

A HARMONY OF THE GOSPELS
XLVII. Christ's Demonstration Of His Divine Authority
(Luke 7:11-17)

I. Introduction

- A. Peter A. Bien claimed that Jesus was “a human being . . . not a unique Son of God,” and Unitarian minister F. Forrester Church held “that Jesus was . . . divine precisely to the extent that we are divine” (Josh Simon, “Who Was Jesus?”, Life, December 1994, p. 71). Obviously, they did not believe that Jesus was the Creator God.
- B. Christ's raising of widow's son at Nain in Galilee in Luke 7:11-17 reveals Jesus's demonstration of His great divine authority. We view the event recorded in that passage for our insight, application and edification:

II. Christ's Demonstration Of His Divine Authority, Luke 7:11-17.

- A. After healing the centurion's servant in Capernaum on the northwestern shore of the Sea of Galilee, Jesus headed about 25 miles southwest to the town of Nain in Galilee where He and a large crowd of followers met a large funeral procession that was proceeding out from Nain and headed for the town's cemetery (Luke 7:1, 11-12a; Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 222; Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, Map 12: The Ministry of Jesus).
- B. The deceased was the only son of a widow, so she “was now completely alone and seemingly unprotected, without a close male relative” in a patristic society (Ibid., Bible Know. Com., N. T.).
- C. Since the funeral procession occurred in Galilee, the women who were related to the dead led the procession because the woman Eve brought death into the world, so the Galilean Hebrews accordingly thought it fitting for women to lead a funeral procession (Alfred Edersheim, Sketches of Jewish Social Life, 1974, p. 170). Thus, Jesus readily encountered the widow in the lead of the procession when He met it exiting the town.
- D. Upon seeing her and recognizing both her great emotional loss and her anxiety over her own welfare in view of the loss of her only son, Jesus felt compassion for the grieving widow, and He gently told her, “Do not go on weeping,” Luke 7:13 (J. Dwight Pentecost, The Words and Works of Jesus Christ, 1991, p. 192, citing J. W. Shepard, The Christ of the Gospels, 1946, p. 198-199).
- E. Jesus then walked further back in the procession to the “open wicker-coffin” and touched it, what caused the pallbearers immediately to stop, Luke 7:14a (Ibid.). The pallbearers were shocked by Jesus' action, for it was “ceremonial pollution of the worst type to touch the dead, and by Rabbinism fraught with the most terrible consequences.” However, “Jesus dreaded not the imagined defilement and brushed away all such useless traditions. A superstitious awe fell upon the great crowd of people” who witnessed this event, Ibid.
- F. Christ then addressed the body of the dead son, saying, “Young man, I say to you, Arise!” (Luke 7:14b)
- G. Dramatically, he who was dead sat up and began to speak, and Jesus delivered him to his mother, Luke 7:15.
- H. A great fear came on everyone present, and they glorified God, saying that a great prophet had risen among them, and that God had visited His people, Luke 7:16. This profound claim is explained in view of the setting:
 - 1. Elijah had raised the son of the widow of Zarephath, a suburb of Sidon north of Galilee (1 Kings 17:9-24), and Elisha had raised the son of the woman from ancient Shunem located just two miles southwest of Nain in Galilee (2 Kings 4:8-37; The Carta Bible Atlas, 2002, Map 232). Justifiably, the people of Galilee who witnessed this miracle thus saw its parallel with the resurrections in the ministries of Elijah and Elisha.
 - 2. However, in the resurrections by these two prophets, both of them had stretched their bodies out on the bodies of the dead boys to raise them, but Jesus merely touched the coffin in which lay the body and told the dead son to rise, and the dead son instantly sat up and began to speak unlike the absence of any such activity recorded in the resurrections by Elijah and Elisha. (cf. 1 Kings 17:18-22; 2 Kings 4:32-37)
 - 3. Though the region of Galilee was identified with the ministries of Elijah and Elisha, and though Jesus like them raised the dead son of the widow of Nain, the power and authority of Christ's miracle involved was far greater than those of these past prophets, eliciting the glowing comments by those who witnessed it!
- I. This glowing report about Jesus spread out into all “Judaea,” the Greek noun being *'Ioudaia*, what in Luke 7:17a refers to the entire land of Israel (Arndt & Gingrich, A Grk.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T., 1967, p. 379). This news also spread to the outlying Gentile region around the land of Israel (Luke 7:17b).

Lesson: *In view of Israel's historical context, Christ's raising of the son of the widow of Nain identified Him with godly Elijah and Elisha, but with far superior power and authority to the ministries of those former prophets as seen in Christ's merely touching the coffin and speaking to the dead to cause him instantly to sit up and to speak.*

Application: *May we trust Christ's divine authority over death and the dead, and so hope in our own resurrection.*