

LUKE 7:12-18

- 11 Soon afterward, Jesus went to a town called Nain, and his disciples and a large crowd went along with him.
- 12 Now as He approached the gate of the city, a dead man was being carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow; and a sizeable crowd from the city was with her.
- 13 When the Lord saw her, He felt compassion for her, and said to her, "Do not weep."
- 14 And He came up and touched the coffin; and the bearers came to a halt. And He said, "Young man, I say to you, arise!"
- 15 The dead man sat up and began to speak. And Jesus gave him back to his mother.
- 16 Fear gripped them all, and they began glorifying God, saying, "*A great prophet has arisen among us!*" and, "*God has visited His people!*"
- 17 This report concerning Him went out all over Judea and in all the surrounding district.
- 18 The disciples of John reported to him about all these things.

The Background and Context.

When you read about Jesus works and teaching you must always remember that the people who witnessed these miracles and heard His teaching were well versed in the Old Testament. While the parallels between the Old Testament and the ministry of Jesus are often missed by a modern Christian audience the Jewish audience in Galilee was primed to look for them at every opportunity.

Why is this so?

It is because of a Messianic prophecy found **Deut 18:15-19**

- 15 The LORD your God will raise up for you *a prophet like me* from among your own brothers. You must listen to him.
- 16 For this is what you asked of the LORD your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly when you said, "Let us not hear the voice of the LORD our God nor see this great fire anymore, or we will die."
- 17 The LORD said to me: "What they say is good.
- 18 I will raise up for them *a prophet like you* from among their brothers; I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him.
- 19 If anyone does not listen to my words that the prophet speaks in my name, I myself will call him to account.

This is also picked up in Mark's Gospel

Mark 5:15 Others said, "He is Elijah." And still others claimed, "He is a prophet, like one of the prophets of long ago."

In the Jewish mind the greatest prophet of all was Moses and so we have a detailed description of Jesus teaching from a mountainside (Torah), feeding multitudes with bread (manna) and healing the sick (the snake of the stick).

What are the parallels with the Old Testament?

The location of the village of Nain is at the foot of the Hill of Moreh a few miles to the southeast of Jesus' hometown, Nazareth. On either side of the hill are two villages Nain and Shunem.

2 Kings 4: 8-37 The story of the prophet Elisha and the son of the Shunammite woman. The parallels are unmistakable.

With these reference points in mind let's look at the account in Luke's Gospel.

12-13

The funeral procession has already gone through the town and is on the way to the place of burial, which was customarily outside the town (v. 12). The deceased was the "only son" (*monogenes*) of his mother. As a widow she was in trouble. She was in the process of burying her retirement policy. Who would look after her in her old age? Without a man in her family, would probably become destitute, unable in that society to earn a living.

The compassion of the Lord Jesus, and of Luke as well, goes out to the woman. She is a widow (*chera*) who, Our Lord's words are deeply human: "Don't cry" (*me klaie*, v. 13), but only he could say that and at the same time remove the cause of the tears. Otherwise such words would be hollow, even though well meant.

Hebrews 4:15-16

15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are--yet was without sin.

16 Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

14-15 Jesus risked ritual defilement by touching the "coffin" (v. 14). One can only imagine the thoughts of the pallbearers as they stopped. Jesus did what would seem useless--he spoke to a dead person. On the young man's return to life, Jesus "gave him back to his mother" (v. 15), words similar to those in **1 Kings 17:23** regarding Elijah and the widow.

23 *Elijah picked up the child and carried him down from the room into the house.
He gave him to his mother and said, "Look, your son is alive!"*

16-17 Once more Luke records the response of the people, noting that they "praised" (*edokszon*, lit., "glorified") God (v. 16; cf. **5:26**; **18:43**; **23:47**). The similarities we have noted with Elisha would naturally cause the people to use the word "prophet" to describe Jesus. They also echo an OT expression: "God has come to help his people" (e.g., **Ruth 1:6**).

On a literary level there is an interesting detail in this passage which unless you know Hebrew you might miss. Hendiadys literally means "one by two," and it is a figure of speech in which two terms connected by "and" are used to qualify each other and express a single concept. This occurs commonly in Hebrew, as for example in **Genesis 12:1**: "From your land and from your birthplace," which means "from your native land."

Unfortunately the NIV obscures this by adding "they said" which separates the statements as though some said this and others said that.

16 They were all filled with awe and praised God. "A great prophet has appeared among us," *they said*. "God has come to help his people." (NIV)

16 Fear gripped them all, and they began glorifying God, saying, "A great prophet has arisen among us!" *and*, "God has visited His people!"

Once again Luke emphasizes the spread of the "news" (*logos*) about Jesus (v. 17).

The different Messianic ideas of Jesus and John the Baptist (7:18-35)

In **Luke 3:16-17**, John had described the one who would come baptizing with the Holy Spirit and with fire. John has judgment in mind. What he associates with the Messiah is the final day of Judgement. Then Jesus was baptized, receiving divine approval and anointing for his work. In **4:16-21** Jesus assumed the task prophesied in **Isaiah 61:1-2**. Now, after a cycle of teachings and healings, the validity of his messianic calling is once more under consideration; and John the Baptist is the reference point. John's question is not so much a crisis of faith, as is usually suggested, as a challenge to Jesus to get on with the programme. Jesus, on the other hand is being true to the Messianic vision He identified from Isaiah 61.