

Much of the Jewish literature information comes from a lecture and article by Marty Pickup –
“On the Third Day”: The Time Frame of Jesus’ Death and Resurrection.”
JETS 56/3 (2013), 511-54.

And He Died

1 Corinthians 15:3-5

Introduction:

- Genesis 5:3-31
- Death:
- Are you noticing a pattern? People die. This is life. We may not like it, but it is a certainty.
- What happens when you die?
 - At the moment of death all muscles relax – pupils, eyelids, jaw, joints, and limbs – *primary flaccidity*
 - Within minutes blood begins to drain from the smaller blood vessels – *pallor mortis*
 - The body begins to cool from its normal temperature – *algor mortis*
 - Blood drains to where gravity pulls it – *livor mortis*
 - At three hours chemical changes in the cells of the muscles cause them to stiffen – *rigor mortis* – this reaches its max by the 12th hour
 - After the 12th hour the chemical changes in the cells begin to cause the muscles to loosen up – *secondary flaccidity*
- This is what happens to the body when the heart stops, when we die. This is what happened when all of the people we just looked at died. And it is what will happen when I die.
- Today I want to talk about the reversal of this process, not by some natural means, but by miraculous resurrection
- I want to talk about three resurrections and compare these with some beliefs and practices the Jews had in connection with death
- We will end by discussing the Resurrection of Jesus and the significance of that happening on the third day

Body:

- I. Jairus’s Daughter – Mark 5:22-42

- A. From the Jerusalem Talmud: R. Abba, R. Joshua, R. Levi – “For the first three days after death, the soul flutters over the body, thinking that she will return to it. When she sees that the appearance of the corpse deteriorates, she leaves the body and goes her way.”
 - 1. This is what they believed, not what the bible says!
 - 2. They did not think it could reenter
 - B. Some have mistakenly thought that death was not complete until after three days.
 - 1. Some of this may come from Jewish tradition of visiting the body for three days, not to see if the individual had come back to life but to make sure the loved one was not buried alive
 - C. Notice in the story that after the girl dies, v. 35, the messengers believe her death to be final
 - D. Within minutes of death, things happen that cannot be reversed
 - 1. Brain cells begin to die due to lack of oxygen
 - 2. After 6-8 minutes resuscitation is almost impossible
 - E. Jesus is not even to Jairus’s house yet. The messengers meet Him, then He has to finish the walk, however long...
 - 1. It’s safe to assume that the lack of oxygen to the brain is destroying brain cells and that the body is already cooling and blood is draining from smaller vessels
 - 2. She is dead. They know it. Jesus knows it.
 - 3. And yet v. 42!
 - F. They understand that this is not mere resuscitation. They know that it’s not just a case where the spirit was able to simply reenter the body
 - G. Jesus raised this little girl from the dead!
 - H. But I want you to understand something – this girl would go on, live her life, and she would die again
- II. Lazarus – John 11
- A. John 11:6 tells us that Jesus delayed – right then, we should understand that something is going on

- B. Mary and Martha both profess to believe that Jesus could have kept Lazarus from dying – then others ask the same question
- C. v. 39 – four days!
 - 1. Jews believed that decay began after the third day
 - 2. In a booklet on Leviticus the Rabbis said, “After three days a person’s belly bursts open and erupts into the mouth...”
 - 3. We know from Jewish writings that the body of a dead man had to be identified by the third day in order to free the wife from that marital bond. This is so because after three days changes will have taken place that make identification less certain. A checklist, *M. Yebamot 16:3*
 - a. They derive testimony only from the appearance of the whole face with the nose,
 - b. Even though there are signs of the identity on his body or garments
 - c. They derive testimony only after he has actually died
 - d. And even if they saw him mortally wounded, crucified, or being eaten by a wild beast
 - e. They give testimony only during a period of three days
 - f. Decay in corpses is not alike for all men, all places, and all times.
- D. In this story not only is Lazarus dead, not only has the “spirit moved on” but the decomposition of the body has begun and it would have smelled!
- E. But what does Jesus do? vv. 43-44
- F. But we must understand something – Lazarus would go on, live his life, and he would die again

I want you to keep some of these things in mind as we go on to talk about the resurrection of Jesus!

III. Jesus Christ – 1 Corinthians 15:3-5

- A. Paul lists four things of first importance in 1 Corinthians 15:3-5
 - 1. Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures
 - 2. He was buried

3. He was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures
 4. And He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.
- B. We know the gruesome, torturous death that was crucifixion
- C. We know that Joseph of Arimathea buried Jesus in his tomb
- D. The sermons in the book of Acts tell us clearly that the resurrection of Jesus was prophesied, it was in “accordance with scripture” – yet Luke and Acts never cite an Old Testament passage that specifies three days...
1. Except that Peter implies it – Psalm 16:10 – “You will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your holy one see corruption”
 2. In the mind of Jews, decay or corruption began AFTER the third day
 3. When was Jesus raised?
- E. Decomposition as punishment for sin
1. Jews believed that death was a divine punishment for sin and this was highlighted in the decay/decomposition of the body for sin committed in that body
 - a. A quote we’ve already mentioned: “After three days a person’s belly bursts open and erupts into the mouth and says, ‘Here is what you stole, grabbed, and put into me.’”
 - b. Job 24:19-20
 - c. This belief may be part of the background for the Jewish two-stage burial process...
 - i. One year as the flesh decays then bones placed in ossuary
 - ii. Some Rabbis taught that the second burial should be a time of joy since the process of decay was complete and their sins punished
 2. But Jesus was raised on the third day...before the decomposition of the body...this implies two things
 - a. If decomposition was punishment for sins committed in the body, being raised before His body could decay implies Jesus’ sinlessness.

- b. And if death was a divine punishment for sin, yet Jesus had no sin, this implies that His death was for the sins of others – just as Paul said, “Christ died for our sins.”

F. Witness of Peter and twelve before 4th day

1. We’ve already discussed the conditions which must be met to declare someone dead – specifically it must happen within three days
2. Therefore Jesus is raised on the third day and appears to (is witnessed by) Peter and the twelve
3. They can, therefore, provide legal testimony as to Jesus’ resurrection – that he was NOT DEAD
4. This is exactly what they do on the Day of Pentecost – Acts 2:22-36

Conclusion:

- Jesus died for our sins. He had none and His resurrection confirms that
- His resurrection confirms His claims to be divine, the Son of God
- And His resurrection confirms His claim to the throne and our need for submission
- We must ask the same question the Jews asked on Pentecost – What must we do?
- And the answer is the same as well – “Repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of sins”