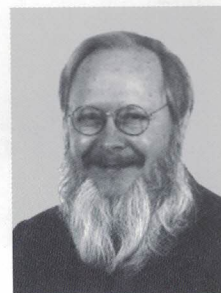


The Third Day

by Dr. Daniel Botkin



When Paul described the essentials of the Gospel, he stated that the Messiah rose from the dead “the third day according to the scriptures” (1 Cor. 15:4). To what scriptures was Paul referring? To the Old Testament, of course, but where does the Old Testament say that the Messiah would rise from the dead specifically on the third day?

When Peter preached about the Resurrection on the Day of Pentecost, he cited Psalm 16:10 as a prophecy of the Messiah’s Resurrection, but Psalm 16 does not specify the third day. Which Old Testament scriptures clearly specify the third day when prophesying the Messiah’s Resurrection? If a reader looks in the Old Testament for a direct statement that plainly announces “the Messiah will be resurrected the third day” (or words to that effect), he will search in vain for any such statement. So how could Paul have said that a third-day Resurrection was “according to the scriptures”?

A truth does not have to be plainly stated in the Bible in clear, easy-to-understand language in order to be “according to the scriptures.” The rabbis of Paul’s day knew this, and today’s rabbis know this. The rabbis even teach that there are four levels of understanding when studying the Scriptures. The four levels are *peshat* (פֶּשֶׁט, the simple, literal meaning of the text), *remez* (רִמְזוֹ, hint, allusion, allegory), *derash* (דְּרָשׁ, exposition, homiletical commentary), and *sod* (סוֹד, mystery, secret, esoteric teaching). The initial letters of these four Hebrew words form the acronym פֶּרְדֵּס - PaRDeS, the Hebrew word for garden, and the source of our English word paradise.

The Messiah’s Resurrection on the third day is not prophesied in the *peshat* form, but it is prophesied in the *remez* form, and is therefore, as Paul put it, “according to the scriptures.” It is interesting that the Talmud speaks about a relationship between the third day and the resurrection of the dead. Alfred Edersheim, in *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, wrote that “the Rabbis insist on the importance of ‘the third day’ in various events connected with Israel, and especially speak of it in connection with the resurrection of the dead, referring in proof to Hosea 6:2 [‘After two days will he revive us: in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight’]” (p. 631).

Apparently this connection between the third day and the resurrection of the dead was understood even

before Yeshua’s Resurrection. When writing about the customs of first-century Jews, Edersheim states that “the relatives and friends of the deceased were in the habit of going to the grave up to the third day (when presumably corruption was supposed to begin), so as to make sure that those laid there were really dead... In mourning also the third day formed a sort of period, because it was thought that the soul hovered round the body till the third day, when it finally parted from its earthly tabernacle” (p. 631).

Other than the Hosea 6:2 passage, on what basis did the rabbis see a connection between the third day and the resurrection of the dead? Edersheim does not go into detail. The only other passage he mentions is Genesis 22:4, which states that it was “on the third day” when Abraham saw the place where he was to offer Isaac. This is interesting in light of the fact that Father Abraham’s offering of his son, followed by the son’s rescue from off the altar, is a prophetic picture of the sacrifice and Resurrection of the Son of God.

There are many other Old Testament references to the third day, and some hints of resurrection can be seen quite easily in some of these. The very first reference to the third day is in Genesis 1:13, when “the evening and the morning were the third day.” On the third day of this first week of creation, the grass, herbs, and trees emerged from the earth. New life bursting forth out of the earth is an obvious picture of resurrection. The traditional Jewish blessing over bread also points us back to this first occurrence of the third day, when God first brought forth life and life-giving grains from the earth: “Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who brings forth bread from the earth.” This was probably the blessing Yeshua spoke over the unleavened bread immediately before He said, “Take, eat; this is My body” (Mt. 26:26) at His last Passover. Prophetically He was telling His disciples, “Just as My Father brings forth bread from the earth (something He did on the third day of creation), so He will bring forth My body from the earth on the third day. This resurrection life will be the life of the new creation. Just as you receive physical life from the bread of this creation, so you will receive spiritual life through My Resurrection in the new creation.”

The story of Joseph in Egypt includes two events that occurred on the third day. Pharaoh’s butler was

released from prison and restored to his former position (unlike Pharaoh's baker, who was executed). (Gen. 40:20ff) It was also on the third day that Joseph released his brothers from prison and said to them, "This do, and live..." (Gen. 42:18). Release, restoration, and life after prison, all on the third day, can be seen as a picture of resurrection on the third day.

In Exodus 19:11 & 15, the children of Israel were told to be ready on the third day, "for the third day Yahweh will come down in the sight of all the people upon mount Sinai." The manifestation of the glory of Yahweh on the third day at Sinai parallels the manifestation of the glory of Yahweh on the third day at the Tomb when the Messiah rose from the dead in resurrection glory.



A generation after the giving of the Torah, when Joshua led the people into the Promised Land, they prepared to cross the Jordan "after three days" (Josh. 3:2). Crossing the Jordan after three days and thus going from the wilderness into the Promised Land is another picture of resurrection. This picture in Joshua is especially vivid to those who know that Jesus' Hebrew name was the same as a shortened form of Joshua's name. In Nehemiah 8:17, Joshua's name is written יֵשׁוּעַ—*Yeshua*.

Here are just a few other events which suggest a connection between the third day and resurrection. King Hezekiah was healed on the third day and thereby given a Divine reprieve (a resurrection of sorts) after an earlier divine death sentence had been pronounced against him (2 Kings 20:1-5). When the Jews left Babylon to rebuild ("resurrect") the Temple, it was finished on the third day of the month (Ezra 6:15; compare John 2:19-21, "'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up'... But He spake of the temple of His body"). It was on the third day that Queen Esther approached King Ahasuerus to request that the lives of her people be spared ("resurrected") from the irreversible death sentence which had been decreed against them (Esther 5:1).

Of course the one Old Testament event which foreshadows Yeshua's resurrection in a very obvious manner is the sign of Jonah. Yeshua Himself pointed to Jonah's experience as a prophetic sign of His own resurrection. "An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so shall the

Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Mt. 12:39f).

The Apostles and the hundreds of other eyewitnesses of the resurrected Messiah did not need the Scriptures to convince them that the Resurrection had happened. They knew from firsthand personal experience that their Rabbi and Lord had risen from the dead. "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you," John wrote (1 Jn. 1:3). "For we have not followed cunningly devised fables," Peter wrote, "...but [we] were eyewitnesses of His majesty" (2 Pet. 1:16). On the day of Pentecost Peter said, "This Yeshua hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses" (Acts 2:32).

These first-hand eyewitnesses of the resurrection did not need the Scriptures to convince them of the reality of the resurrection. Those of us in later generations do not have the opportunity to be among those first-century eyewitnesses, but the prophecies of the Scriptures confirm that which the inward witness of the Spirit tells us—that Yeshua of Nazareth rose from the dead on the third day.

This article is reprinted from the Gates of Eden newsletter, March-April 2003. Dr. Daniel Botkin is a member of the board of directors of the BSA and the publisher of Gates of Eden. Dr. Botkin is also the leader of the Gates of Eden Messianic Congregation of Peoria, Illinois. See the Gates of Eden Web site at <http://www.gatesofeden.org/>.

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