

Easter – Hope. The significance of Easter and the Cross.

1. The Cross and The Sacrifice

Jesus was crucified on Golgotha, a ridge that is part of the Temple Mount, 777 metres above sea level. This is the same place where years before, Abraham offered Isaac as a sacrifice to God before God provided a ram (The Temple Mount is the same place as Mount Moriah).

There is a prophetic link with Jesus found in Genesis 22.14 – *“So Abraham called the name of that place The Lord Will Provide. And it is said to this day, On the mount of the Lord it will be provided.”* (Amplified Bible). Many commentators believe this was a prophetic reference to Jesus’ sacrifice on the same location 1900 years later, as well as having a contemporary meaning as the place where God provided for Abraham and Isaac.

Hebrews 11.17-19: *“By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had received the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son, even though God had said to him, “It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned.” Abraham reasoned that God could raise the dead, and figuratively speaking, he did receive Isaac back from death.”*

So we know that when Abraham took Isaac as a sacrifice, he believed that God would raise Isaac from the dead, after Abraham had killed him. This was some great faith, as God had never done this before. Of great interest is that Isaac was possibly in his early 30s when he willingly submitted, as did Jesus. Pawson (2003: 83)

Wikipedia shares this, relating to the evidence of Isaac’s age: *“While it is often imagined that Isaac was a young boy at the time of the incident, this is mostly a modern idea, with most traditional sources claiming he was an adult. According to Josephus, Isaac is twenty-five years old at the time of the sacrifice; the Talmudic sages teach that Isaac is thirty-seven, likely based on the fact that the next Biblical story is of Sarah’s death at 127 (she was ninety when Isaac was born). In either case, Isaac is a fully grown man, strong enough to prevent the elderly Abraham from tying him up had he wanted to resist.”* Wikipedia (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Binding_of_Isaac 2008)

The Bible makes it clear that at no time did Isaac resist his Father’s actions (also suggesting a strong faith). Genesis 22.9-10 – *“When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son.”*

Likewise, Jesus submitted to his Father’s will. Luke 22:42 - *“Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.”*

Notably, in Genesis 22.2, we learn that Isaac was Abraham's only son – *"Then God said, 'Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about.'*" In the same way, Jesus was God's only son sent for our sins. Pawson (2003: 94).

When he got to the place, Abraham had faith that God would provide the sacrifice (Genesis 22.8). God was faithful and provided a ram (Genesis 22.13). The word 'lamb' could better be translated 'ram' as it was a male sheep. So, God provided a male lamb, a ram for sacrifice at Golgotha for Abraham. Centuries later, God provided Jesus, the lamb (or ram) of God as a sacrifice for our sins. John 1.29 – *"The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, 'Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!'"*

Jesus can also be seen in the Abraham / Isaac sacrifice in that God provided a ram who was caught in a thicket of thorns. Genesis 22.13 – *"Then Abraham looked up and glanced around, and behold, behind him was a ram caught in a thicket by his horns."* In the same way, we read that Jesus had a crown of thorns placed on his head. *Mark 15.17 we read about Jesus: "They put a purple robe on him, then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on him"* Pawson (2003: 95)

Matthew 17:5 - *"While he was still speaking, a bright cloud enveloped them, and a voice from the cloud said, 'This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!'"*

In Revelation, Jesus is described as a lamb. Revelation 5.6 it says, *"Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. He had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth."*

2. The Father

Stirling D. Allen has an excellent insight into the concept of 'Father':

The very first word, the *alpha* word, in the alphabetical listing of all the words of the Hebrew Old Testament is *ab* or "Father." This Hebrew word may sound familiar because of the cry of Jesus, "abba, Father," as recorded in the New Testament. (Mark 14:13; see also Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:6.)

This Hebrew word for Father, *Ab*, is spelled *aleph*, *bet*, which are the first two letters of the 22-letter Hebrew alphabet.

Aleph is the Hebrew equivalent of the Greek *alpha*, which is the first letter of that alphabet as well. *Aleph* and *Alpha* are the equivalent of the first letter, **A**, in the English alphabet. The Hebrew *Bet* is equivalent to the Greek *Beta* which is equivalent to the English **B**.

Combining these languages, the Hebrew word for "Father," *Ab*, spelled *aleph*, *bet*, could also be represented as the Greek *alpha* and the Hebrew *bet*, creating the English word: *ALPHABET*.

Therefore, another name for "Father" is *Alphabet* -- and interesting synonym of "THE WORD." Do not the scriptures say, "In the beginning was the word..." (John 1:1; I John 1:1; D&C 93:8.) And are not words made up of letters of the alphabet?

Allen (1999: <http://www.greaterthings.com/Word-Number/father.htm>)

Abraham, the Father of Isaac was prepared to give him in sacrifice. God, the Father sent his Son Jesus, to be a sacrifice for the sins of the world. If we read through Hebrews, it is this book alone where we find that Jesus is described as the priest whose sacrifice was his own body. Jesus voluntary gave up his life. Mark 10:45 – *"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."*

Pilate wrote up a sign to go on the cross. It was written in Greek, Hebrew and Latin and said, *"Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews."* (John 19:19). Missler (2005: 190) reveals that "the first letter of each of the four words in the Hebrew spell out YHWH, the unpronounceable name of God Himself. He apparently did it deliberately to offend the Jewish leadership."

3. The Third Day

Third day – Jesus rose from the dead, as he prophesied. Matthew 17.22-23 - *"The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men. They will kill him, and on the third day he will be raised to life."* In Matthew 12.40, Jesus said he'd spend 3 days and nights in the earth: *"For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."*

Let's go back to Genesis 1.13 – *"And there was evening, and there was morning—the third day."* Although Genesis 1 records this happened every day, it's interesting how there was evening, then the morning came and that was the end of the day. When Jesus died, there was a spiritual darkness. But when he rose on the third day, there was morning.

Jesus is described as the morning star who rises in our hearts. 2 Peter 1.19 - *And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. The Bible also describes Jesus as being the light of the world. (John 8.12 - "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." John 12.46 - "I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness.")*

Ezra 6.15 says – *"The temple was completed on the third day of the month Adar, in the sixth year of the reign of King Darius."* So, the temple in Jerusalem was completed on the third day of the week.

Exodus 10.10-11: *"And the LORD said to Moses, "Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow. Have them wash their clothes and be ready by the third day, because on that day the LORD will come down on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people."*

On the third day, the Lord would come down Mount Sinai in the sight of people. In the same way, Jesus rose from the dead and was seen by over 500 people.

Chuck Missler writes that *"The Ark came to rest on the seventeenth day of the seventh month (Nisan, on that calendar), on the mountains of Ararat. Jesus was crucified on the fourteenth of Nisan and he was in the grave three days. So He rose on the seventeenth of Nisan. God's new beginning of the Planet Earth under Noah was on the same date, in advance, as our new beginning in Jesus Christ. I think that's breathtaking! Every detail in God's plan is by design. God, in His predetermined counsel, laid it all out in detail."* Missler (2002: 191).

4. Who did Jesus see after he had risen?

Mary Magdalene

The other women

Peter

Eleven disciples

Eleven disciples plus Thomas

Seven by Galilee seaside with fish

Then on the mountain

500 saw him in Galilee

Jesus first revealed himself to a woman, Mary Magdalene who became the first witness for Jesus' resurrection. He showed himself to many people and groups, as he still does today. As Galatians 3.26-29 says: *"You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, or all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. here is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."*

5. When did Jesus Rise? Why this is potentially significant

Interesting that when the women came to the tomb in Matthew 28.1 the Bible records this was "after the Sabbath". Yet the original verses should be rendered as "after the Sabbaths" in its proper context, as there were 2 Sabbaths that week. This is important because it changes some of our understanding of days and times. We won't get into that but it fit Scripture well. Banks (2005:121-124).

If we accept this interpretation, the Jewish people were celebrating the Feast of the first Fruits. As this was happening, the women were discovering an empty tomb. Therefore, Jesus rose as the 'First Fruits' of the 'First Resurrection'. McGee (1991: 9).

1 Corinthians 15:20 – *"But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep."*

1 Corinthians 15:23 - *"But each in his own turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him."*

Colossians 1:15 – *"He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation."*

1 Thessalonians 4:16 - *"For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first."*

Revelation 1:5 - *"Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits before his throne, and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth."*

6. The disfigurement of Jesus

The question has also been asked about why Mary, then the 2 disciples on the road to Emmaus didn't recognize Jesus. Mary thought Jesus was the gardener and only recognised him when he switched from Greek to Aramaic and said, 'Mary'. The men on the road to Emmaus only recognised Jesus when he broke bread with them. Then the disciples were terrified when he appeared in the upper room. The disciples fishing who changed nets to the right side only realised it was Jesus after the nets became full and John must have remembered what happened before.

In Isaiah 50.6 the Bible talks about Jesus having his beard pulled off. We could also assume things from Revelation 5.6 about Jesus looking like a lamb who had been slain and Zechariah 12.10 that 'they shall look upon me whom they have pierced'. Isaiah 52.14 speaks about Jesus: *"his appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any man and his form marred beyond human likeness."*

What can we assume? Well, it may be that Jesus was given away by the holes in his hands – by people looking on where he had been pierced (such as Thomas). Maybe Jesus still carried the disfigurement from his torture and crucifixion and perhaps he no longer had his beard.

Jesus still bears the marks of what happened on the cross. Story of woman who was disfigured – daughter embarrassed until she found out her mom got the injuries by being burned while trying to save her daughter's life. Jesus shows us that same love and when one day we look on his face, we will see this.

See Missler (2005: 191-194)

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