

What is the significance of Nain in the Bible?

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The city of Nain is mentioned only once in the Bible, but it was the site of one of Jesus' greatest miracles. Luke 7:11-17 details the account of Jesus traveling through the town of Nain. As He approached the city gate, a funeral procession was in progress. Jesus noticed the mother, a widow, weeping as the pallbearers carried the body of her only son to the burial grounds. Jesus had compassion on her and told her, "Don't cry." He then touched the frame they were carrying him on and spoke to the dead man: "Young man, I say to you, get up!" (Luke 7:14). Immediately, the widow's son sat up, alive. Because of this miracle, many glorified God, and news of Jesus spread quickly throughout that region.

Nain was a small village in Galilee, located approximately four miles from Mount Tabor and twenty-five miles southwest of Capernaum, Jesus' residence during His earthly ministry. The word Nain means "beauty" or "pleasantness." In Hebrew, Nain referred to green pastures or loveliness. Nain may have earned its name because its location high on a hill affords a breathtaking view across the plain to Carmel, over the hills of Nazareth, with the white peak of Mount Hermon glistening in the distance. A look to the south reveals the hills of Gilboa and the higher plains of Samaria. Nain was at one time fairly prosperous, but scholars believe that a sudden change in the economy brought an end to its prosperity and the town never recovered. It remains today a tiny settlement.

Nain was never enclosed by a wall, making it different from many towns in Bible times. So the gate referred to in Luke 7:12 may have been a pass between houses on the main road through the town. To the west of Nain was a great number of burial caves and tombs, probably the destination of the funeral party when Jesus intercepted them.

While Nain may have earned its name from the beautiful view of nature, Jesus enhanced its meaning by choosing that town to bring life from death. Nothing is more beautiful than the miracle of transformation that takes place in those who “were dead in [their] transgressions and sins” but are now made alive with Christ (Ephesians 2:1-5; John 10:10). Jesus’ miracle of resurrection in the town of Nain was for the benefit of those present, but it also serves as a reminder to us all of His promise that “whoever believes in [Jesus] shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16).