

Pembroke Bible Chapel

... from darkness to light ...



Welcome to our Thanksgiving Newsletter

October 2007

In Canada we celebrate Thanksgiving in October and in the United States in November. This year Canadian Thanksgiving is on Monday October 8 and Thanksgiving south of the border is Thursday November 22. This newsletter is focused on Thanksgiving. Our feature article considers what is the significance of Thanksgiving to the Christian. You will find a devotional, a thanksgiving recipe, an article on how we see God in the wonders of nature, and an interesting book review.

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FEATURED ARTICLE

Thanksgiving by Don

The traditions

Throughout history, many cultures have set aside a time to give thanks to God for a bountiful harvest. They might differ in their forms and presentations, but they all generally reflect on life's blessings. They would associate blessings with harvest festivals in gratitude to the God who protected them and their crops. Harvest festivals and thanksgiving celebrations held by the ancient Greeks, Romans, Hebrews, Chinese, and Egyptians all reflect a similar spirit.

American Thanksgiving, celebrated on the 4th Thursday of November, traces its origin to 1621 when the first pilgrims gave thanks for their preservation during the first winter in America. In 1863, President Abraham Lincoln appointed a national day of thanksgiving. Since then, each President has issued a Thanksgiving Day proclamation, usually designating the fourth Thursday of each November as the holiday.

Canadian Thanksgiving, celebrated on the second Monday in October, traces its origin to 1578 when the English explorer, Martin Frobisher, held a formal ceremony, in what is now called Newfoundland, to give thanks for surviving the long journey from England. Other settlers arrived and continued these ceremonies. The date for this celebration varied over the years and finally, on January 31st, 1957, Parliament proclaimed "A Day of General Thanksgiving to Almighty God for the bountiful harvest with which Canada has been blessed to be observed on the 2nd Monday in October." This was earlier in the year than the American holiday to tie into the Canadian harvest, which occurs earlier.

The Asian peoples, including the Chinese, Vietnamese, and Koreans, celebrate a thanksgiving harvest on the 15th of the 8th lunar month. This is known as the August Moon Festival or the Mid-Autumn Festival and is one of the most celebrated feasts in this culture. Often, it is a time to focus on family activities.

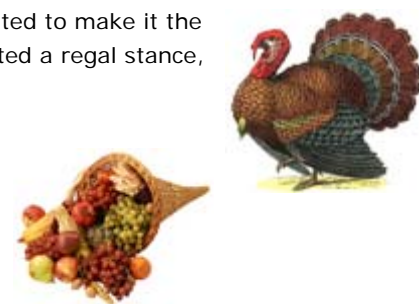
Many African peoples celebrate Kwanza on December 26 as a harvest celebration. The term Kwanza is the Swahili word for first fruits.

Succoth is the Jewish Harvest Festival. It begins on the 15th day of the Hebrew month of Tishri which usually occurs in September or October. The celebration lasts for 7 days. Succoth traditions and customs have both historical and religious significance. This festival dates back to the period during which Hebrews wandered in the wilderness on route to Canaan (now Israel). During their pilgrimage, they lived in temporary booths. This open living space was called a succah where the people gathered to worship and share meals. Succoth is also called the Feast of Tabernacles or the Feast of First Fruits when they gave thanks to God for their crops.

The symbols

The Turkey: The American tradition of eating turkey was founded by Benjamin Franklin, who wanted to make it the United States national symbol because it is a quick runner, wary, with sharp eyesight, and exhibited a regal stance, at least to Franklin.

Cornucopia: Long before the first Europeans arrived in North America, farmers in Europe celebrated by "Giving Thanks" for their good fortune at harvest time. The farm workers filled a curved goat's horn with fruits and grains. That symbol was called a "Cornucopia" or "Horn of Plenty". When these Europeans came to Canada, they brought this tradition with them.



Pumpkin Pie: One of the great harvest symbols in North America is the pumpkin. This loved symbol of the harvest season reflects the harvest fields of bright orange pumpkins adorning the landscape at harvest time.



Why give thanks?

The Bible exhorts us to give thanks in everything (1 Thessalonians 5:18). This verse is not saying to give thanks for everything, such as the trials and tribulations of life, but to give thanks to God for His goodness even in the midst of these difficulties. In Ephesians 5:20 we are exhorted to always give thanks to God for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. What are some of the things for which the born-again believer in Jesus Christ can give thanks?...

Our Redeemer, Jesus Christ, the undeserved kindness of God to us while we were still in our sins, the great plan of salvation revealed throughout every book of the Bible, the forgiveness of sins, the new birth, the indwelling Holy Spirit, the present certainty of eternal life, the promise of Christ's return, and many more.

Biblical significance of the Fall Feasts

There were seven great feasts in Old Testament Israel - three in the spring (at our Easter) - Passover, Unleavened Bread, and First Fruits, one seven weeks later - the Feast of Weeks/Pentecost, and three in the fall - Trumpets (on Tishri 1), Day of Atonement (on Tishri 10), and the Feast of Tabernacles/Booths (Succoth on Tishri 15). The three spring feasts were fulfilled (to the day) at the first coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. He died on the cross on Passover Friday and was raised on First Fruit Sunday. The Holy Spirit was given on the Feast of Pentecost. I personally believe that Christ's second coming will coincide with the three great Fall Feasts. Read on if you are interested why!

Christ's second coming is believed by many to take place in two parts separated by seven years or 2520 days of tribulation upon the earth (Daniel 7:25; 9:24-27; 12:7, 11, 12; Revelation 11:2,3; 12:6; 13:5). All born-again believers will be taken directly to heaven (raptured) - prior to this tribulation period (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 1 Corinthians 15:51-53). In my opinion, the Rapture is likely to be on the Day of Trumpets, in fulfillment of the first of the three Fall Feasts. The second part of His second coming (return to earth to reign for 1000 years) is likely to coincide with the second great Fall Feast, the Day of Atonement, seven years later. How can this be?

The Jewish lunar calendar has an extra month added about every 3 years (actually 7 days every 19 years) to correct for the lunar/solar difference. Thus a given 7-year period includes either two or three embolic (extra month added) years to account for this difference, or 86 or 87 lunar months. The average lunar period is 29.53 days at present. Thus a 7-year time with 2 embolic years equals $86 \times 29.53 = 2540$ days and this equates with the date of the Feast of Trumpets on year 7. The Day of Atonement in year seven is 10 days later or 2550 days from the start of the Tribulation Period. This equates exactly to the 30 extra days after the 2520 day tribulation period of Daniel's prophecy (Daniel 12:11). The celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles or Harvest, five days later, can be considered coincidental to our Thanksgiving celebrations.

This year, as you think about Thanksgiving, consider the significance and symbolism of this celebration. Are you truly thankful for the wondrous plan of salvation made possible through the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ? Are you thankful for God's gift of eternal life and Heaven? And, as you celebrate Thanksgiving, ask yourself - am I ready for the great Rapture of the Church which may well occur at this time of year?

HIGHLIGHTED DEVOTIONAL

SUPPORT, NOT RELIEF Stanford, None But The Hungry Heart



"In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you" (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

Relief from pressure may seem merciful, but support in the pressure produces growth and maturity.

"There is a greater blessing for us than relief; there is the Father's support, for it imparts to you an acquaintance with Himself which relief does not. Relief makes one more satisfied with things here. I have known some who could tell you of a long list of mercies, most touching, truly proof of the tenderness of God.

"Thank God, we all know something of His tenderness. But then there is a greater blessing, namely, that He does not remove the pressure, but raises you above it, so that, though you are not relieved, you are better off than if you were merely relieved, because you know His heart who supports you in the pressure. You have made a deep acquaintance with your Father, and your heart is more attached to Him." -J.B.S.

"It is not getting away from our circumstances, our environment, our associations, that we need, but the Lord Jesus' likeness where we are. The Father placed us there, permitted the trials for a purpose, and He stands ready to bring us out into a life of liberty, if we will stand with Him in trust and endurance while He works it out."

"Have you asked to be made like your Lord; that it might be 'not I, but Christ'? Have you longed for the fruit of the Spirit, and have you prayed for patience and love? Then fear not the stormy tempest that is at this moment sweeping through your life. A blessing is in the storm, and there will be a rich fruitage in the 'afterward.'"

"The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms" (Deuteronomy 33:27).

A daily devotional like this one can be found on our website at www.pembrokebiblechapel.com

SCIENCE & CREATION

The Ruby-throated Hummingbird by Chris

In eastern North America, the Ruby-throated Hummingbird is the only regular hummingbird, and many of its characteristics are shared with other hummingbird species. It is an amazing bird in many ways, living a fast life during the day, and sleeping deeply at night.

Ruby-throated Hummingbirds are tiny: usually 9 cm long (3.75"), with a wingspan of 11 cm (4.5"), and hardly more than 3.2 grams (0.11oz). This bird is so small, that a big aggressive dragonfly, the Dragonhunter, has been seen attacking it. Its iridescent green feathers on its back, and its dull grey belly make for an excellent camouflage. The male's black throat becomes a gorgeous ruby colour when sunlight is deflected in these special feathers. The Ruby-throated is easier to observe by a hummingbird feeder: this is where we can start to appreciate this astonishing creature.



Their flight is amazing: they can fly forward, backward, sideways, up or down, so they can drink nectar from flowers, advancing slowly in long flowers, backing up, going to another flower nearby, and repeating the process. Also, they can pivot on themselves to check on potential danger or rival. They are the only kind of bird that has a rigid wing: birds have an elbow and a wrist, like us, and they can fold their wings when needed. But the hummingbird can't fold its wings, they pivot at the shoulder, much like a paddle. To fly, they produce a figure of eight (8) motion, seen from profile, constantly changing the angle to push air down, even when pulling the wings up, an average of 60 times a second. Quite a feat!

Of course, such a rapid wingbeat requires a lot of energy, provided by fast sugars in the flowers' nectar, licked with a tongue extending another 2 cm (1") or so. But the nectar hardly contains any protein or fat. Protein is essential for growing, and feeding the young, which females do alone. To complete their nutrition, hummingbirds also eat small insects attracted by nectar, or caught in the air, or, simpler, caught in a spider web! They have been known to consume half their body weight in food every day. At night, though, they would quickly die if they kept their energy expenditure to this extreme. To allow survival, the Creator gave them a special physiological energy-saving feature: torpor. Their body temperature drops way down, their heartbeat slows right down, they fluff their feathers, and fall asleep until morning. Torpor is a bit like a miniature hibernation. The physiological changes are such that it is hard to figure out how this might have evolved by itself, how it could be programmed by chance. Yet, there is more.

These minute birds have to migrate to the tropics to escape winters. Well, many of them migrate through Mexico, but others migrate right across the Gulf of Mexico, over 500 km wide. How do we know for sure? Well, many witnessed these hummers perched on cruise ships way out on the Gulf, and also on distant oil rigs, taking a break from flight on an opportune support on their path. The Creator has indeed made marvels. Psalm 104:24.

Life as a Missionary

The Price is Right (Selling off my daughters) by Rolf Engelbrecht from "The Hernia" 2005

In traditional Nalu culture, wives are purchased [1] Depending on how wealthy a man is, he may collect up to four wives. Of course, he may not be able to afford the third or fourth until later in life, and it is not unheard of for a 75-year-old geezer to acquire a brand new 15-year-old bride to comfort him in his retirement years [2]

The Bride Price for a prospective new wife varies, depending on her qualities [3], and usually involves more than just cash. A typical Bride Price might include some or all of the following components:

- Kola Nuts (obligatory; presented to the bride's family when the engagement is negotiated, as a pledge and down payment)
- Livestock--a few goats or sheep
- Clothing--anywhere from two to ten nicely tailored outfits
- Chest--some sort of suitcase or large, tin box, to put all the stuff in
- Cash--varies largely, usually somewhere in the range of \$25 to \$100

I myself have three daughters (and a son), who all spent some years of their childhood and young adulthood living with us in the village of Kotufra. Somehow I was never able to earn what the Nalu would consider a respectable amount of labor nor marriage revenue out of them - but I love them dearly all the same!

Being very attractive young ladies (by any cultural standard), it was not surprising that village men of all ages and social ranks asked me frequently for one of my daughters to marry. Some were just jesting, of course, and were greatly entertained by seeing me get all flustered. But others were quite serious and hopeful--and persistent.

At first I tried declining these petitions with various excuses, ranging from "I'll leave that up to my daughters to decide "(which had the unfortunate result of my daughters being approached directly—gee thanks, Dad!), to "you wouldn't want them--they can't pound rice very well" (which the suitors interpreted enthusiastically as a potential bargaining point for reducing the assessed value of the prospective bride).

Eventually I hit upon a good solution: setting an impossibly high Bride Price. This proved to be an effective ploy with both the jokesters (who appreciate a good joke being turned back on them) and with the serious contenders (who were clearly set back beyond their means by the exorbitant asking price).

Not wanting to encourage the practice of favoritism among my offspring, I set the same price for each of my three daughters:

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(200 Elephants, non-negotiable!)

"That's impossible!" complained the disappointed suitors.

"I sure hope so!" said I [4].

Well, my daughters are all back in the US now. Good thing, because I recently learned something that caused me considerable concern:

I was informed by some Nalu elders in the capital city of Conakry, who are better versed in the more obscure elements of Nalu history, that the word for Elephant was once used long ago to refer to the basic monetary unit (now defunct, like the Confederate Dollar).

Imagine my shock when I realized I had been offering my daughters off at the bargain price of about \$2 each! Good thing none of the village suitors were Nalu History majors!



[1] Thus, a girl's otherwise inferior value (compared to that of a boy) is redeemed in two ways: her value as a worker during childhood, and later, as a source of revenue when purchased for marriage.

[2] Since I am obviously quite rich in their eyes, I have often been queried by the village men about having only one wife: "We know you are wealthy, Tongo – we have seen as many as six shirts hanging out on laundry day! Why then do you have only one wife? Would you like to buy some more? We have some great deals available for you if you want."

[3] Positive features include: attractive (pointed nose, lighter skin, not too skinny); strong; proven hard worker; good food preparer; good child bearing potential (often tested in advance)

[4] Guinea once had Elephants, but they are very rare now--probably less than 200 in the entire country. They have not been seen by the Nalu for several generations

RECIPE of the MONTH

Pumpkin Cheesecake by Bev
A yummy Thanksgiving dessert!

Crust

1/4 cup butter

1 1/4 cups of crushed ginger snaps

Melt butter. Stir in crumbs. Press into ungreased 9 inch cheesecake pan. Bake at 350F for 10 minutes.

Filling

2 - 8 oz pkgs softened cream cheese

2/3 cup white sugar

2 eggs

14 oz can of pumpkin

1/2 tsp cinnamon

1/2 tsp nutmeg

1/2 tsp ginger

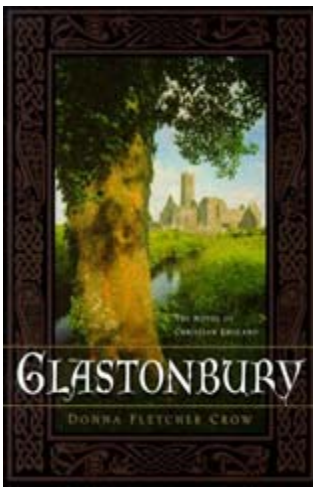
1/2 tsp salt

Beat cheese and butter. Add eggs, one at a time. Mix the rest in.

Bake at 350F 50 to 60 minutes. Let cool on counter and then refrigerate to set well. Beat small container of whipped cream and spread on top. Fine grate a semi-sweet chocolate square over top.



BOOK REVIEW



Glastonbury by Brenda

Sweeping through 1500 years of tumultuous history, *Glastonbury* tells the story of Christianity in England—from the first confrontations between druids and Christians to the dissolution of the monasteries under Henry VIII.

Glastonbury saw it all. The clash of cultures. Armies marching. The rise and fall of kingdoms. One language supplanting another. But *Glastonbury* remained a place of serenity, prayer, and reconciliation.

Here is a story of faith passed on from generation to generation. And here in this epic novel of the triumph of Christianity through the darkest moments of history, many will find their own spiritual roots.

The previous paragraphs were the information on the back cover of the book. This is a fascinating view of history that I had never heard of before. The writer has researched well and uses a blend of historical facts, myths, and legends to introduce the reader in an enthralling way to the history of those times. If you have ever wondered just how Christianity might possibly have spread from the biblical lands to Britain and beyond, this book tells you about the legend of how this happened. I would highly recommend it to any Christian interested in ancient history and legends.

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