

Jesus Raises the Son of Nain's Widow

Let's do a **full breakdown** of Luke 7:11–17, the story of **Jesus raising the widow's son at Nain**, with all your preferred elements: historical, cultural, narrative, theological, Greek terms, Old Testament connection (especially to Elijah), and reflection.



Full Breakdown: Luke 7:11–17 – Jesus Raises the Widow's Son at Nain

● LUKE 7:11–17 (*This event is unique to Luke's Gospel*)

Category	Details
📍 Location	Nain , a small village near Mount Tabor in Galilee—only mentioned here in Scripture. About 6 miles southeast of Nazareth .
📅 Context	Happens right after the healing of the centurion's servant (Luke 7:1–10). Jesus' reputation is growing rapidly.
👤 People Involved	Jesus, His disciples, a large crowd, a widow, and her only son (dead), plus a large mourning crowd from Nain.
📚 OT Parallel	The raising of the widow's son by Elijah in 1 Kings 17:17–24—also took place near this region!
⚰️ Object of Interest	A coffin ("soros" in Greek), being carried out of the city—signaling the final stage of burial . Likely a wooden plank or open bier, but could have been covered.



Text Summary

● LUKE 7:11–17 (NASB)

- Jesus goes to **Nain**, His disciples and a large crowd follow.
- At the **city gate**, they meet a funeral procession: a **widow's only son** has died.
- Moved by **compassion**, Jesus says, "*Do not weep.*"
- He **touches the coffin**—an act that would make Him ritually unclean under Mosaic law (Num. 19:11).
- He says: "*Young man, I say to you, arise!*"
- The dead man **sits up and begins to speak**, and Jesus gives him back to his mother.
- **Fear and awe** seize the people: "*A great prophet has arisen among us!*" and "*God has visited His people!*"



Theological and Narrative Significance

Aspect	Meaning
❤️ Compassion of Jesus	One of the clearest displays of Jesus' emotion in the Gospels. He doesn't wait to be asked—He initiates the miracle purely from compassion.
✚ Foreshadowing Resurrection	This is the first resurrection miracle in Luke's Gospel—prefiguring Jesus' own resurrection , and also that of Jairus' daughter and Lazarus .
⚖️ Social & Emotional Impact	A widow with no son was completely vulnerable—no protector, no inheritance, possibly destitute. Jesus restores not just her son but her future .
👉 Jesus Touching the Coffin	Would render Him unclean (Num 19:11), but instead life flows out from Him , not defilement. Shows Jesus' authority over death and the Law.
🔄 Echo of Elijah	The crowd's response directly recalls Elijah : " <i>A great prophet has arisen among us.</i> " This miracle mirrors 1 Kings 17 —a deliberate literary connection.

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Old Testament Parallel: Elijah Raises a Widow's Son

1 Kings 17:17–24

- Elijah stays with a **widow in Zarephath** during a famine.
- Her **son dies**. She blames Elijah.
- Elijah **prays fervently** and stretches himself out on the boy **three times**.
- The boy is revived, and Elijah **gives him to his mother**—almost identical to Jesus' act.

Comparison	Elijah (1 Kings 17)	Jesus (Luke 7)
Location	Zarephath (near Sidon)	Nain (near Nazareth)
Mother	Widow	Widow
Son	Dies suddenly	Already dead
Prophet's Action	Prays, stretches out 3x	Speaks directly: "Arise!"
Result	Son revived and returned to mother	Son raised and returned to mother
Aftermath	Woman confesses Elijah is from God	Crowd says: "God has visited His people"

+ Both events occurred in Gentile-border regions, enhancing the prophetic symbolism.

Key Greek Word Study

Greek Word	English	Notes
ἐσπλαγχνίσθη (esplagchnisthē)	"He had compassion"	Deep, gut-level empathy; used of Jesus often (e.g., Mk 6:34, Lk 15:20)
νεανίσκε (neaniske)	"Young man"	A term used for youth or adolescent males—often under 30
ἀνάστηθι (anastēthi)	"Arise!"	Command form of <i>anistēmi</i> , meaning to rise or be resurrected—used in resurrection accounts
σορός (soros)	"Coffin"	Often an open bier or plank; may or may not be closed, depending on local custom



Was the Coffin Closed?

While Luke uses the word **soros**, which can mean **coffin or bier**, in 1st-century Jewish burials, this likely referred to an **open wooden plank** or stretcher. The body would typically be:

- **Anointed**, wrapped, but visible;
- Carried **out of the city**, in line with Jewish burial customs;
- Then placed in a **rock-cut tomb** or **ossuary**.

💡 But if Luke intends to show a connection to Elijah, a **closed coffin** may emphasize Jesus' **unquestionable authority**—He doesn't need to see the body or perform ritual acts. His **word alone** reverses death.



Possible Symbolism:

- A **closed container** = *finality*, no human hope.
- Jesus breaks through that **barrier**, even sight unseen.

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Messianic Implications

Aspect	Fulfillment
God visiting His people	Echoes Malachi 3:1 , “ <i>The Lord... will suddenly come to His temple</i> ”
Raising the dead	Implied in Isaiah 35:5–6 , associated with the Messianic age: “the dead will be raised” (also see Luke 4:18–19)
Prophet like Elijah	Points to Deut. 18:15 : “ <i>God will raise up a prophet like me</i> ”—Jesus is greater than Elijah , doing by command what Elijah did through prayer



Reflection & Application

- **Jesus sees the hidden suffering**—this widow never speaks, yet He acts.
- **He touches what is unclean** to bring life—Jesus **enters our brokenness**.
- **He speaks to the dead**. His **word is powerful enough to raise the lifeless**.
- **He restores more than life**; He restores **hope, dignity, and future**.
- **This story is your story**—when you think all is lost, Jesus can say: “*Arise.*”



Resurrection Miracles of Jesus – Comparison Chart

Aspect	Widow's Son at Nain (Luke 7:11–17)	Jairus' Daughter (Matt. 9:18–26; Mark 5:21–43; Luke 8:40–56)	Lazarus (John 11:1–44)
Person Raised	Young man, only son of a widow	12-year-old daughter of Jairus	Adult man, Jesus' close friend
Who Asked Jesus?	No one — Jesus initiated out of compassion	Jairus, synagogue leader	Mary and Martha, Lazarus's sisters
Location	Nain (small Galilean village)	Capernaum	Bethany (near Jerusalem)
Time of Death	Just died – funeral procession	Just died – moments before Jesus arrives	Dead 4 days – body in tomb
Method Used	Jesus touches the coffin and commands, “ <i>Young man, arise!</i> ”	Jesus takes her hand and says, “ <i>Talitha koum</i> ”	Jesus calls out , “ <i>Lazarus, come forth!</i> ”
Crowd Reaction	Fear and praise: “ <i>God has visited His people!</i> ”	Amazement; Jesus tells them to remain silent	Many believe; Pharisees begin to plot Jesus' death
Old Testament Echo	Elijah raising the widow's son (1 Kings 17)	Elisha raising the Shunammite's son (2 Kings 4)	Ezekiel's valley of dry bones (Ezek. 37)
Symbolic Meaning	Jesus' unsolicited compassion gives life	Jesus rewards faith and raises even when delayed	Jesus shows authority over grave-decay and foreshadows His own resurrection
Escalation of Power	Raises from recent death	Raises from just-dead condition	Raises from entrenched death with decay

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Key Theological Themes Across the Three

Theme	Description
Jesus' Authority	He raises the dead by word alone , sometimes even without touch. Each miracle escalates in difficulty (dead for minutes → hours → days).
Compassionate Savior	Jesus responds to deep human grief : a widow, a father, grieving sisters. Each miracle begins with Jesus' empathy .
Messianic Identity	The crowd often responds with language echoing Old Testament prophets. These events confirm Jesus as greater than Elijah/Elisha .
Foreshadowing	These point to Jesus' own resurrection , and to the final resurrection He will bring (John 5:28–29).
Life from Death	Jesus doesn't just reverse death; He restores relationships , social standing, hope, and joy.



Escalation of Death & Power Displayed

Case	Time Since Death	Circumstance	Demonstrated Power
Widow's Son	Funeral Procession (soon after death)	Public mourning	Power over recent death
Jairus' Daughter	Inside home, just died	Private, limited witnesses	Power over death with intimacy
Lazarus	Dead 4 days, tomb sealed	Decay had begun	Power over entrenched death – foreshadowing own resurrection



Symbolism in Each

Miracle	Symbolic Focus	Spiritual Meaning
Nain	<i>Compassion without being asked</i>	Jesus brings unexpected grace
Jairus' Daughter	<i>Faith and touch</i>	Jesus responds to faith, even delayed
Lazarus	<i>Resurrection and the glory of God</i>	Jesus is Resurrection and Life (John 11:25)



Elijah & Elisha Parallels

OT Prophet	OT Story	NT Parallel
Elijah	Raised the widow's son (1 Kings 17)	Luke 7 – Widow of Nain
Elisha	Raised the Shunammite's son (2 Kings 4)	Luke 8 / Mark 5 – Jairus' daughter
Both	Stretched over the child, prayed multiple times	Jesus only speaks once , showing greater authority