

Glad Tidings

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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53 Sundays

(Jerry Fite)

For 53 Sundays to occur in a single year, our calendar reveals impreciseness in chronicling time by the year. We are quick to say that there are 365 days, or 52 weeks in a year, while understanding that the earth’s yearly rotation around the sun does not occur exactly at the end of the 365th day, or at the close of the seventh day of the 52nd week. To be more precise, there is a day left over when chronicling by the week, and a $\frac{1}{4}$ of a day added to the number of days it takes for the earth to complete its yearly orbit around the sun.

To accommodate for the yearly fractional addition of the day ($\frac{1}{4}$), our calendars periodically add an additional day (February 29). So, every four years, we add a day to the year ($\frac{1}{4} \times 4 = 1$) thus totaling for that year 366 days. We call the fourth year, “leap year,” as we “leap” a full day to catch up to the earth-sun-orbit reality, and accommodate the impreciseness of our yearly calendar. The odd day left over after 52 full weeks is sometimes Sunday. Therefore, we occasionally have 52 weeks in the year, with 53 Sundays registering on the calendar.

This year, our calendar reveals something worth noticing other than the fact we have 53 Sundays: our year began on a Sunday, and ends today on a Sunday.

Can you think of a better way to begin a year than by gathering with the saints to worship God, and then end the year in the same fashion?

Sunday, is the first day of the week. It is the day when Jesus’ disciples “gathered together” to “break bread” in memory of the Lord’s death on the cross (*Acts 20:7*). The body and the blood of Jesus is remembered as we eat the bread and drink the cup, the fruit of the vine (*Matt. 26:26-28*). We reflect not only on His physically painful sacrificial death on the cross, but remember His blood ratified a new covenant of remission of sins for us. This year we have had the blessing of beginning and ending the year by gathering with those sanctified by Jesus’ blood to reflect with sobering thoughts and grateful hearts upon Jesus’ death, and its meaning for our lives.

We have been able to open the year and close it with a spiritual focus. Gathering to speak to

one another in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs directs our thoughts to God, as we praise His holy name in song. Our public prayers unite our thankful hearts in faith as we petition our loving and wise God. As we focus together on the teaching and proclamation of God’s Word, our faith is strengthened, and our lives are instructed with authoritative application. On the first day of week, we have an opportunity to give back to the Lord, and support His cause.

Praising God in song; trusting God in prayer; heeding God by receiving His heralded Word; and cheerfully giving back to God who prospered us in the first place combine to strengthen the inward man, and help keep the flesh in check. What a way to begin and end a year to the glory of God, and our spiritual well-being. By gathering with the saints, we have also been able to begin the year, and end it with our children seeing a spiritual emphasis in our families (cf. *Heb. 10:24-25*).

The Lord is “*the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end*” (*Rev. 22:13*). We have been able to reflect on this truth together at the beginning, and the end of 2017.