

The Case of Eutychus

Introduction.

Acts 20:7 On the first day of the week [Sunday], when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul {began} talking to them, intending to leave the next day, and he prolonged his message until midnight.

Acts 20:8 There were many lamps in the upper room where we were gathered together.

Acts 20:9 And there was a young man named Eutychus sitting on the window sill, sinking into a deep sleep [becoming sleepier and sleepier]; and as Paul kept on talking, he was overcome by sleep and fell down from the third floor and was picked up dead. The words "picked up dead" must not be overlooked to have a correct understanding of this passage.

Acts 20:10 But Paul went down and fell upon him, and after embracing him, he said [to the other believers], "Do not be troubled, for his life is in him." "for his life is in him" is the literal reading of the Greek text.

Acts 20:11 When he [Paul] had gone {back} up [to the third floor] and had broken the bread and eaten, he talked with them a long while until daybreak, and then left.

Acts 20:12 They took away the boy alive, and were greatly comforted.

- Some understand verse 12 to be an account of the boy or young man right after Paul restored his life to him. They brought the young man inside the house and were very comforted that he was alive.
- There is no mention that he was injured or needed any medical care.
- The New King James Version has "And they brought the young man in alive, and they were not a little comforted."
- ASV translates with nearly the same exact words, "And they brought the lad alive, and were not a little comforted." (Acts 20:12).
- The IEB reads, "Paul went down to Eutychus. He knelt down and hugged him. Paul said to the believers, 'Don't worry. He is alive now.'"
- Others understand this to mean **the young man was taken away alive to his home.**
 - 1) The NIV has "the people took the young man home alive and were greatly comforted. (Acts 20:12).
 - 2) The word "home" is not in the Greek text, but is an interpretation of NIV translators.
- The translation of the New King James Version and the American Standard Version are more literal than the NIV and they fit the context better.
- The Greek word "ago" [**ah** goh] means "to lead, bring, go." It is used here in the Greek Aorist tense and translated "brought."
- Miracles were not partial. Those healed or restored to life did not suffer after effects.

- The Greek for “young man” is “nianias” [ne ah **nee** ahs] can describe a youth up to forty years of age. It was used of Paul in Acts 7:58 who was certainly not a boy. A similar word “neotes” [neh **ah** tace] is used of Timothy who was not a boy - “Let no one despise your youth” - NKJV, ASV
- The Greek for “boy” in Acts 20:12 is “pais” that can refer to a young child [boy or girl], but can mean a “young man” as with “nianias” in verse 9.
- We cannot be certain of his exact age, but it is certain he was a younger man. Knowing his exact age is not essential to a correct understanding of this passage.

1. As Paul was concluding his third missionary campaign, he, along with eight traveling companions, came to Troas on the western coast of provincial Asia. (Acts 20:6).
2. Luke informs us that here they waited for seven days, finally meeting with the saints of that city on Sunday.
 - a. According to Jewish custom, the first day of the week began at sundown (when the Sabbath ended).
 - b. It lasted until the next sundown. Monday began at sundown Sunday.
3. It may have been early evening when the assembly convened to worship, hear the preaching of Paul and partake of the Lord’s supper.
 - a. “To break bread” is a Greek idiom usually referring to the Lord’s supper. (Acts 2:42).
 - b. Likely many Christians had to work during the day.
 - c. Slaves and others likely would not be free to attend the assembly until after sunset.
 - d. The first day of the week was not a special day to the Jews nor to Gentiles, but it is to Christians. (1 Cor. 16:1-2).
4. At some point the brethren ate the Lord’s supper, meditating upon the Savior’s death as Jesus had instructed. (Matt. 26:26-29).

Matt 26:26 While they were eating, Jesus took {some} bread, and after a blessing, He broke {it} and gave {it} to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is My body."

Matt 26:27 And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He gave {it} to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you;

Matt 26:28 for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins.

Matt 26:29 "But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom."

5. Also, Luke emphasizes Paul spoke to the brethren at length, prolonging his presentation all night.
 - a. Luke, who was in the company of Paul, vividly described the scene.
 - b. He says there were many “lights” [lamps] (lampas, an oil-burning vessel) where they met in a room that was on the third floor (Acts 20:8).
 - 1) The early church did not have buildings, but most often met in homes. (Rom. 16:5; 1 Cor. 16:9; Col. 4:15; Phile. 2).

- 2) The first church buildings, we know about, date back to the third century.
 - 3) In much of the world today Christian out of fear of persecution or because of a lack of finances still meet in homes.
- c. Some have questioned the relevance of this allusion to “lights” or “lamps.”
 - d. They suggest that it is much too trivial to be worthy of a document that professes to be inspired of God.
 - e. In response, however, we may observe:
 - 1) This may provide background information for what follows, i.e., the sleep of the youth or young man who fell and was killed (the fumes perhaps generating drowsiness).
 - 2) The fumes given off by these oil-burning lamps may help explain why Eutychus fell asleep.
 - 3) The late hour, fatigue may also explain his drowsiness.
 - 4) “Lamps”“ [lights] may serve to inoculate against the false charge, later cited by Tertullian (Apology c.8), that the early Christians met in darkness where they practiced strange rituals.
6. This young man named Eutychus was borne down with “deep sleep.”
 - a. Suddenly, he fell from the window to the ground below.
 - b. We do not know the distance he fell, but it was from “the third floor.”

Acts 20:9 And there was a young man named Eutychus sitting on the window sill, sinking into a deep sleep; and as Paul kept on talking, he was overcome by sleep and fell down from the third floor and was picked up dead.

- c. The Christians rushed down, doubtless to render assistance, **but the young man was dead.**
- d. The text clearly states the young man “was picked up dead.”
 - 1) He did not say nearly or almost “dead.” He was not merely dazed or knocked senseless.
 - 2) The fall from the third floor had killed the young man.
 - 3) The Greek “**nekros**” does not here mean spiritually dead, but that this young man was literally “dead.”
 - 4) There would not be a meaningful reason for Luke to record Paul hugging a young man who had merely had his breath knocked out of him and perhaps gained consciousness once Paul hugged him.
 - 5) Earlier Luke reported that Peter had raised Dorcas from the dead (Acts 9:40 and now he emphasized Paul raised Eutychus from the dead.
 - 6) Paul later wrote about himself, “Truly the signs of an apostle were accomplished among you.” (2 Cor. 12:12).

Death Of Eutychus

1. Some doubt or even deny Eutychus really died
2. Some appear to be not so sure as to the reported death of this young disciple.
 - a. The late William Barclay, who served as Professor of Divinity and Biblical Criticism at the University of Glasgow, says that when the crowd ran down the stairs, they “found the lad senseless,” but Paul calmed them, asserting that his life was “yet” in him (p. 163).
 - 1) It is important to mention that Luke did not use the word “senseless,” but the word “dead.”
 - 2) The word “yet” was not used by Luke.
 - 3) This word “yet” is supplied by some translators to hint that the young man did not actually die.
 - b. The late F.F. Bruce, of the University of Manchester, in one of his books, wrote the following:

“Luke remembered the occasion vividly because a young man of the community in Troas, Eutychus by name, was overcome by sleep while Paul was talking and fell down from the third-floor window-ledge where he had been sitting. He was knocked unconscious by the fall and his friends feared that he was dead, but Paul hurried downstairs and embraced him (perhaps applying some form of artificial respiration) and assured the others, to their great relief, that Eutychus was still alive” (p. 340).
 - d. Richard Oster is a Bible professor at Harding Graduate School in Memphis, Tennessee.
 - 1) In his work on the latter portion of the book of Acts, Oster describes the fall suffered by Eutychus, and then adds his editorial comment: “... if the youth was in fact dead.”
 - 2) He subsequently mentions that there was a delay caused by Eutychus’ “injury” (p. 108).
 - e. The comments above either explicitly state, or strongly imply, that Eutychus did not die at all; he merely was injured or knock senseless or both.

Doubts Rooted in Disbelief

1. It likely will remain a mystery as to why some writers feel so disposed to surgically remove certain miraculous elements from the New Testament, or at least to cast doubt on them.
2. The above quotations express the doubts some have about the death of Eutychus.
3. One should not be shocked by these doubts since more and more theologians attempt to explain away or outrightly deny most or all miracles by Jesus and His apostles.
4. **We must never seek to remove the miraculous from the Scriptures.**

Some Facts Not To Be Ignored

1. Luke, the physician, was with Paul on this occasion. (Col. 4:14).
- Col 4:14 Luke, the beloved physician, sends you his greetings, and {also} Demas.

2. Dr. Luke was on the scene and he unequivocally affirmed Eutychus was “dead.” (Acts. 20:9).
3. As an eye-witness Luke was in a better position to judge if the young man was dead than some commentators who lived many centuries after this event.

What Paul Really Said

1. Paul said on this occasion, “His life is in him.”
 - a. This statement was made after he went down from the third floor of the house and hugged the young man.
 - b. Paul made this statement because he had embraced [hugged] the young man restoring his life.
 - c. This was an instantaneous healing like the other healings and miracles in the book of Acts and in the rest of the Bible.
 - d. Paul, like all the apostles, had the power to heal and raise the dead. (2 Cor. 12:11-12).

2 Cor 12:11 I have become foolish; you yourselves compelled me. Actually I should have been commended by you, for in no respect was I inferior to the most eminent apostles, even though I am a nobody.

2 Cor 12:12 The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with all perseverance, by signs and wonders and miracles.

2. He did not say: “His life is still in him,” or “His life is yet in him.”
3. To add those words to the sacred text manifests a tampering with the word of God.
4. After hugging the young man he said “for his life is in him.”
5. He made this amazing statement because he had restored life to this young man.

Luke’s Later Testimony

1. Luke later comments that Eutychus was “alive” (Acts 20:12).
 - a. “Alive” comes from the Greek “zao” [**zah** oh] meaning “living, alive.”
 - b. It is vital to the correct understanding of this miracle that earlier Luke had said the young man was “dead.”
2. One usage of this term is to describe “dead persons who return to life, become alive again” (Arndt, p. 336; cf. Matt. 9:18; Mk. 16:11; Acts 9:41,etc.).

Matt 9:18 While He was saying these things to them, a {synagogue} official came and bowed down before Him, and said, "My daughter has just died; but come and lay Your hand on her, and **she will live.**"

Mark 16:11 When they heard that He [Jesus] was alive and had been seen by her, they refused to believe it.

Acts 9:41 And he gave her his hand and raised her up; and calling the saints and widows, **he presented her alive.**

3. If the lad had merely been injured, why stress that he was “brought alive”?

4. To merely mention that the youth was brought again to the Christians in the upper room the next day would have been entirely sufficient.
5. Were not they all alive who returned to the upper room? Were they not all alive to whom Paul bid farewell?
 - a. What was special about this young man? It is that he had been dead!
 - b. Luke knew the difference between dead and supposedly dead.
 - c. When Paul was stoned at Lystra on his first missionary journey, Luke records that the apostle was dragged out of the city.
 - d. He adds that the Jews were “supposing that he was dead” (Acts 14:19).
6. **Here’s the point.**
 - a. Had Luke wanted to present the idea that the saints in Troas merely “supposed” that Eutychus was dead, when in fact he was only injured or knock senseless, he certainly was capable of expressing that concept, as he did in chapter 14.
 - b. But that is not what he wrote in chapter 20.

Death Of Eutychus

- The restoring of the life of Eutychus brought “comfort” to the saints in Troas for three reasons:
 1. First, this young man loved the Lord and he was loved by the brethren.
 - a. The fact he felt asleep late at night does not mean he was disinterested in Paul’s sermon.
 - b. Drowsiness, at such a late hour, is not unusual.
 2. Second, it authenticated their Christian religion as genuine.
 - a. Only God can effect a resurrection from death to life.
 - b. Paul restored life to this young man by the power he received from the Holy Spirit.
 - c. He was not able to work miracles nor to impart miraculous power to others before he became an apostle.
 3. Third, it demonstrated that the grave is not the end of human existence.
 - a. Jesus and the apostles raised people from the dead.
 - b. All these people later died, but they will be raised again on that last day. (Jn. 6:39,40, 44).

John 6:39 "This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day.

John 6:40 "For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day."

John 6:44 "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day.

4. The Creator is able to bring life out of death. God created all things through His Son. (Jn. 1:3).

5. Jesus made this comforting statement. (Jn. 11:25).

John 11:25 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies,

6. Paul later wrote these comforting words about the assurance the Lord has given Christians. (1 Thess. 4:13-18).

1 Thess 4:13 But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope.

1 Thess 4:14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus.

1 Thess 4:15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep.

1 Thess 4:16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of {the} archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.

1 Thess 4:17 Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.

1 Thess 4:18 Therefore comfort one another with these words.

Conclusion.

1. Paul raised Eutychus from the dead by the power of the Almighty God.

2. One day Christ will raise all who have died from the grave and those who have obeyed Him will ascend to be with Him forever in heaven. (1 Thess. 4:17).

``Scripture taken from the NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE®,
© Copyright 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation

Used by permission." (www.Lockman.org)