

Shumanites Son

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[0 : 0 0] Now, as most of you may perhaps be aware, we're looking in recent weeks at what we're calling resurrection case studies. And we're going to look at the seven instances recorded in Scripture of people being raised to life, excluding the resurrection of our Lord.

Obviously, that's a case by itself. People being raised to life through the agency of others. And there are these seven instances of it. And in January, we looked at the first biblical case of raising the dead.

That was the widow of Zarephath's son by Elijah. And a four-month ago, we looked at the last such case in Scripture, which was the raising of Eutychus in Troas by the ministry of Paul.

And skipping back then to the Old Testament now tonight, we now look at this evening the only other Old Testament case of resurrection, or of raising from the dead.

And that is the Shunammite's son by Elisha. Now, Elisha appears to have been based at Mount Carmel. If we look at what we read there at verse 25, so she went and came unto the man of God to Mount Carmel.

[1 : 1 3] That's where he seems to have been based, which was, of course, the scene of Elijah's great victory over the prophets of Baal back in 1 Kings. Although he often, Elisha often seems to have been present at the king's capital in Samaria, which means he must have been often travelling between the two.

Now, if you have a map at the back of your Bible, or if it's a big enough scale, you'll see that Mount Carmel is pretty much near where modern Hefa is in Israel. And from there, there's a range.

Carmel is a kind of range. It's not a single peak. And based on that Mount Carmel, if you're going to go to where Samaria was, it would be almost like an upside down back to front seven.

You'd travel sort of like that, and then like that. Or the other way round from where you're sitting, so it'd be like that. So you'd be travelling sort of east and south, and then west and south.

You wouldn't go as the crow flies, because there's mountains and all manner of difficulties in the way. People travelled by the path of least resistance. So Elisha would, for example, coming down from the slopes of Mount Carmel, he would almost certainly follow the Kishon River up into the valley of Jezreel, and therefore Shunim would just be a mile or two off his route, even if that much, and then he would head south towards Samaria, assuming that this is why he was passing by the area so often.

[2 : 3 8] So he's travelling between Mount Carmel and Samaria, or perhaps he just happens to come to Shunim the first time, where this woman of considerable wealth and substance persuaded him to come and take his meals with them.

Now when it says a great woman, that's what it means. It's somebody with wealth, of influence, of property, and so on. It's no reference to physical appearance or size. But what's significant here, before we get on to any theological points, is a couple of social details here, which I think are, they may be no more than interesting in passing, but it's perhaps worth noting.

Not least for what is not said, as much as for what is. First of all, you'll notice that although she's not a widow or anything like that, it is she who is described as the great woman.

It's not that she happens to be married to a great and powerful and wealthy man. It's not like Abigail, that David eventually married, who was a beautiful and virtuous woman, but she didn't have any wealth or property of her own.

But Nabal, to whom she was married, although a very churlish and unpleasant character, was a man of considerable wealth and property. But nowhere does the scriptural narrative suggest that Abigail herself was a woman of wealth or property.

[4 : 00] But here, the emphasis is quite clear. It is the woman of Shunel, who is the woman of great substance and power and influence, rather than any focus upon her husband.

Now, that doesn't mean that he was, of course, impoverished. It may mean simply that he had money of his own and perhaps she had money of her own. Maybe it was a dowry. Maybe it was something by which her family had granted her wealth and possessions.

Maybe, if we can be brutal about it, he married her for her money, perhaps. Maybe she is, and we'll come to this also in a little while, But she may be a second wife in the sense of her husband having been widowed.

Because if you notice what it says in the narrative, it says that, you know, when Gehazi says, Verily she hath no child, and her husband is old.

It doesn't say, oh, they're both old. It's not like Zacharias and Elizabeth, where they're both wealth-stricken in years. Or even Abraham and Sarah, where they were both, you know, really ancient. Abraham was 100, Sarah was 90.

[5 : 06] You know, it doesn't say they are both old. It says she has no child and her husband is old. And that might imply that having been widowed already, My first wife then, he's now married a younger second wife, who has property and wealth of her own.

There also doesn't seem to be any great anxiety on the part of the husband to have an heir. You know, the suggestion again might be that, you know, he's not worried about whether or not there's sons or heirs or whatever, because, you know, his inheritance is quite secure.

And that would imply the fact that he doesn't appear to be concerned about it. The fact that it says she doesn't have a son. It doesn't say they don't have a child.

They don't have any children, but she doesn't have any. Think of Elkanah, for example, at the beginning of 1 Samuel, chapter 1, where there's the two wives. Okay, they're both living at the same time.

Peninnah, who has plenty of children, and Burhanah, who at that stage has no children. But, of course, Elkanah himself, he's got prosperity. He's got heirs. He's quite happy.

[6 : 15] He's quite content. But it's Burhanah who feels the shame of not having any children of her own. Now, we don't read that this Shunammite woman is, you know, pleading with the Lord at the tabernacle or whatever, that if only she could have a son.

She seems reasonably content with her lot. She seems accepting of the fact, maybe knows that she's married an older husband who's already got plenty of heirs, plenty of kids, and plenty of family.

So he doesn't need that side of things. She doesn't have any children. It's just these little things which are not said. And the way that it is said, she is a woman of substance, wealth, property.

She has no child, but it doesn't say about her son. It doesn't say they. He is old, but it doesn't say she is old. You know, all these little things which might imply a certain social context here that the narrative doesn't go into detail about.

Of course, it doesn't need to. That's not really the point. But just to sort of get the background here, the only reason for such a woman is that to desire the presence and company of this rough and ready prophet, you know, of Jehovah would be because she herself valued such company.

[7 : 34] She served and loved the Lord. Indeed, again, if we're just digging a little below the surface, verse 23, you know, he said, wherefore wilt thou go to him today? It is neither new moon nor Sabbath.

And she said, it shall be well. That kind of implies, doesn't it, that if it had been the Sabbath or it had been the new moon, then he just said, oh yeah, of course, you're off to see the prophet, right? Fair enough, right?

Because that's what you do. That would imply that this was perhaps her habit or at least a semi-regular occurrence. It doesn't imply that necessarily she went alone.

There's almost the implication. If she's going on a regular basis, presumably to Mount Carmel to see Elisha, then that would imply that at times of the Sabbath or the new moon, that there would be a number of people who would go and would congregate at the prophet's feet, as it were, for teaching or worship or whatever, the clear implication of verse 23 is that had it been the new moon, had it been the Sabbath, had it been some kind of religious festival, he would have been perfectly excellent.

Yeah, that's what my wife does when it comes to these times. She goes off to see the prophet. That's just what she chooses to do. Fine. His question is not, what on earth are you going to see him for? His question is, why are you going today?

[8 : 53] It's not the Sabbath. It's not the new moon. She says, it's okay, it'll be fine. But you see the implication there of why that question, of how that question is asked.

So just under the surface, there might be the suggestion that perhaps on a regular basis, those who were devout in that part of the country made a point of going to meet with Elisha, going to receive teaching from him, to be led in worship, whatever the case may be on Mount Carmel.

If she was known to Elisha from such gatherings, that might be another further reason of his readiness just to turn aside into the house and to allow himself to be fed there and to stay there because he knows her to be a devout and faithful woman.

Now, he doesn't go from house to house, he doesn't stay with lots of different people. Jesus, of course, from the New Testament says that his disciples, if they're taken in by somebody faithful and diligent and devout, they should stay there.

Luke chapter 10, verse 5, into whatsoever house ye enter, first say, peace be to this house. And if the son of peace be there, your peace shall rest upon it. If not, it shall turn to you again.

[10 : 07] And in the same house remain, eating and drinking such things as they give. For the labourer is worthy of his hire. Go not from house to house.

Now, we might be inclined to think in terms of, well, you share the burden around them, but you don't always get a dump on the same people and become a burden to them. But Jesus' instructions to his apostles is quite clear.

Where somebody takes them in and is willing to receive them as messengers of Christ, stay there. Because you know that they are bringing you in for the right reasons.

They love your message. They love you and receive you because they love me, Jesus would be saying. And they would love him because they love his father. So, if they're receiving you with nothing to recommend you, then you know their motives are absolutely clear.

And that's what you like. Stay with those whose hearts you know. That seems to be the implication of what Jesus teaches his apostles. But at any rate, Elisha is doing pretty much what Jesus tells the apostles to do.

[11 : 11] Whenever he's visiting Shunam, he stays there for his meals. Whenever he's visiting Shunam, he lodges there in the chamber the woman has prepared for. Secondly, as to the chamber itself, the nature of large and grander houses in the Middle East in those days would be in the context of a house within a compound.

It would have a high protective wall round about a central courtyard area. Probably there would be outbuildings built against the inside of the wall, maybe servants' quarters or storage or whatever the case may be.

But they would be round the inside of the courtyard and the gate itself wouldn't just be sort of a gate opening directly into the courtyard. It would probably be built with a sort of building and kind of tunnel over it like a sort of gatehouse.

Not unlike, say, a medieval castle where you've got, you know, your port calluses and gates and so on. Well, it wouldn't have those. But it's not unlikely there would be an outer gate and an inner gate if it was a great house.

And there would be small chambers on the ground floor sides probably for the gatekeeper to live in where he would stay and people would be admitted through these gates. But obviously, if it's built in that way, then there would be some kind of accommodation above the gate.

[12 : 27] Now, such small rooms up there would be used either for storage, again, or for perhaps if visitors came who might just be kind of travellers, not invited guests of the family.

If they were invited guests of the family, they'd be in the main house with the family. But just perhaps visitors, travellers staying there, they could just sort of doss, as it were, in that room.

But the suggestion is that the room is not being built specially, but rather prepared, make ready a little chamber in verse 10. You know, on the wall.

And the fact that it mentions, you know, for example, verse 10, on the wall and set for him a table, a bed, a stool. And again, verse 21, she went up and laid him on the bed of the man of God.

And again, at verse 30, where it says, you know, that he went, the mother of the child said to the Lord that he arose and followed her and then he went up. Again, verse 35, he returned and walked in the house to and fro, went up and stretched himself upon him.

[13 : 34] It implies it's an upstairs room. Now, upstairs room on the wall almost certainly means over the gate in that sense. It's not unlike what in a larger scale city context where, if you remember, when David receives the news about Absalom's death and we read 2 Samuel, chapter 18, verse 33, the king was much moved and went up to the chamber over the gate and wept.

And as he went, thus he said, O my son, Absalom, my son, my son, Absalom, would God I had died for thee. O Absalom, my son, my son. It would be a comparatively isolated room.

So there would be privacy. You couldn't get there easily, you know, just passing by. Nobody's going to be passing by the door looking in or knocking as they go past. You've got to want to get up to that room.

So that makes it ideal for somebody who values perhaps privacy or study or time alone with the Lord, the man of God. It would be ideal for him.

It's the place to which David withdrew in his misery, the equivalent place on the city wall. This is an individual house on a grand scale but it's a house rather than a city wall but it's the same kind of plan.

[14:55] So this is the context. This is the area, the sort of room that is being prepared for Elisha here. So we go on to the actual substance of it itself and we see in verse 13 where Gehazi says, you know, where he says, would you be spoken for to the king implies Elisha's influence at court or to the captain of the host.

Again, why would the general of the army be of help to them? It might just mean have you got trouble with neighbours or have you got, you know, something you need soldiers protection for or it might mean do you have, does your husband have a grown up son who might want the commission in the army or something like that?

No, for some reason speaking to the captain of the host might be a benefit to them but I dwell among my own people. We don't have ambitions to go to court, we don't have ambitions to be at the royal palace or whatever and all.

So, what can be done for her? She hath no child and her husband is old. Again, draw your attention, she, not he, not me, she has no child and her husband is old.

He said, about this season according to the time of life I shall embrace her son. She said, nay my Lord, the man of God do not lie unto thine handmaid. In other words, don't get my hopes up if this isn't real.

[16:12] You know, that hope raised and given and then cruelly taken away is far more cruel than never to raise those hopes at all in the first place.

And I would suggest to you that God does not do this. God does not artificially raise hopes only to dash them.

God does not give a little bit of hope, a little bit of encouragement and then smash it away again and then say, ha ha, look what I have for you. God is not vindictive. He is not capricious or spiteful.

He is a God of love, a God of mercy. He may withhold encouragement or strength from us at times when we may be longing for just a drop of water to slake the burning thirst of our sorrows and our suffering but it's withheld.

But when he gives hope, when he gives encouragement, he follows through on it. He is not one that says, okay, I'll give you a little but you know, you can ask all you like.

[17:20] No, I'm not going to give it to you. I'm not going to be kind to you. I'm not going to encourage you. God, remember what he says in Isaiah 45, verse 19. I have not spoken in secret in the dark place of the earth.

I said not unto the seed of Jacob, seek ye me in vain. I, the Lord, speak righteousness. I declare things that are right. If I make a promise, I follow through.

I didn't say, seek me in vain. If you seek me, you'll find me. If you ask me, I will give. If you desire something on me, if it's for your good and for your blessing, I will give it freely.

God does not say, seek ye me in vain. In 1 Corinthians 15, verse 10, Paul says, the grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain, but I labored more abundantly than they all.

God didn't give his gift to Paul just for nothing. It was in order to be followed through on to be used. And at the end of that chapter, he says, therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.

[18:28] For as much as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord. God does not do anything in vain. He does not give just in order to take away.

You know, sometimes you might see somebody teasing a dog and I will give you a ball and somebody taking it away and then giving it and then taking it away and just sort of provoking it in that way. God is not like that.

God does not set out to provoke and just to torment. He desires to give goods and wondrous gifts. Sometimes He may withhold His blessings for that time.

But He doesn't desire to torment. Philippians chapter 1 verse 6 of course, He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.

God is in the business of keeping His word, fulfilling His promises, following through on what He does. He does not say seek me in vain. But, as far as the raising of the dead is concerned, and that's what we're looking at of course tonight and have been in previous weeks and shall be in subsequent weeks, in every case of raising the dead, it sounds like stating the obvious, but, there must first have been a bereavement.

[19 : 47] If the dead are going to be raised, then first of all they must be dead. And in every case where somebody is dead and lamented and there's broken hearted loved ones, they would far rather they'd never died in the first place.

They would far rather they hadn't had that illness of the dead. They hadn't died and passed away. They would far rather not to have to bother the Lord if only this hadn't happened.

You know, it's a Mary and Martha of course cried to Jesus. And they were women of faith, remember? John 11 verse 21, and Martha said to Jesus, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.

But I know that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee. You see, this woman of faith, Martha, and likewise May 8 verse 32, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.

But they believed, or at least Martha believed, whatever Jesus chose to do, God would grant it. And there is something of that similar faith here in this Tsunami woman.

[20 : 55] When she is bereaved of her son, then we do not find her, oh, wailing and keying and sending for the borders and so on.

Her reaction is a reaction of determined faith. It is reasonable also, again, it's not stated explicitly in the narrative, but it's reasonable to suppose that this child, so dear to his parents, the son of his father's old age, certainly the only son of his mother, it's reasonable to suppose it would also be dear to Alicia.

That every time he came and visited, and remember, if the child is old enough to go out into the fields with his father, he must be at the very least a toddler. He must be, you know, an infant, a young child, but not a baby anymore.

So several years have passed. And with each time that Alicia turns in, he would ask after the child and see how it's going. Is he going from a wee baby to a bigger baby, and then beginning to toddle, and then getting a wee bit older again?

He would see it with delight. That's what inevitably delights, in the progress, in the growth of little children who gladden the hearts of all who see them.

[22 : 09] But remember that to his parents this child will be beloved, but to Alicia as well. This is the child of his prayers, this is the child of his petition, it is the one for whom he said to the Lord, you know, said on her behalf to the Lord, asking for this child, you will embrace his son about this time next year.

So he is in a sense involved in the life of this child, so it's really inconceivable that this little boy would not have been dear also to Alicia.

What has he suffered from here? Is it some kind of sunstroke, perhaps if it's hardest time there might be intense heat or perhaps cold at night, we don't know, but anyway it's his head that affects him, such a fever or whatever that takes over him that in his young body he complains of the pain in his head, he sits on his mother's lap until the middle of the day and that's where he dies, the fever takes him.

He sat on his mother's knees until noon and then he died. And how does she react? She lays him up in the man of God's room, goes up to the little chamber, shut the door and went out.

Called to her husband, send me I pray to you one of the young men and one of the asses that I may run to the man of God and come again. She doesn't say I'm going off somewhere else, I'm going into town, I'm going to do some shopping, I'm going off to Jerusalem.

[23 : 35] No, she's heading to the man of God. She's quite open about it. But she is determined not only to keep the death a secret, but she must, as far as anyone is concerned, seek that help and seek it now.

As far as all the land will know, or if all the country doesn't know, certainly all the devout will know about the widow of Zarephath's son. People do not get raised from the dead every day, even in the Old Testament or the New Testament.

It's a rarity. It's such an unusual thing that when it happens, people are going to talk about it. And if it was talked about in the coasts of Tyre and Zion and Zarephath and so on, that word would have filtered down into Israel itself.

And certainly those who were the devout followers of the Lord, Jehovah, who waited upon the ministry of Elisha, they would have known this man is the successor of Elijah.

Who raised the widow of Zarephath's son. She might know that Elisha had asked that a double portion of Elijah's spirit would rest upon him and that he had received it because he saw Elijah going up to heaven in the fiery chariot.

[24 : 51] So she would have reason to believe, to hope, to trust that if Elijah could do it, Elisha also could do it under God. such confidence had she of God's goodness that she was very ready to believe that he who so soon took away what he had given might soon restore what he had now taken away.

That God was able to raise the child again from death. Such was her faith. She believed. She's a woman of great faith.

You know, like Abraham. Abraham in Hebrews 11, we read of course, by faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac. And he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, that in Isaac shall thy seed be called.

Accounting that God was able to raise him up even from the dead. From whence also he received him in a figure. Now, of course, we know that Isaac didn't, in the end, get put to death.

But Abraham was ready to do it. And Abraham must have in his heart already have reckoned, well, I've lost him. I have to do the sacrifice. I have to take my son's life.

[26 : 08] That's the commandment of God. And the angel, of course, stopped him in mid-flow. But he didn't know that was going to happen. But what he did trust was that even if he was required to slay his son Isaac and offer him up for a burnt offering, God was able to raise him back again from the dead.

That is what he was trusting in. In fact, the Lord prevented the death before it took place. But Abraham's faith was such that he was ready to do it.

And in this same chapter in Hebrews 11, we read in verse 35, women received their dead raised to life again. Now, bearing in mind the letter to the Hebrews is referencing the old testament scriptures.

There's only the two cases in the old testament. There's the widow of Zarephath's son raised by Elijah under God, of course. And there is the Shunammite's son that we're looking at this evening, raised by Elisha under God.

Women received their dead raised to life again. This is what she is trusting in. She has the kind of faith that Abraham has that although her son is dead, she believes in a God who can raise the dead.

[27 : 20] And she knows it has happened at least the once. If it can happen before, why not do it now? She had such confidence of God's goodness that she was very ready to believe that he who so soon took away what he had given might restore again what he had taken away.

She believed that he had given her this faith. He was not, and it worked it in her heart, he wasn't going to squash that faith, he wasn't going to crush that faith, he was going to vindicate it, not frustrate it.

And so she comes seeking the man of God and she does it right away. And she does it with urgency. And on coming to Elisha, she's ready to think herself, perhaps having been mocked by him, you know, having received mercy and having it snatched away, but laying hold upon him, she will not let him go.

She senses that if there's going to be any help, it's only through him. Think again about Jacob wrestling with the angel at the Jabbok River, Genesis 32, verse 24.

Jacob was left alone and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day. And he said, let me go for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go except thou bless me.

[28 : 41] He knew this was an angel of God. He knew there was only going to be a blessing if he held on to him until he got it. She's not letting go of Elisha. And how her faith is with the physical person of Elisha, our faith must be with the spiritual presence of the Lord.

Hold fast on to the Lord. Do not let him go. If we can say it reverently, give him no peace until we receive what we in desperation are asking for from him.

She has hope. Romans 5, verse 5 tells us, and hope maketh not ashamed because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given to us.

Now the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of Christ, it's the same Spirit that was given to Elijah and to Elisha that anointed them, that filled them with power. the same God, the same Holy Ghost, the same Spirit.

He wasn't shed in abundance upon the Old Testament Church in the same way that he was upon the New Testament Church of Pentecost, but it's the same God and it's the same Spirit and it's the same power because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given to us.

[30 : 00] And that hope maketh not ashamed. So Elisha, having initially sent Gehazi off with his staff, we're not quite sure, commentators even don't seem to be quite sure what to make of this.

Some have suggested that this was a practice amongst the occult and necromancers, those who engaged with the dead supposedly, that they would sort of put all kind of spells and incantations of their staff and then the staff had to be of a particular dimensions, particular size and length and then that was kind of imbued with this magic power and whether Elisha, knowing that this was a false who the people practiced, wanted to go and demonstrate that such, even with the power of God, was not going to work.

There was no power in a staff. There was no power in a piece of wood. That may be the case. Others have suggested that perhaps Elisha was just a little bit too conceited for his own good.

where this is concerned. We know that his behavior is not exactly Christ-like in other instances. The instances of the little children and the she-bears spring to mind.

But, however, he sends Gehazi with the staff but nothing happens. Now, that is likewise though a kind of spiritual lesson for us as well.

[31 : 29] Because in and of itself, just as there's no power in the staff, in and of itself there's no power in anything that a mere servant can do. Nor in anything that they can lay upon or before the afflicted or the needy.

The commentator Matthew Henry puts it this way. And I'm quoting now. In the raising of dead souls to spiritual life, ministers can do no more by their own power than Gehazi here could.

They lay the word like the prophet's staff before their faces. But there is neither voice nor hearing till Christ by his spirit comes himself.

The letter alone kills. It is the spirit that gives life. It is not prophesying upon dry bones that will put life into them. Breath must come from heaven and breathe upon those slain.

And that's referencing Ezekiel 37, obviously, here. But the point is that we can utilize the instruments God has given us. Gehazi can faithfully go and lay the staff on the child's face or whatever.

[32 : 40] And ministers of the gospel preachers can set the word before people and use these instruments they are given. But however diligently that may be performed, it will not in itself bring anyone to life.

It is only the spirit and power of Christ that can do that. It is the Holy Ghost, the spirit of Christ, which alone can bring life from the dead. Jesus said, I am the resurrection and the life.

He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believe us, thou art this. Now, that's the power that there is.

And that power is not in Elisha's staff. It's not in Gehazi. And whatever reason Elisha had for doing this, it is proved rightly or wrongly, intentionally or not, to be of no effect.

So when Elisha was coming to the house, behold, the child was dead. He laid upon his bed. So it's not a case of simply it's asleep. You know, when Gehazi said the child is not awake.

[33 : 47] He's being euphemistic. He's using kind language. But the child is dead. There's no doubt about it. And he went in and shut the door upon them twain and prayed unto the Lord.

And he went up and lay upon the child. Notice the verse 2, verse 33 and verse 34. First of all, he prayed unto the Lord. He knows that he, Elisha, has no power to bring life from the dead.

However much he may be anointed with the spirit of Elijah, however much he may have the power of the Holy Ghost in him, he, Elisha, has no power to raise the dead.

He is an instrument in the hand of God, but he is not power in itself. He prayed unto the Lord. And that is the right thing to do. But he doesn't leave it there.

Having prayed unto the Lord, and he went up and lay upon the child, and put his mouth upon his mouth, and his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands, and he stretched himself upon the child.

[34 : 48] And the flesh of the child waxed warm. And this tells us right away that the flesh of the child to begin with is stone cold, as a corpse, of course, becomes.

Quite quickly, it would seem. So this child, who will have been laid upon the bed for several hours now, dead, perhaps half a day. This may be evening time by now.

He is stone cold. He is dead cold. And so when Elisha stretches himself upon him, he is, apart from contracting all manner of ceremonial uncleanness, not being in contact with a dead body, never mind that.

He places his face upon his face, his eyes upon his eyes, his mouth upon his mouth. Now, even for a little child, even for one that you may love dearly or personally, that takes some doing to put yourself face-to-face touching a corpse.

Because it takes a strong stomach. It takes a bit of doing to do that. And even if the person is somebody you love, the corpse is not the person anymore.

[36 : 03] Remember, a few years back, of course, when my own father died, and he left me alone in the room where the body was laid out. He said, did I want to sit for a wee while? So I did.

And I looked at the body that had been my father. And it was stone cold, of course. It was crummy cold.

Outwardly, it was the same appearance. But clearly, it was not him. Everything that was him had gone, had departed. The corpse is not the person.

The life is no longer there. And the person that you have loved and interacted with has gone. And that outward shell is all that it is. And I found it remarkably unmoving, untouching, because I wasn't in the presence of my father for me.

It was just almost like a dummy, as it were. Almost like an academic. Nothing that was there. It wasn't him. And in one sense, it was comparatively easy to walk away, because much as I loved and had revealed, I had the memory of my father, that wasn't him.

[37 : 19] And it did nothing for me. So to lie face to face, even on a little child, it takes some doing. And Elisha's doing it.

He went up, lay upon the child, put his mouth upon his mouth, and his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands, and stretched himself upon the child, and the flesh of the child waxed warm.

Where does it get the heat from? Okay, you could say God is beginning to bring the child's spirit back into it. Yes. But the heat is coming out of Elisha. Remember that when Jesus was inadvertently healed the woman with the issue of blood, and he says, somebody touch me.

He says, everybody's jostling you, Lord. Everybody's touching you. How can you say, who touched me? And he says, somebody touch me, for I perceive that virtue has gone out of me. In other words, it had cost him.

He felt the power drain out of him and into somebody else. And Elisha would have felt the heat, the strength of his body, as it were, draining out of him and into this little child.

[38 : 27] Some have suggested, that says, when he returned and walked to and fro in the house, that he himself had become almost half frozen by the experience, that the warmth that's kind of transferred in it, and sort of walking up and down and sort of, you know, getting himself warm again sort of thing, and getting a bit of exercise to get the blood flowing again.

And then went back up again and laid on the child. And that's a perfectly reasonable understanding of the text. He walked to and fro in the house and went up and stretched himself upon him.

The child sneezed seven times, and the child opened his eyes. The child is alive again. But the point is that yes, he has prayed to the Lord. And yes, it is by the power of the Lord that the child is raised, but it has not been without cost to Elisha.

And that is perhaps as it should be. If it's important enough to bring a soul to life, a child to life, a person to life, it's important enough that it should actually cost us something.

And it is costing Elisha. Whatever uncleanness he may have contracted once the child's alive again, of course, that won't really matter. But it is costing. Physical strength, physical warmth, physical ability, it has cost him, although the Lord is the one who has given the life back again.

[39 : 51] There is cost to Elisha. And there is cost to anything that is worth achieving. What can be more important and more worthwhile to achieve than life from the dead?

Now, any achievement, whether it's in business, whether it's in athletics, whether it's in pursuing a course or exams at university, whatever, we need to be applied to that.

Other things will have to take second place. For a time we must be focused. We must be determined. We must be prepared to make sacrifices for whatever it is that we are pursuing.

And the world understands that. The athlete understands that. The businessman understands that. The world recognizes that the goal must be pursued. And other things must fall by the wayside, at least for a time.

Now, for one who is in Christ or who is seeking Christ, all else must take second place at the very least. The eyes upon the prize are the eyes upon the life that the Lord freely offers to give us in Christ.

[41 : 00] We must pray to the Lord as Elisha does, but we must be prepared to do whatever it takes to receive and accept of the life that he is ready to give.

And let's notice, he is ready to give. He's not trying to torment or tease or make fun of the Shunammite woman or Elisha or whatever. The Lord is ready to give. And we have to ask and seek and be prepared to be exercised in the pursuit and receiving of this great gift.

And there is no greater gift than life from the dead. I am the resurrection and the life, said the Lord. He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.

When she was coming, the woman came into her. He said, take up thy son. She went in and fell at his feet and bowed herself to the ground and took up her son and went out. There's a postscript to this a couple of chapters later on when Elisha knows there's going to be a famine in the land, chapter 8.

He tells the Shunammite and her family, again, the background music, the implication in the text is that by then she's widowed. He just talks about her and her family going into the land of the Philistines and then she comes back again seven years later, by which time the child must be well grown, and seeks to have her land back.

[42 : 21] And at the time Gehazi is busy telling the king about all the things Elisha has done and how he raised a child from the dead and after he restored a body to life, he said, Behold, the woman whose son he restored to life cried to the king for her house and for her land.

And Gehazi said, My lord, O king, this is the woman and this is her son whom Elisha restored to life. And when the king asked the woman, she told him. So the king appointed unto her a certain officer, saying, Restore all that was hers and all the fruits of the field since the day that she left the land, even until now.

Now this is a physical blessing. You could even say it's a political blessing that she receives years later. But you see, when God raises a soul to life, when Christ enters into a life, into a soul, when he raises one from the dead state of unbelief and indifference, it doesn't end there.

He doesn't just say, Right, that's you, sit up on your feet, I'm away, you can look after yourself now and lead you to it. God is involved in your life from that day for the rest of eternity.

God desires to be part of your life. He does not lead you to your own devices. He desires to be in and through and part of all that you are and all that you do.

[43 : 36] And yes, he has a mind and a care for that which is earthly and that which is political and that which is concerned with lands and survival and food and drink and houses and so on.

He knows our need of these things. Provided, of course, they do not become the be all and the end all. And this is what Jesus says in the Sermon on the Mount. Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of these things.

But what does he say? So forget about God and pursue these things. No, he says, Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. And all these things shall be added unto you.

But all these things will do you no good whatsoever if you do not first have life from the dead. It is the greatest gift of all.

It is the only gift that ultimately matters. And in Christ it is the only gift that ever lasts. And that is the thing the Lord freely offers. And that is the thing he is ready to be entreated and asked for if we will ask and receive at his hand.

[44 : 45] The life from the dead. That is what these resurrection case studies are all about. And they are not just isolated incidents from long ago. They have a spiritual message for us now which is applicable to us here and now if we will receive it.

Let us pray.