

The Season of the Church Year and their Liturgical Colors

A. Seasons of the Church Year

1. Biblical example of time

a) Time for rest

Genesis 1:5; Genesis 1:14; Exodus 20:8-11

b) Days of remembrance

Leviticus 23:4-8 Passover

23:9-14 Firstfruits

23:15-22 Feast of Weeks

23:23-25 Trumpets

23:33-43 Tabernacles

16 Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur

2. Christian Calendar History

a) Luke 24:1 & Luke 1:5, 2:2 & Acts 2:1 Easter, Christmas, Pentecost

b) for what purpose?

1) keep the memories alive

(God commanded the Jews to remember how he delivered them from slavery, Christians continue to keep these past memories alive)

2) regularity of the holidays as teaching moments for followers of Christ

(Passover meal begins with the question, "Why is this night different from all other nights?" Ex 12:24-28)

3) calendar of Christian events unites believers with the past and the future in the present

(Christians recognize that this life is not an end in itself, Christ's victory over death means that daily life focuses beyond the mundane to eternity)

Liturgical calendar is used because it is Christ-centered

3. History and Development of the Church Year

a) Sunday

1) Jewish tradition (Ex 23:1-12; Genesis 2:2-3) Shabbat, day of rest, Saturday

2) a Christian change (1Corinthians 16:2; Matthew 28:1-6; Revelation 1:10)

- Bishop Ignatius of Antioch (AD 35-107) and *Didache* early second century - the Lord's Day

b) Advent

Latin *adventus* = _____ (coming) 550 AD

1) fourth Sunday before Dec 25 preparation for Christmas

2) century later focus shifted toward anticipation of Christ's second coming, penitential nature, postpone weddings, Gloria in Excelsis omitted, focus on Christ's second coming as judge on Last Day,

Four advents or comings –

1. prophets pointing to Christ's birth

2. incarnate coming of Christ in Bethlehem

3. sacramental coming of Christ in Word and Sacrament

4. Christ's coming at the end of world

c) Christmas

date March 25, January 6, December 25

Why December 25? Pagan winter solstice festival known as the birth of the invincible sun, Christians adapted to the birth of the truly invincible son of God whom the darkness has not overcome (John 1:5) Fourth century – dating conception more significant, annunciation at March 25 – December 25 nine months

12 Days of Christmas? Continues after December 25th

Festival of St. Stephen, St. John the apostle, Feast of Holy Innocents, circumcision and naming of Jesus, Epiphany of our Lord

d) Epiphany

Greek epiphany = manifestation (Season of Light emphasizes Jesus' manifestation as God and man, evangelism emphases)

January 6 = another pagan holiday, birth of Aeon (greek god), first century Christians replaced it with this festival, birth and baptism of Jesus

Length – 9 Sundays, depending on date of Easter

Baptism of our Lord, Jesus' first miracle (John 2.11)

ends with Transfiguration (Bugenhagen, Luther's pastor)

e) Lent

Latin – spring Old English – lengthen

40 days prior to Easter, baptismal candidates were examined in preparation for baptism at the Easter Vigil, 325AD Council of Nicaea recorded first reference to forty days, later associated with 40 days in desert, temptation (Matthew 4), 40 years in wilderness (Numbers 14:34), 329AD Bishop Athanasius asked congregation to keep a fast of 40 days.

Fifth century Pope Leo the Great explained to congregation that Lent was appointed to prepare souls for a fruitful commemoration of the mystery of Easter, as a time of inner purification and sanctification, penance for sins past, breaking off of sinful habits, exercise of virtues, almsgiving, reconciliation and laying aside of enmity and hatred.

Ash Wednesday

- places of ashes, France, sixth century, sign of penitence and reminder of human mortality

Alleluias discontinued, Gloria in Excelsis not sung, Sundays in Lent, not of Lent, sat, sun, holy week not considered part of lent,

Holy Week

Palm Sunday – begun post reformation, palms = hope, life, victory

Triduum – Latin = three days

- Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Easter Eve, observed sooner than Lent was

Maundy Thursday – Latin mandatum novum Jesus gives his disciples a new command (John 13:34), footwashing in Germany 1500s, Jesus' institution of Sacrament of the Altar, altar is stripped, read Ps 22, benediction not spoken, service continues the next day

Good Friday – mourning and fasting,

f) Easter and its season

- chief festival in early Christian church,

- date 1st Sunday after the first full moon after the spring equinox

- He is risen! He is risen indeed!

- the great 50 days 1/7 of the year to the Lord's resurrection

- 2nd Sunday of Easter = White Sunday, recently baptized wore their white robes all week as a sign of their baptism, German churches confirmation the Sunday after Easter (beginning in ninth century),

- 4th Sunday of Easter = Good Shepherd Sunday

- Ascension Sunday = 40 days after Easter, Thursday (Acts 1:3)

g) Pentecost - Greek = 50th after Passover

- harvest festival, birthday of Christian church (Acts 2:1-41), 2nd century Christians not baptized at Easter vigil baptized on Pentecost

- emphasis on the HS

- moving paschal candle closer to the font, continuing presence and work of HS

- 1st Sunday after Pentecost Trinity Sunday (tenth century) Athanasian Creed, Apostles', Nicene being used in Europe

- Sundays after Pentecost = God's activity in the church, Christian living

h) Saints Days and Lesser Festivals

- anniversaries of martyrs (birthday into eternity), commemoration of the saints, see page in CW

- 33 minor festivals

i) End Times – 4 weeks

1) Reformation Sunday (Luther's 95thesis 1517 Oct 31)

2) Last Judgment – reminder of Christ's second coming to judge the living and the dead

3) Saints Triumphant – eternal glory of the saints is emphasized

4) Christ the King – 1925 added, entire year of the church celebrates the rule of Christ over our hearts now and forever

B. Colors of the liturgical calendar (see pgs. 157-161 in CW)

Purpose of colors – help to establish for believers the mood of the various seasons of the church year, science has long recognized that colors carry different moods and feelings...

White – color of the godhead and eternity; color of the robe of the glorified Christ and of the angels and saints in heaven; color of perfection, joy, purity, innocence, gladness; Christ's birth and baptism; Latin – alba – white, name for the liturgical gown worn by pastors, reminiscent of traditional baptismal dress

Black – absence of color; symbolic of death; associated with ashes and repentance

Red – color of fire, fervor, blood, martyrdom; victorious truth of Christian teaching based on the blood of Christ

Green – color of life, nourishment, growth; basic color of nature

Purple – color of royal mourning and repentance

Blue – color of the sky and hope and joy

Gold – color of royalty, riches, victory

Significance of the colors in our sanctuary?