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THE SEASON OF LENT

Learning from our Calendar (5)

My purpose - Reminder

- ▶ This year, I am preaching through the calendar - an ongoing study of holidays and observances we find on our calendars.
- ▶ This is not about observing these days as the church, but addressing various subjects related to these days from a Biblical perspective (since holidays often cause us to pause and ponder their meaning).
- ▶ Also, there are “religious holidays” that we ought to be informed about.

The Season of Lent

- ▶ Lent, a 40 day period (actually 42 days) of fasting, almsgiving and prayers (designed to offset the avenues of lust - flesh, eyes & pride - **1 John 2:15-16**) to prepare for the Easter season.
- ▶ Its origin is with pre-Catholicism, but many today practice various aspects of this season.
- ▶ It begins with Ash Wednesday and culminates on Holy Thursday, just before Easter.

The Season of Lent

- ▶ Observers are encouraged to give up some luxury and/or vices as a matter of self-control.
- ▶ On Ash Wednesday and Good Friday they are to fast. On Fridays during Lent they are to not eat meat (but they can have fish).
- ▶ Should one choose, Sundays are exempt (because the sacrifices are voluntary)
- ▶ It is suggested that during the whole period they give up something they enjoy.

The Season of Lent

- ▶ The purpose of this period is an effort to purify oneself for the most holy observance of Easter.
- ▶ It is a season of repentance (penitence) and reflection.
- ▶ It is an extended period to practice self-control, self-discipline, sacrifice (denying oneself) and increased focus on God and Jesus.
- ▶ It is also a time where good deeds are encouraged.

The Season of Lent

- ▶ The 40 days is based upon various Bible passages identified with fasting and abstinence.
 - Moses on Mt. Sinai (2x) - **Exodus 24:19, 34:28**
 - Elijah fleeing from Jezebel - **1 Kings 19:8**
 - 40 days of rain (cleansing) - **Genesis 7:12**
 - Jesus after His baptism in the wilderness -
Matthew 4:2
 - Jonah's warning to Nineveh - **Jonah 3:4**
- ▶ Typically, if one is struggling to overcome a bad habit, 40 days is a good starting point.

The Season of Lent - The “Easter Calendar”

- ▶ NOTE: Most of the following details are from Catholic resources. I have tried to be as accurate and objective as possible.
- ▶ The calendar - the dating of the “Easter calendar” has its origins in 325 AD at the council of Nicaea (**NOT during NT times**)
- ▶ Easter is the first Sunday after the first full moon following the vernal equinox (first day of spring). It can be any day from March 22nd to April 25th. To determine lent, count back 6 Sundays plus 4 days to Ash Wednesday (46 days).



The Season of Lent - The “Easter Calendar”

Mardi Gras - French for “Fat Tuesday”

- ▶ This is a day of celebration and indulgence before the beginning of Lent.
- ▶ The purpose is to remind us of blessings of prosperity.
- ▶ Celebrated with eating rich foods and festivities. NOTE: Catholicism does NOT condone the debauchery that is often associated with the day.
- ▶ Part of its purpose was to use up rich foods before the start of the fast & abstinence.



The Season of Lent - The “Easter Calendar”

“Ash Wednesday”

- ▶ The first day of the Lenten season.
- ▶ A special day of fasting and penance.
- ▶ Catholicism regulates the “fast”
 - 1 regular meal and 2 small snacks.
 - Observed from ages 18-58
 - Abstain from meat, but you can eat fish.
Some deny & others permit animal products
 - If medical conditions require eating meat that is exempted
- ▶ May go to “mass” and have a priest put ashes in the shape of a cross on one’s forehead. Recipients **MAY** choose to keep it there all day or wash it off.



The Season of Lent - The “Easter Calendar”

“Palm Sunday”

- ▶ 39 days after Ash Wednesday.
- ▶ This is the Sunday before Easter and commemorates the triumphal entry of Jesus (**Matthew 21:7-8, John 12:13-15**), when followers laid down their coats and palm branches as He arrived on a donkey.
- ▶ Some churches will give participants palm branches that have been blessed to take home. Some weave them into crosses and/or display the branches. Instead of throwing them away, they are brought to the church to be burned for the ashes the next year.



The Season of Lent - The “Easter Calendar” “Holy Thursday”

- ▶ The last day of Lent.
- ▶ A special mass is offered to commemorate Jesus instituting the Lord’s Supper (**Luke 22:14-20**) in the evening.
- ▶ This is the beginning of the “most sacred days of Catholic faith.” Called the Paschal Triduum.
- ▶ NOTE: Catholicism believes in transubstantiation, that the “communion” is literally transformed into the body & blood of Jesus.



The Season of Lent - The “Easter Calendar”

“Good Friday”

- ▶ Commemorates the crucifixion of Jesus.
- ▶ It is called “good” because of the results of His death (**Isaiah 53:5**, etc.).
- ▶ There is no “Mass” on this day. But people are encouraged to think of about His death. Some suggest that people remain silent from noon - 3 pm (**cf. Luke 23:44**)



The Season of Lent - The “Easter Calendar”

“Holy Saturday”

- ▶ The day Jesus was in the grave.
- ▶ It is a day of preparation for Easter Sunday.
- ▶ Churches will conduct a Saturday evening, “Easter Vigil”. A bonfire will be lit outside the church and a priest lights a paschal candle, then participants will each light a candle from the paschal candle filling the dark church with light.



The Season of Lent - The “Easter Calendar” “Easter Sunday”

- ▶ Celebrates the resurrection of Jesus (I will address this later in the year)
- ▶ This will begin a 50 day period known as “Easter season”.
- ▶ It culminates with Pentecost (the day the church/kingdom began - **Acts 2**).



Lessons to consider

Observations

- ▶ I am NOT questioning the good intentions of the various events of this season.
Some of the activities would be good things to consider from time to time INDIVIDUALLY (**cf. Romans 14:5-6**).
- ▶ BUT, good intentions alone do not make what we do right. **Matthew 7:21-23**
- ▶ Obedience is about doing what Christ desires THE WAY He instructs us.



Lessons to consider

The season of lent is NOT found in the Bible

- ▶ While uncertain of its beginning, the 4th century AD is when we have recorded observances of some of these activities (portions predate that time frame).
- ▶ NOTE: This is TOO late to consider it “according to scripture”.
- ▶ There is NO command, example or inference to the observance of this season in scripture.
- ▶ The problem is that many think it is!



Lessons to consider

The season of lent is NOT found in the Bible

- ▶ Lent is justified based on
 - The 40 days of fasting of Jesus
 - **Matthew 9:15**, where Jesus said a time of fasting would come
 - Examples of “communal fasting” in scripture – e.g., **Acts 13:1-3, 14:23, etc.**



Lessons to consider

The season of lent is NOT found in the Bible

- ▶ Lent justified answered:
- ▶ There is NOTHING about a period of ritualistic fasting in the New Testament.
- ▶ Yes Jesus did fast for 40 days. But His purpose was to establish His dominance over Satan.

NOTE: Jesus ate NOTHING during this period -
Matthew 4:2, Luke 4:1-2 - that is different than Lent



Lessons to consider

The season of lent is NOT found in the Bible

- ▶ Lent justified answered:
- ▶ While **Matthew 9:15** does mention a time when His disciples would fast. There are no details of what that involved. Was it voluntary or involuntary? Was it individual? WHEN? What occasion? Etc. ???????????
- ▶ As to communal fasting. The occasions were exception and warranted intense prayers (appointing elders, Paul & Barnabas' first preaching journey, etc.)
- ▶ That is NOT an annual ritual.



Lessons to consider

Traditions

- ▶ NOTE the very specific instructions given for observing various days and the season. Where?????
- ▶ Catholicism places tradition as equally authoritative with scripture.
- ▶ Consider **2 Timothy 3:16-17, 2 Peter 1:3, Jude 3, Galatians 1:6-9, 1 Corinthians 4:6, etc.**



Lessons to consider

Traditions

- ▶ The Bible and traditions:
- ▶ **Matthew 15:1-9** addresses the traditions of men. They render worship to God vain.
- ▶ **Galatians 4:9-11** - they observed days and seasons, “I am afraid for you, lest I have labored in vain.”
- ▶ **Colossians 2:8** - Beware, lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit...
- ▶ **1 Corinthians 4:6** - BOUNDARIES!!!!



Lessons to consider

Traditions

- ▶ The Bible and traditions:
- ▶ There are traditions we do keep:
- ▶ **2 Thessalonians 2:15** - the teachings of the apostles.
- ▶ Should we observe traditions in how we worship they must be TRUE to God's standard, and we CANNOT bind them on others!



Lessons to consider

Lent does not accord with what the Bible teaches about the church of Christ

- ▶ WHERE in the NT do we find churches observing special Sundays, annual feasts, holiday seasons, etc.?
- ▶ Our worship is governed by the pattern we find in scripture - **Acts 20:7, 1 Corinthians 16:1-2, 11:8** - every Sunday.
Hebrews 10:24-25 - not forsaking
- ▶ Various acts of worship defined.



Lessons to consider

Concerning personal worship

- ▶ There are acts of worship and things we can do as individuals that the church cannot do
- ▶ **1 Thessalonians 5:17, 2 Timothy 2:15, etc.**
- ▶ What about fasting? **Matthew 6:16-18, Acts 9:9-11** - Paul for 3 days;
1 Corinthians 7:5 - husbands & wives
Let it be PRIVATE!

Lessons to consider

Concerning personal worship

- ▶ We need to learn self-control & sacrifice -
**2 Peter 1:5-6, Galatians 5:22-23,
1 Corinthians 9:24-27, etc.**
- ▶ We need to contemplate Jesus.
**Philippians 2:5, 1 Peter 2:21
Galatians 6:14, etc.** It is good for us to
regularly pause and think about Him.
Do we do this often enough?



Lessons to consider

Concerning personal worship

- ▶ NOTE: Should you choose to engage in these activities, be different.

As we have noted, it is NOT found in scripture. Today, even some congregations, CHOOSE to make no distinction. Is that deceptive?

2 Corinthians 6:14-17 - includes false religion

- ▶ Please do NOT leave the impression you believe these traditions of men are what God commands!



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Does Jesus deserve more
than just a season?

Learning from our Calendar (5)

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Let us pray!

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Learning from our Calendar (5)