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Looking Forward From Lent

If you're not already looking forward to Easter and the end of Lent then you probably live in some warm, sunny part of the world like Puerto Rico or the Southern Hemisphere. The rest of us are ready for winter to end and light to return to our dark lives.

Lent lasts 40 days because that's how long Jesus was in the wilderness being tempted by the Devil. Easter lasts 50 days because that's the time until Pentecost and, besides, you should spend more time celebrating Jesus' resurrection than preparing to celebrate it.

Lent and Easter reflect the constant tension of the Christian life. In a sense it is always Lent while we live in this world of sorrows. Until the day of the Lord's appearing, we are preparing for his coming, changing our minds about our false beliefs (repenting), and allowing the Spirit to instruct us in his ways. We live our lives in Lenten lands.

In another sense it is always Easter. As we await the Lord's appearing, we live in the power and glory of his resurrection, knowing that we have already been raised up in Christ and seated in heavenly realms, in him, at the Father's right hand. It would not be possible for us to travel safely through this Lenten world if we did not know ourselves to already be the children of the Easter world to come.

This tension of the "already" and the "not yet" explains why we experience both despair and joy, sometimes in the very same moment. We are already adopted and raised up in Christ, but we have not yet experienced the fullness of this reality in time and space.

It's not just the end of this year's season of Lent that we are looking forward to. We are looking forward to the end of the whole creation's Lent and the dawning of the Easter that will last for all eternity. The promise of the New Jerusalem, and the New Heaven and the New Earth, is that someday there will be no more Lent. Someday it will be Easter forever.

May we live in hope and faith as we look forward to the glory of the home our Father has prepared for us.

~ Jonathan Stepp