

# The Gospel Unashamed

"From the cowardice that shrinks from new truth, from the laziness that is content with half-truths, from the arrogance that thinks it knows all truth, O, God of Truth, deliver us."

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~ All articles are written by Terry Carter unless otherwise stated ~

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Terry Carter, Editor

## According to the Scriptures

"And that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day **according to the Scriptures,**" 1 Corinthians 15:4 (NKJV)

### Question:

Where in the Old Testament Scriptures does it say that Jesus would rise from the dead on the third day as Paul asserts in the verse above?

### Answer:

If you are looking for a specific verse in the Old Testament that specifically says that Jesus (or even Messiah) would rise from the dead on the third day, you will be disappointed.

However, we must be careful not to condemn Paul for what he did not intend to say. What I mean is that Paul's statement is not incorrect unless he intended to say that there was a specific verse in the Old Testament stating that Messiah would be raised from the dead on the third day. There are good reasons to believe that that is not at all what Paul meant by this statement. There are some things to keep in mind when trying to decide what exactly Paul meant here.

**First**, it is not clear at all what part of this statement Paul is claiming was predicted by the Scriptures.

Did he simply mean that the resurrection, which happened on the

third day, was predicted by the Scriptures or did he mean that the Scriptures predicted that the resurrection would happen on the third day?

It is an assumption on our part that Paul was claiming that the timing of the resurrection was predicted by the Scriptures. That may be the case, but we can't be dogmatic about it.

I am neither the only, nor the first person, to point out the ambiguity of Paul's language here. Consider these statements by other commentators:

*"That is, that he should rise from the dead was foretold in the Scriptures. It is not of necessity implied that it was predicted that he should rise on the third day, [emphasis his] but that he should rise from the dead."*

--Barnes

*"Was it that Messiah would 'rise from the dead,' or that he would rise 'on the third day'?" --Gareth Reese*

There is no question that the Old Testament predicted that Messiah would rise from the dead. Peter makes this point on the day of Pentecost. He quotes from **Psalms 16:8-11** and argues that these verses cannot apply to David who was dead and buried, and thus saw corruption.

However, David was a prophet, and he was predicting the resurrection of the Messiah Who did not see corruption.

Finally, Peter asserts that Jesus fulfilled this prophecy by raising from the dead to which they were all witnesses.

"25 "For David says concerning Him: 'I foresaw the LORD always before my face, For He is at my right hand, that I may not be shaken. 26 Therefore my heart rejoiced, and my tongue was glad; Moreover my flesh also will rest in hope. 27 For **You will not leave my soul in Hades, Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption.** 28 You have made known to me the ways of life; You will make me full of joy in Your presence.' 29 "Men and brethren, let me speak freely to you of **the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried,** and his tomb is with us to this day. 30 "Therefore, **being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, He would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne,** 31 "he, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption. 32 "This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses." Acts 2:25-31 (NKJV)

Paul makes essentially the same point from the same Psalms later in the book of Acts.

"30 "But **God raised Him from the dead.** 31 "He was seen for many days by those who came up with Him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are His witnesses to the people. 32 "And

we declare to you glad tidings--that promise which was made to the fathers. 33 "God has fulfilled this for us their children, in that He has raised up Jesus. As it is also written in the second Psalm: 'You are My Son, Today I have begotten You.' 34 "And that He raised Him from the dead, no more to return to corruption, He has spoken thus: 'I will give you the sure mercies of David.' 35 "Therefore He also says in another Psalm: 'You will not allow Your Holy One to see corruption.' 36 "For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell asleep, was buried with his fathers, and saw corruption; 37 "but He whom God raised up saw no corruption." Acts 13:30-37 (NKJV)

If Paul was simply speaking of the resurrection being foretold by the Old Testament Scriptures, there is no problem here. That is certainly true. While this is an important point, the rest of this article will assume that Paul was referring to resurrection on the third day being according to the Scriptures. We shall see that this is also certainly true.

**Second**, some believe that Paul may have been referring to one or more of the Gospels when he said, "according to the Scriptures". Jesus had certainly predicted that He would rise on the third day.

"For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." Matthew 12:40 (NKJV)

"From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day." Matthew 16:21 (NKJV)

"For He taught His disciples and said to them, "The Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of men, and they will kill Him. And after He is

killed, He will rise the third day." Mark 9:31 (NKJV)

"Saying, "The Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day." Luke 9:22 (NKJV)

This idea that Paul was referring to one or more of the Gospels is an interesting one. If this is true, it would indicate that Paul considered the Gospels "Scripture". However, it seems unlikely that any of the Gospels had been written prior to I Corinthians. Therefore, we will assume that Paul is referring to the Old Testament Scriptures and not the Gospels.

**Third**, it needs to be pointed out that Jesus Himself taught that resurrection on the third day was predicted by the Old Testament.

"Then He said to them, "Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day," Luke 24:26 (NKJV)

There are a couple of points to be made here. The first is that Paul is not saying anything more or different than Jesus Himself had said. Paul said that the Gospel was given to him by the revelation of Jesus Christ. Whatever Paul taught about the resurrection, and its being prophesied by the Old Testament, was revealed to him by Jesus Christ.

"11 But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. 12 For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ." Galatians 1:11-12 (NKJV)

The second point has to do with the context in which Jesus made this statement. It was after His resurrection, amid doubt about the resurrection. He had previously rebuked the two on the road to Emmaus for being slow to believe what the prophets had written concerning the Christ.

"25 Then He said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! 26 "Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?" Luke 24:25-26 (NKJV)

When He appeared to the eleven, they thought He was a ghost or spirit, so He showed them His hands and feet and invited them to touch Him.

"36 Now as they said these things, Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them, and said to them, "Peace to you." 37 But they were terrified and frightened, and supposed they had seen a spirit. 38 And He said to them, "Why are you troubled? And why do doubts arise in your hearts? 39 "Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have." Luke 24:36-39 (NKJV)

He went on to tell them that what had happened was fulfillment of what was written in the Law, Prophets, and Psalms about Him. Finally, He opened their understanding to comprehend the Scriptures.

"44 Then He said to them, "These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me." 45 And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures." Luke 24:44-45 (NKJV)

This indicates that the prophecies about Jesus were such that prior to their fulfillment they had not been understood by even His closest followers. Even after His resurrection, He had to explain the fulfillment to them so that they might understand.

This is similar to the situation with the Ethiopian Eunuch. He did not know whether Isaiah was speaking of himself or another man and wondered how he could understand without someone to guide him.

"30 So Philip ran to him, and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah, and said, "**Do you understand what you are reading?**" 31 And he said, "**How can I, unless someone guides me?**" And he asked Philip to come up and sit with him...34 So the eunuch answered Philip and said, "I ask you, **of whom does the prophet say this, of himself or of some other man?**"'" **Acts 8:30-31, 34 (NKJV)**

While the Eunuch was probably not familiar with Jesus, the eleven were very familiar with Him. However, in both cases the prophecies had to be explained before they were understood.

What this means is that the Old Testament prophecies about Messiah are such that they need to be explained even after their fulfillment in Jesus. However, once they are explained, they can be fully understood.

There are many implications of this that cannot be discussed in a short article. However, what this means for our present discussion, is that the Old Testament prophecies, regarding the third day, may not be stated in a straightforward way. That is, some explanation may be required. In other words, we probably should not be looking for an Old Testament verse that says, "Messiah will be killed and raised again on the third day" in such a specific and clear manner.

**Fourth**, Jesus connected Jonah being in the belly of the great fish for three days to the three days of His own death, burial, and resurrection. He even called it the only sign that would be given to such an evil and adulterous generation.

"39 But He answered and said to them, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and **no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.** 40 "For **as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in**

**the heart of the earth."** **Matthew 12:39-40 (NKJV)**

This is especially relevant to our discussion here. Jesus expected that people would make, or at least understand, the connection between the three days of Jonah and the three days of Jesus. It was to be a sign to them. In fact, it was to be the only sign to them. The three days is a crucial part of this sign.

But there is nothing in Jonah that plainly says that Messiah would be killed and raised again on the third day. Instead, Jonah is a type or foreshadowing of what would happen to Messiah. Jesus makes it clear that this foreshadowing was intended and expected that people would understand it once it was pointed out to them.

### **There are Two Important Implications Here for our Discussion**

The first is that Paul was likely referring to either that same Old Testament passage about Jonah and/or other similar Old Testament passages when he spoke of 'the third day resurrection being according to the Scriptures'. For him to do so would have been perfectly consistent with what Jesus Himself had done.

The second implication is that passages like Jonah being in the belly of the whale for three days are probably the kind of passages that we should be looking for in understanding what Paul was referring to when he said, "according to the Scriptures". When we begin to look for such passages, we find that the Old Testament has many of them.

**Finally**, we need to recognize that Paul may have been referring to the overall tenor of the Old Testament Scriptures rather than to a specific verse or verses.

We do this all the time ourselves when we say things like, "the Bible says" or "the Bible teaches". Often, we do not have a specific verse, or

verses, in mind. What we mean is that the overall teaching of the Bible leads us to this conclusion. Think about things like the Trinity. No one verse teaches that doctrine, but when you look at all that the Bible teaches on the Godhead, we conclude that the Trinity is what the Bible teaches.

*"But do the Old Testament Scriptures teach his resurrection on the third day? The answer is twofold. There is no specific reference in any one text; yet a combination of passages provides sufficient evidence of the concept of the resurrection... Gordan D. Fee concludes, 'The O[ld] T[estament] as a whole bears witness to the resurrection on the third day...'" --Kistemaker*

*"It is not said anywhere in the Scriptures, in express terms, that Christ should rise on the third day; but it is fully implied in his types, as in the case of Jonah who came out of the belly of the fish on the third day; but particularly in the case of Isaac, who was a very expressive type of Christ; for, as his being brought to the Mount Moriah, bound and laid on the wood, in order to be sacrificed, pointed out the death of Christ; so his being brought alive on the third day from the mount was a figure of Christ's resurrection." [emphasis his throughout] --Clarke*

When we look carefully at the Old Testament, we see that its overall teaching is that the third day represents 'a new beginning' or 'new life'.

We offer a brief list below:

1. On the third day of creation, the ground came forth from the water and brought forth new life, **Genesis 1:9-13**
2. Isaac was figuratively received back to life again after three days when Abraham was told to sacrifice him, **Genesis 22:4, 12 Hebrews 11:17-19**
3. Jacob began a new life after traveling three days from Laban, **Genesis 30:36**

4. It was three days after his dream when the butler began his new life, **Genesis 40:13**
5. Joseph told his brothers to “do this and live” after they spent three days in prison, **Genesis 42:17-18**
6. There was new life for Israel as a nation after three days, **Exodus 3:18, 19:15**
7. There was a new start for Israel three days after departing Sinai, **Numbers 10:33**
8. There was new life for Israel when entering the Promised Land after three days, **Joshua 1:11**
9. The spies were delivered from death after hiding for three days, **Joshua 2:16, 22**
10. David was delivered from death after three days, **I Samuel 20:19**
11. The Egyptian began new life after three days of facing death, **I Samuel 30:11-13**
12. Hezekiah was delivered from death after three days, **II Kings 20:5-8**
13. Israel was rescued from death after three days of fasting, **Esther 4:16**
14. Israel was promised deliverance on the third day, **Hosea 6:2**
15. Jonah was delivered after three days and nights in the fish, **Jonah 1:17, Matthew 12:40**

There are some other Old Testament passages that mention the third day which some may find relevant to our discussion here. However, we have left off our list ones that are not clearly about new life or a new beginning. Besides, the ones listed above ought to be sufficient to make our point.

Someone might argue that a specific one of these doesn't belong on this list or that any one of these is not

convincing on its own. However, that misses the point. The point is that the Old Testament Scriptures teach that there is something special about the third day. That is the day when new life begins, deliverance from death occurs, or a new beginning happens.

The strength of this teaching does not rest upon any one passage. It is the sum of these passages that shows us that new life happens on the third day according to the Scriptures.



The question is not which specific Old Testament verse Paul is referring to regarding the resurrection on the third day. The question is whether the overall teaching of the Old Testament is that new life or new beginning happens on the third day. Clearly, that is the case.

The final question is whether we ought to apply that teaching to the resurrection of the Messiah. Jesus and Paul both thought that we should, and I do too.