

Retired Members Corner



CENTREPOINT – THE CROSS

At Easter our hearts and minds turn to the Cross. This is the centre of our thoughts. Paul said that Christ had sent him to preach the gospel and, purely and simply, that was to preach Christ crucified (1 Cor 1 v 23). The Cross is not only central to our Christian faith and our salvation, it is also central to History (His Story). Although we record our dates as either BC (Before Christ) or AD (Anno Domini - in the year of our Lord) with reference to the Lord's birth, Jesus was born to die. Jesus said He came to give His life as a ransom for many (Mark 10 v 45).

It is interesting to examine how the sacrifice of the Lamb of God on the Cross brought a new relationship between God and man. The Old Testament (BC) deals with God's chosen people, the children of Israel, Jacob's twelve tribes. The New Testament (AD) deals with God's chosen people, the Church, the Bride of Christ. Every time we write the date - 2010 - we are proclaiming when the dispensation of the Law changed to the dispensation of Grace.

In the Old Testament God called Abraham to leave Ur of the Chaldees and to be the father of a great nation (Gen 12 v 1/2). This was an earthly people - the Israelites. In the New Testament, Jesus gave Himself for us on the Cross that He might redeem us from iniquity and purify unto Himself a peculiar people (Titus 2 v 14). This is a spiritual people out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation. The Cross made the way of salvation open to all if they were prepared to repent of their sin and accept Jesus as their Lord and Saviour.

So, if the life, death and resurrection of Jesus is the centre of History, what was happening in 2010 BC? Well, the pyramids at Gizeh were already ancient monuments. According to the pundits who study these things, Abraham had been in Canaan 80 years, Sarah had long since died and he had been married to his second wife, Keturah, for 15 years. Isaac was 55 years old and married to Rebekah. In five years' time (2005) the twins Esau and Jacob would be born. How did these people commune with God? Whenever Abraham moved from place to place it would appear that he built an altar and offered sacrifices to God. He built

an altar when God appeared to him in visions. When he was about to sacrifice Isaac on Mount Moriah (Gen 22) the Lord provided him with a ram as a substitute and he named the place Jehovah Jireh, meaning, "The Lord will provide". He built an altar between Bethel and Ai (Gen 12 v 8), that is, between God's house and the world. All the while God was revealing how communication could be re-established after the fall of Adam had caused sin to separate man from God. There could be no remission of sin without the shedding of blood. Altars were for the sacrifice of animals as substitutes for man, and sacrifices could make a bridge over the chasm between God's dwelling place and the world. At first Abraham was his own priest officiating at the altar, but later Melchizedec appears on the scene as mediator between Abraham and God. It is clear that as time moved on God's revelation was progressing towards 0 BC.

So, in 2010 AD how do God's chosen people, the Church, commune with God? Although in some churches there is an altar and a priest in fine raiment, in many there is a communion table. The bread and wine of Melchizedec has progressed to the bread and wine of the last supper (1 Cor 11 v 26). Whoever presides at the table need not be an ordained minister or priest since all believers are now priests. Each believer is a lively stone, part of a spiritual house, a holy priest able to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ (1 Peter 2 v 5). What sort of spiritual sacrifices do we offer in 2010 AD? God's Word identifies seven, I believe. Firstly, we must present our bodies as a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service (Rom 12 v 1). Secondly, we offer the sacrifice of praise to God which is the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His Name (Heb 13 v 15). Thirdly, sacrificial prayers of believers rise up as incense before the throne of God (Rev 8 v 3/4). Fourthly, the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart (Ps 51 v 17). We sing "Lord, break me, melt me, mould me, fill me". We would sacrifice ourselves at the Potter's House. Fifthly, sacrificial giving to those engaged in God's work is well pleasing to God (Phil 4 v 18). Sixthly, to be poured out as a sacrifice in serving God and labouring on His behalf is not in vain (Phil 2 v 17). The final sacrifice is the work of an evangelist ministering the gospel resulting in the conversion of sinners whom he can present as an offering acceptable to God (Rom 15 v 16).

In Abraham's day they did not know they were living in 2010 BC. God did not reveal when His Son would leave Heaven's glory. As the time came closer, however, the expectancy increased. It was revealed to Simeon that he would see the Lord's Christ before he died (Luke 2 v 26).

We do not know what year BSCC (Before the Second Coming of Christ) we are living in. As the time comes closer, however, our expectancy is increasing. The signs of the times seem to indicate it. God's clock, Israel, is ticking ever closer to midnight. The diaspora is returning. He will come in the twinkling of an eye. Are you watching and waiting? Are you listening for the trump of God? Be prepared.

THE GAUGER