

Easter 2024:-

As we look at the background to the momentous events of that first Holy Week and Easter we begin with the preaching of John the Baptist - “Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John chapter 1, verse 29).

The theme of the sacrificial lamb runs all the way through scripture, from Genesis to Revelation! As an encouragement to us in these uncertain days we can look to the unfailing Word of God in the Bible and see His guiding hand on the life of His Chosen People.

Genesis chapter 4, verses 1 – 5:- Abel brought as an offering to the Lord God “*of the firstlings of his flock*” - a lamb, one of the best he could give. Cain brought “*an offering of the fruit of the ground*”. Cain’s offering was not regarded. Why? Maybe it was not the best he had to offer. Compare with Ananias and Sapphira in Acts chapter 5, verses 1 – 11.

Genesis chapter 22, verses 1 – 14:- Isaac asked his father Abraham “. . . ‘where is the lamb for a burnt offering?’ Abraham said ‘God will provide himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son.’” So he did! “. . . a ram caught in a thicket by his horns”. Traditionally the place of the sacrifice was Mount Moriah – the site of the Temple Mount in Jerusalem.

Exodus chapter 12, verses 1 – 27:- Read this chapter carefully it is the key text for the theme of the ‘Passover Lamb’. Note that the sign of deliverance was blood on the lintel and door-posts of the entrance of the dwelling.

Deuteronomy chapter 16, verses 1 – 8:- The Passover to be kept in perpetuity by the people of God. Note that the Passover Sacrifice was to be celebrated “*at the place which the Lord will choose to make his name dwell there*”. It was to be ‘the City of David’, ‘Mount Zion’, Jerusalem.

Isaiah chapter 53:- It is worth re-reading the whole of this chapter when considering the sacrifice of our Saviour on the cross. Note especially that the ‘Suffering Servant’ is compared to a sacrificial lamb in verse 7.

In the New Testament we have already seen how John the Baptist picks up the theme of “*the Lamb of God*”. In the Gospel of John, the idea of the sacrificial lamb is introduced right at the beginning of the Lord’s ministry see John chapter 1, verses 29 and 36. This is picked up by the evangelist in his account of the trial of our Lord Jesus Christ. See **John chapter 19, verse 14**. At the very time that the lambs for the traditional Jewish Passover were being prepared for sacrifice in the Temple, our Lord was being handed over to be crucified as a the Sacrifice for the redemption of the world.

1 Corinthians chapter 5, verse 7 – 8:- The opening verse of the Easter Anthems, which replace the Venite on Easter Day (see set readings in the Book of Common Prayer), is a constant reminder that Our Lord Jesus Christ is “*the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world*”. Through his death on the cross “*we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses . . .*” Ephesians chapter 1, verse 7.

But that death was not the end! The resurrection was still to come on that glorious first Easter Day! And that will not be the end! There is still the culmination of all things when the Crucified, Risen Lord Jesus will return in glory! For the final references to the Lamb of God read Revelation chapter 5, verses 6 - 14 and Revelation chapter 21, verse 22 on to chapter 22, verse 5!

Hymn - “Man of Sorrows”, what a name for the Son of God who came
Ruined sinners to reclaim! Hallelujah! what a Saviour!

P.P. Bliss 1875

Alleluia, Christ is risen! He is risen indeed, Alleluia!