

Introduction

- The Scriptures reveal a God who creates a world and a people engaged in cycles, rhythms, seasons, and holy days of feasting - embedding worship in time
- There were **feast days/periods** explicitly given by God in the Law
 - **Sabbath** - Leviticus 23:3
 - **Passover** - Leviticus 23:5
 - **Unleavened Bread** - Leviticus 23:6
 - **Firstfruits** - Leviticus 23:9-14
 - **Weeks/Pentecost** - Leviticus 23:15-20
 - **Trumpets** - Leviticus 23:23-25
 - **Day of Atonement** - Leviticus 23:26-3
 - **Booths/Tabernacles** - Leviticus 23:33-43

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- There were **other feasts** that were not given explicitly in the Law, but were established by the Jewish people (apart from any direct command from the Lord) as a remembrance of God's work
- **Purim** - Esther 9:20-32
 - **Feast of Lights/Hanukkah** - established between Old/New Testaments
- These feasts, apart from those tied to specific historical events, also show God's highlighting the **annual cycles** that coincide with **agricultural rhythms**
- If anything, we see God as a **celebratory** and **feast-encouraging** God

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- As a Jewish man under the law, **Jesus** would have kept the biblical feasts established in the Law of Moses
- We are also told that Jesus celebrated the "un-commanded" feasts established by the Jews - **Purim** (John 5:1ff) and **Hanukkah** (John 10:22ff)
- A *similar pattern* is seen in that God established **Tabernacle/Temple** worship in the Law of Moses (in which Jesus participated)
 - Even though the practice of **Synagogue** worship was not biblically commanded, it was an alternative house of worship by at least 3rd century BC
 - Jesus also customarily participated in synagogue worship (Luke 4:16) though not commanded in Scripture
- Why do I take the time to explain these things?

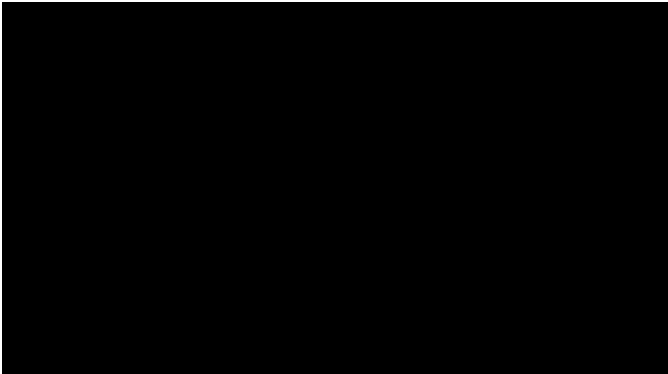
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- Paul deals with the practice of these day by Gentile believers (Romans 14; Colossians 2:16ff)
- Some have taken this to mean that there ought to be no NT equivalent
 - Yet, after the time of the Apostles the Church in various ways followed this impetus to remember **significant New Covenant events** by way of feast days and festivals - evolving into what is known as the **The Church Calendar**
 - Sadly, the practice turned into meritorious acts, and together with Saints Days became burdensome
- It is to much of these abuses that the **Reformation** responds, especially the **Puritans**, in clearing the deck and looking for only biblically established days (i.e. the Sunday Sabbath)
- Nevertheless, the **practice has been maintained** by Lutherans, Episcopalians, and a number Presbyterian Churches
- Baptist Churches often identify Christmas and Easter, but take them out of the "storied" practice of the church practiced for centuries

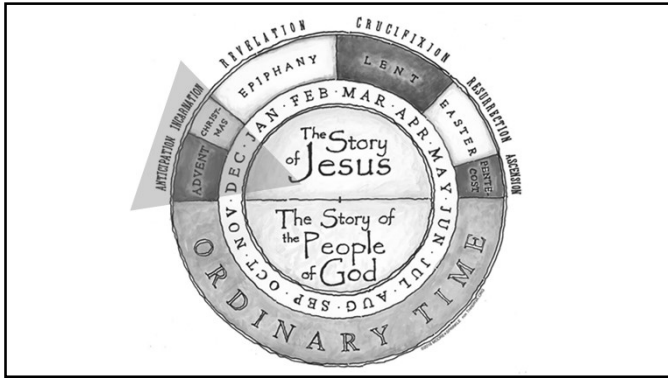
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- The tradition of the Church Calendar was not something I was familiar with for many years, and likewise adopted a minimalist perspective
 - This was from a **Regulative Principle** approach, one that is understandable in seeking to be faithful to the Bible
 - However, I have rethought the approach, and believe there are good reasons to consider it not as an "ought" of biblical command, but "free to" of historical example (similar principle - Wednesday evenings, Sunday structures (time, liturgy), family worship)
- **Potential benefits:**
 - Establishing a **subversive timeline and story** to counteract the narratives of our culture
 - A **shared way of thinking** about time to remind us of the realities of Jesus Christ and the Good News of the Kingdom
- With this in mind, here is a brief explanation of The Christian Year

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Advent/Christmas/Epiphany Timeline

- **4 Advent Sundays** (Nov 29th, Dec 6th, 13th, 20th)
 - Identifying with **Israel's story** in longing for Messiah in dark times
 - Taking up their songs, exile mentality, to be set free by their King
 - Paralleling this with the **2nd coming of Jesus** at the end of the age
 - Pressing into sorrow, longing, the winter wait (Narnia)
- **Christmas Day** (Dec 25th)
 - Not the actual date of Jesus' birth, but a day **commemorating** God becoming flesh and dwelling among us
- **Christmas Sundays** (Dec 27th and Jan 3rd)
 - Celebration of the incarnation of the Son of God in the **12 Days** of Christmas festival...extending beyond commercial practice

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Psalms 72 - Prayer for Messiah's Coming Reign

A psalm of Solomon

*Give your love of justice to the king, O God,
and righteousness to the king's son.*

*Help him judge your people in the right way;
let the poor always be treated fairly.*

*May the mountains yield prosperity for all,
and may the hills be fruitful.*

9

*Help him to defend the poor,
to rescue the children of the needy,
and to crush their oppressors.*

*May they fear you as long as the sun shines,
as long as the moon remains in the sky.*

Yes, forever!

10

*May the king's rule be refreshing
like spring rain on freshly cut grass,
like the showers that water the earth.*

May all the godly flourish during his reign.

*May there be abundant prosperity
until the moon is no more.*

*May he reign from sea to sea,
and from the Euphrates River
to the ends of the earth.*

11

*Desert nomads will bow before him;
his enemies will fall before him in the dust.*

*The western kings of Tarshish and other distant lands
will bring him tribute.*

*The eastern kings of Sheba and Seba
will bring him gifts.*

*All kings will bow before him,
and all nations will serve him.*

12

*He will rescue the poor when they cry to him;
 he will help the oppressed,
 who have no one to defend them.*

*He feels pity for the weak and the needy,
 and he will rescue them.*

*He will redeem them from oppression and violence,
 for their lives are precious to him.*

13

Long live the king!

May the gold of Sheba be given to him.

*May the people always pray for him
 and bless him all day long.*

*May there be abundant grain throughout the land,
 flourishing even on the hilltops.*

14

*May the fruit trees flourish like the trees of Lebanon,
 and may the people thrive like grass in a field.*

*May the king's name endure forever;
 may it continue as long as the sun shines.*

*May all nations be blessed through him
 and bring him praise.*

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Application

- During this Advent season, **lean into** the lament and longing
- Explore and use this **Psalm** (and others like it) to **feel and pray** the reality of our rebellious, broken, and yet to be redeemed world (and selves)
- Like a woman in **pregnant with promise**, feel the burden and look forward to the appearance of the birth of the Christ-child
- **This year live in** the Story, His story, His people's story...your story
- **Invitation** to get in on the Greatest Story Ever Told
