**Easter** dkm April 2024

In the calendar today is called Easter Sunday, and the day before yesterday was called Good Friday. The word Easter apparently comes from a Latin word meaning ‘white’ or ‘dawn’, via Old German into the English language. In French it is ‘Paques’ which comes from the Latin ‘Pascha’ or Passover, which makes more sense. But the word ‘Easter’ is not found in the Bible (apart from the KJV in Acts 12:4) because there was no such ‘holiday’ in the early church.

The early church did not keep ‘religious days’, and nor do we, because there is no such command in Scripture- apart from the Lord’s Day which is commanded in Scripture. Under the old covenant, people met for worship on the last or seventh day of the week, ‘but from the resurrection of Christ, [this day] was changed into the first day of the week, which, in Scripture, is called the Lord’s day’ (WCF XXI.7).

Our Westminster Confession also has a chapter on ‘the two sacraments ordained by Christ our Lord in the gospel’: Baptism and the Lord’s Supper. The sacrament of the Lord’s Supper was established by Jesus as he celebrated Passover with his disciples in the ‘upper room’ in Jerusalem. Jesus knew this would be his last Passover, and indeed, the last Passover for the people of God, because he was fulfilling the Passover. He announced the new covenant in his own blood the night before he died.

Jesus knew he was about to be betrayed, and arrested, and crucified. He came into this world knowing it was God’s will for him to ‘drink the cup of God’s wrath’ (Ps 75:8), to suffer the wrath of God against sin, against our sin, and bear in his own body the penalty that was ours: ‘The wages of sin is death’ (Rom 6:23). He knew he had no sin of his own, but that he would become sin for us, ‘that we might become the righteousness of God in Him’ (2Cor 5:21).

Jesus knew what was written in Psalm 22, and in Isaiah 53, about himself, even if his disciples did not make the connection. Jesus told them a number of times that he must suffer at the hands of the Jewish leaders and be killed, and be raised on the third day (Mat 16:21, 17:23, 20:18,19), but they did not believe him. Indeed, Peter was so bold as to rebuke Jesus for saying such a thing (Mat 16:22). So when Jesus was arrested they were surprised, and fled in fear. Jesus was abandoned, even by those closest to him.

There are still people who, if they believe that Jesus of Nazareth was crucified, believe it was simply a tragic miscarriage of justice; ‘good men sometimes suffer and die’. From a worldly perspective, his death was certainly an injustice, but what about God’s perspective? What is your perspective on Jesus’ death? Is his death any more than history, a significant event in history in that it divides history - BC to AD? Do you believe that you have anything to do with Jesus’ death, or any benefit from his death? Do you believe that it was your sin that God was punishing on the cross? Do you believe that the death of Jesus was for your justification before God?

The cross of Christ was a great injustice, yes, but it was a great justification before God for you who believe. God was being ‘just, and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus’ (Rom 3:26). This was God’s plan from the very beginning, the plan of the just and loving God to save us from sin’s sentence of death. Psalm 22 is a revelation of God’s plan for his Son, Jesus Christ, to die and be raised again, a thousand years before Christ. Isaiah 53, written seven hundred years before Christ, is also prophecy regarding Christ’s death, a prophecy telling us that his death would be for us and our justification, our being made righteous before God.