

CHAPTER 3

MESSIAH TO RISE FROM THE DEAD

In John's account of the resurrection of Jesus, he says that the disciples *'did not know the Scripture, that He must rise from the dead'* (John 20.9).

Asher Norman, in his critique of Christianity, casts doubt on this verse, when he writes: 'They did not know the scripture, because it does not exist.' There may be no direct prophecy in the Tenach which says 'He must rise from the dead', but the concept of the resurrection of the Messiah is there to be found.

Actually there is not a great deal in the whole of the Jewish Bible about the subject of resurrection, with nothing directly to be found in the Torah. There are some verses in the prophets. For example:

'Your dead shall live; together with my dead body they shall arise. Awake and sing, you who dwell in dust; for your dew is like the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead.' (Isaiah 26.19)

'And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt.' (Daniel 12.2)

Ezekiel's vision of the dry bones coming to life is also seen as a prophecy of the resurrection of the dead:

'Prophecy to these bones, and say to them, 'O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord! Thus says the Lord God to these bones: 'Surely I will cause breath to enter into you, and you shall live. I will put sinews on you and bring flesh upon you, cover you with skin and put breath in you; and you shall live. Then you shall know that I am the Lord.' (Ezekiel 37.4-6)

So are there verses in the Tenach, which point to the resurrection of the Messiah?

The Gospels emphasise the 'third day' as the day of Jesus' resurrection. Hosea 6.2 also refers to the third day and says:

'After two days he will revive us; On the third day He will raise us up, that we may live in His sight.'

Bereshit Rabbah says of this verse:

‘This passage is applied to the resurrection and to the Messiah by R. Moses Haddarshan in Genesis 22.4’.

In the prophecy of Isaiah 53, there are three references to the Servant being put to death. Verse 8 tells us he is to be ‘cut off from the land of the living’ (i.e. dead). In Verse 10 we read:

*‘Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief. When You make His soul an offering for sin, **He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand**’.*

Jesus was put to death on the cross and placed in a tomb. The Gospels explain that He was then raised from the dead. Isaiah says He shall see His seed (here it means those who would believe on Him) and prolong His days. The only way this can happen is if He is resurrected from the dead.

On the road to Jerusalem, Jesus told His disciples about His coming crucifixion and resurrection:

‘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)

He had previously spoken of the ‘sign of Jonah’ in a dispute with the scribes and Pharisees:

‘An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. 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.’

The story of Jonah can be seen as a type of death and resurrection. In Jonah 2 the prophet cries to the Lord ‘Out of the belly of Sheol’ (the place of the dead). He says:

‘The earth with its bars closed behind me forever; Yet You have brought up my life from the pit, O Lord, my God.’ (Jonah 2.6)

He then says:

'I will sacrifice to You with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay what I have vowed. Salvation is of the Lord.' (Jonah 2.9)

The only way Jonah can sacrifice to the Lord with the voice of thanksgiving after he has been in 'the belly of Sheol' is if he is miraculously delivered from that place. This is what happens in the next verse. —

'So the Lord spoke to the fish and it vomited Jonah onto dry land.'
(Jonah 2.10)

Therefore the 'sign of Jonah' can be seen as the sign of death and resurrection.

Job speaks of his hope of resurrection, referring to 'My Redeemer', whom he says will at last stand on the earth:

'For I know that my Redeemer lives, and He shall stand at last on the earth; And after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh I shall see God, Whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!' (Job 19.25-27)

This verse speaks about the resurrection of the righteous and of the Redeemer / Messiah who will 'stand on the earth.' When Jesus comes again He will stand on the earth, after He has completed the task of bringing salvation through His death and resurrection.

Psalm 16 also speaks of resurrection and is quoted by Peter when he is speaking in the Temple about the resurrection of Jesus on the day of Shavuoth (Pentecost):

'God raised Him up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it. 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. Therefore my heart rejoiced, and my tongue was glad; moreover my flesh also will rest in hope. For You will not leave my soul in Hades (Greek form of the Hebrew Sheol, the place of the dead), nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption. You have made known to me the ways of life; You will make me full of joy in Your presence.'

'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.

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 Messiah to sit on his throne, he, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Messiah, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption. This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses.’ (Acts 2.24-32)

Peter quotes from Psalm 16.10-11 concerning the Holy One, the Messiah who will not remain in Sheol, the place of the dead. He says it is not possible that death could hold Him (verse 24). It is not possible because He is the Holy One, the Son of God, who has come to earth to redeem us. Therefore He cannot remain dead. In fact the last words of Jesus from the cross are:

‘Father into your hands I commit my spirit.’ (Luke 23.46)

His body was placed in the grave, while He committed His spirit to the Father. On the third day, as He had foretold, His spirit returned into His body. He rose from the dead, and He appeared to the disciples, convincing them that He was alive and had conquered sin and death.

It is a generally accepted view of Judaism that, in the days of the Messiah, the dead will be resurrected. The Gospels all describe the resurrection of Jesus from the dead as an event which has already taken place and which also points forward to the general day of the resurrection of the dead and the day of judgement. Jesus claims:

‘I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die.’ (John 11.25-6)

He asks us to believe in Him as the Messiah who has died for our sins and risen from the dead. According to the New Testament, the disciples witnessed Him risen from the dead, appearing to them over a period of forty days before being taken up into heaven:

‘He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.’ (Acts 1.3)

The resurrection of Jesus became the central message of the disciples to be taken into all the world as a witness to the risen Messiah.

‘For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Messiah / Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He was seen by Cephas, (Peter) then by the twelve. After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep. After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles. Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time.’

(1 Corinthians 15.3-7)

In Luke’s account of the resurrection, Jesus explained to them what had happened according to Luke 24.44-47:

“ 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.” And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures. Then He said to them, “Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Messiah to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.”

(For more on this subject go to our article on the resurrection accounts.

<http://messiahfactor.com/page65a.html>)

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