

The Third Day¹

I. The question

- What does Paul mean when he says that Jesus “was raised on the third day *in accordance with the Scriptures*” (1 Cor 15:4)? In what way is Jesus being raised on the *third day* a fulfillment of the Bible?

II. The third day in the OT

- Three days are a period of testing
 - Joseph tests his brothers by imprisoning them for three days, then releases them to give life (Gen 42:17–18).
 - God provides water in the wilderness after testing them for three days (Exod 15:22–26).
 - Esther fasts three days before approaching the king to ask for the life of her people (Est 4:16).
- A day of new life and new beginnings
 - At Mount Sinai, God appeared on the third day to inaugurate the old covenant (Exod 19:11, 15, 16).
 - Israel had a three-day wait before entering the land of promise (Josh 1:11; 3:2).
 - After Jonah was in the fish three days (an experience of death; Jon 2:5–6), he was vomited out to have a new chance to obey (Jon 1:17; 3:1).
 - Jesus draws a direct connection between this and his resurrection (Matt 12:40).
 - On the third day, Jesus goes to a wedding where he shows the new beginning he is about to make (John 2:1).
- A day of God’s saving intervention
 - On the third day Abraham is about to sacrifice Isaac when God intervenes (Gen 22:4, 11).
 - Moses saves the people on the third day (Exod 19:17; 20:18–19) by becoming their mediator.
 - On the third day of the plague in David’s reign, David has a vision of the angel about to strike, and David intervenes to ask God’s mercy (2 Sam 24:13–17).
 - God heals Hezekiah, the anointed son of David, on the third day (2 Kgs 20:8)
 - See above on Exod 15:22–26; Jon 1:17.
- A central text: Hos 6:1–3: “on the third day [the LORD] will raise us up, that we may live before him.” All the other texts show this pattern, and Jesus fulfills it.
 - In the context of Hosea, the “raising up” refers to restoration from exile.

¹ This lesson is largely derived from Stephen Dempster, “From Slight Peg to Cornerstone to Capstone: The Resurrection of Christ on ‘the Third Day’ According to the Scriptures,” *WTJ* 76 (2014): 371–409.

III. Conclusions

- The hope of Israel is about the reversal of death in all its forms:
 - Isa 25:6–8: “[The LORD] will swallow up death forever; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the LORD has spoken.”
 - Hos 13:14: “O Death, where are your plagues? O Sheol, where is your sting?”
- Resurrection is a broad theme in the OT:
 - Physical resurrection promised in Isa 26:19; Dan 12:2.
 - But death and resurrection are much bigger than physical death in the Bible; it’s about the movement “from sterility to miraculous childbirth, from slavery in Egypt to freedom in the promised land, from exile to return” (R. Hays).
 - Resurrection as a metaphor for Israel’s return from exile (Ezek 37:1–14).

IV. Applications

- We need to suffer with Jesus if we are to be raised with Jesus.
 - The church needs to pass through the experience of death and resurrection in this life. We must have our “three days of testing.”
 - We can only participate in Jesus’ resurrection power if we are buried with him.
 - 2 Kgs 13:20–21: When a man touched the prophet Elisha’s bones, God raised him to life.
 - Rom 6:4: “We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life” (see Col 2:12).
 - Col 1:24: “in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions for the sake of his body.” (see Matt 16:24; Acts 14:22; Rom 8:17)
- Take comfort from the fact that the time of suffering is finite in length (so also Jer 25:12; Rev 2:10); the time of testing will even be cut short (Matt 24:22).
- Take comfort from the completeness of the resurrection: God will dry every tear!
 - Isaac Watts: “He comes to make his blessings flow far as the curse is found.”
 - Rev 7:17; 21:4: “God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”