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From Ashes of Repentance to Epiphany of Glory

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This week we are entering into the Lenten Season of the Christian Church.



I did not celebrate this season in my childhood, but only in my adult life. Jesus did not give a commandment about keeping a Season of Lent, but the Church under God, beginning in the fourth Century, recommended keeping an extended time of reflection for our lives. Some Believers do it this way.

"In the British Isles, the day before Ash Wednesday is called Shrove Tuesday, named for the ritual of 'shriving,' or forgiving of sins" (Associated Press, 2010). Their delicious pancakes were an easy way to use up butter and eggs before the less fattening, frugal days of Lent begins.

I try to attend the pancake supper of my church, especially for fellowship during the meal. It is fun to see the 'guys' working in the kitchen, flipping those hundreds of pancakes!

ASH WEDNESDAY

The name Ash Wednesday comes from the ancient practice of a minister placing ashes on a worshipper's forehead, sometimes in the form of a cross. It is a sign of humility.

Lent officially begins on this day. I think of the Words God said, "From dust you are, and to dust you shall return" (Genesis 3:19b NKJV).

This was a decree from God as a result of the treasonous choice our

first parents made to follow another god before Him. It was then necessary for Jesus to buy us back from the Pharaoh like usurper, Satan – and to redeem Adam and Eve from the results of turning over their lives and dominion of the world, to this King of Darkness (Revelation 5:3-14).

The Good News is that by Jesus' death and resurrection, salvation and restored dominion comes to all who receive the Savior, Jesus Christ. You could be on a desert island or in a foxhole, and pray to God to receive Christ, just as easily as someone who walks down the aisle of a church. God is available at this spring season or any time.

THE BIBLICAL NUMBER 40

"Since Sundays celebrate the resurrection of Jesus, the six Sundays that occur during Lent are not counted as part of the 40 days of Lent, and are referred to as the Sundays in Lent.

"The number 40 is connected with many biblical events, but especially with the forty days Jesus spent in the wilderness preparing for His ministry by facing the temptations that could lead Him to abandon His mission and calling" (www.crivoice.org, 2010).

We need to pray for ourselves that we will not be tempted by the Deceiver who would like us to abandon God's 'mission and calling' for our lives. "If it feels good, do it" is not the pathway for a healthy, exemplary, influential life.

REPENTANCE AND RESTORATION

During these six weeks, we will remember that through our unre-

pentant sinful life-style, we in essence may have crucified Jesus afresh (Hebrews 6:1-6). The Commandments of God are broken or not even known (Exodus 20:1-17). Or if we, like Peter, do not admit to those asking us about our Friend Jesus or do not admit that we even know Him – we may all the while deny our Best Friend who loved us to His death.

Peter repented from his denial of the Lord and was empowered with the Holy Spirit.

His life of victory is proclaimed in the Bible and his name is written as one of the 12 Apostles of the Lamb. God's 12 welcome mats, or foundations at Heaven's gates, list Peter's name! (Revelation 21:14; "Heaven Tours," Bennett, 2009, pictures p. 146,150).

Every Sunday "The book of Common Prayer" used in many churches proclaim the "mystery of faith:

- Christ has died,
- Christ is risen,
- Christ will come again."

This Lenten season begins with ashes. We walk with Christ through His challenge to the world's darkness. It concludes with joyful fulfillment in the epiphany of His resurrection light.

I'll see you next time as we explore God's bestseller.

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