and thus it is that He leaves us, like Paul, to have "the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead." (2 Cor. 1: 9.) We should challenge our hearts as to how far we have thus learned God as the God of resurrection. Martha and Mary needed and learned the lesson, and, on the evening of the day on which their brother had been raised up from death, would thank God that He had permitted him to die ere the Lord came upon the scene. What was thus for the glory of God, and glorified the Son of God, secured at the same time for His people unspeakable blessings.

These three different motives for the Lord's action may in another way be connected. If we begin from man's side, as presented in Jairus, we see that it is faith which lays hold and secures the intervention of His power on our behalf. If we look at His side in relation to ourselves, we learn that it is His heart which moves His arm of power in answer to our cries. And then if we enquire what is the object He has before Himself in all the exercise of His grace and power, we find that it is solely the glory of God. Thus, ere He came to earth, in the past eternity, foreseeing man's condition and the failure of everything to satisfy God's claims, He presented Himself, saying, "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God;" and before He returned to the Father, but taking a place, in spirit, beyond the cross, He said, "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work thou gavest me to do." (John 17: 4.)

A few words may be added upon the dispensational teachings of these three cases, leaving for the present the more general instruction. All symbolise Israel in different ways. But it must be remembered, as another has said, "that, while dispensationally Israel has great importance as the centre of God's government of this world, morally Israel was just man where all the ways and dealings of God had been carried out so as to bring to light what he was. The Gentile was man left to himself as regards God's special ways, and so unrevealed. Christ was a light "to reveal the Gentiles (εις ἀποκάλυψιν ἐθνῶν)." The daughter of Jairus sets forth the condition of Israel on the Lord's return. Christ was on His way to heal the nation, but while on His way the poor woman, who had been afflicted with an issue of blood for twelve years (Mark 5: 25), and had come to the end of all resources, whether in herself or in others, in vainly seeking for cure, comes in the energy of faith to Christ, and at once obtains relief. This is what has happened. The nation of Israel refused their Messiah, but faith, even while He was on earth, proved His ability to save, and still proves it now that He is on high. The present dispensation, therefore, like the woman with the issue of blood, comes between His mission to Israel and His actual restoration of the nation to life. The son of the widow of Nain also speaks of Israel's moral condition. Remarkably enough, too, the incident comes after a striking exhibition of faith; faith in Christ as having the power of God, and such faith as the Lord had not found in Israel. (Luke 7: 9.) But in this case it was a Gentile, and not one of the chosen people. He was a Roman centurion. Luke, however, presents Christ as the Son of man, revealing God in grace outside of all dispensations, although, as a matter of fact, He was in the midst of Israel. Hence the prominence given to the faith of the centurion, who was an alien from the commonwealth of Israel, and a stranger from the covenant of promise. It is in contrast with this that the son of the widow of Nain is introduced. Morally Israel was dead, and, as such, beyond hope, save for the intervention in grace of resurrection power — a power unknown to the ordinances of the law. Israel then must be the object of sovereign grace and mercy equally with the Gentile. (Compare Romans 11: 30-32.)

Lazarus typifies, in like manner, the state of Israel, as indeed the state of man as displayed in Israel. In John 8, the Jews reject the word of Christ; in John 9, His work; and in John 10, He, as the Good Shepherd, calls His sheep out of the Jewish fold. This excites the enmity of the Jews, and they took up stones again to stone Him. (John 10: 31.) They had done this before. (John 8: 59.) Not only, therefore, had they rejected Him, but they had also displayed the murderous enmity of their hearts against Him as the Son of God. (John 10: 33-36.) It was consequently all over with them as a nation, and in the next chapter their state in death, as the fruit of their sin, is displayed in Lazarus. They had sought to stone Christ as the Son of God; God testifies to Him in this character in the resurrection of Lazarus. "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, *that the Son of God might be glorified thereby*" Moreover, if Israel is dead, the question is, Can these dry bones live? If so, it can only be by the sovereign exercise of resurrection power in grace. And this is what will take place; for "thus saith the Lord God; Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel." (Ezekiel 37: 12.) "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been His counsellor? Or who hath first given to Him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen." (Rom. 11: 33-36.) E. D.