

TRINITY NEWS

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ADVENT AND THE START OF A NEW CHURCH YEAR

The last Sunday of the church calendar is known as "Christ the King" Sunday, usually in late November during Thanksgiving weekend. The first Sunday in Advent follows, and I've always loved the spirit of slow somnolence gradually stirring awake into an air of expectation. Fall can be quite busy in church activities, as we've seen this year, and all of a sudden the stirring of Advent is upon us. As many therapists, counselors and pastors know, the holiday season can be quite painful for many. Life events occur with no regard for any calendar or human schedule. The season can also be an opportunity for truly covenantal living - a time to recall and reinforce in our lives the great Covenant Promises of God through human history. The Hebrew Bible records many - six or seven actually - where God specifically spells out something God will do and what God expects the people to do. Similar to a contract the Covenants of God could be either conditional or unconditional. They also could result in considerable political turmoil. The "Palestinian Covenant" is a real bone of contention even in Reformed circles today. (Genesis 15:1-6, 18-20) It started with the 4th Covenant - the "Abrahamic" that God promised to Abram (Genesis 12:1-3). All can celebrate the Abrahamic Covenant because we see in that great promise One who would come to bless us all - Jesus Christ. This was unconditional. God's blessing on this man and his posterity was not related to any degree of acceptance or obedience.

Abram did obey and God acknowledged his faith. Whether the descendents of Jacob, Abraham's grandson, who became the nation of Israel would inhabit the land granted to them was conditional on their obedience to the Laws of Moses in the Torah - part and parcel to the Mosaid-Palestinian Covenants - the 5th Covenant. Later God would speak through Nathan the Prophet to King David and establish the 6th - or Davidic Covenant. God would raise from David's descendents a King to reign forever. (IISamuel 7:12-13). While this is unconditional, it has yet to be seen in political reality. The world remains in the throes of the horsemen of Revelation 6:1-8. Prophets would call this Son of David the "Prince of Peace". Why then are we still involved in war, famine, death, hades, pestilence, etc.? Because God has not completed the blessing of Genesis 12:3. There remains those who have yet to take God up on God's promise in faith. What are we to do in the time we have? Live as people of faith - demonstrating the love of God, the power of God within the human heart, and bearing a life testimony that this is indeed the "God of the Living". Christmas, when the commercials are gone, really is about the promises of God. We continue with the last great Covenant - the 7th. Jesus inaugurated it the last evening of his earthly life. It is what He is all about.

"This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins."
--Matthew 16:28