

What do we say when we are asked, what is meant by Lent?

How do we answer when asked by Christians and non-Christians, what is the meant by Lent in the Christian calendar. It is hardly a celebration but a practice and will affect church members in different personal ways.

Do we reply with the simple statement that it that period of time from Ash Wednesday, the first day of Lent until Maundy Thursday. But that is longer than 40 days. We don't include Sundays.

How did it all begin?

The word Lent comes from the Anglo-Saxon word **lencten** meaning spring-a period of enforced frugality in agricultural communities when the winter stores of food were running low. It is also derived from **lenctentid** which means Springtide or March when Lent usually occurs.

The Lenten period first emerged shortly after the Council of Nicaea in 325 AD and even the earliest observances of Lent focused on a practice of fasting, and eating one meal a day.

Lent was inserted into the yearly Christian liturgy with Pope Gregory I. He died in 604, when the **Lenten** period was regularized in the time and character. When it was regularized, **Lent** began 46 days before Easter with a ceremony of ash, and it didn't include Sundays.

The period became penitential preparation for Easter just as Christ's forty days and nights in the wilderness became His preparation for His crucifixion.

Two days before Lent begins is Shrove Tuesday. Shrove comes from the verb 'to shrive' which means to confess sins. It became the day before the Lenten season started and therefore the ideal time to make pancakes as a means to use up leftover eggs, milk and sugar. A time for Mardi Gras.

The Easter journey begins the following day when some Christians are marked with an ashen cross using the ash from the previous years blessed Palm Sunday crosses.

At first the period of abstinence usually lasted 3 or 4 days. From the 4th century this gradually extended to 40 days excluding Sundays. This early abstinence was rigorous, only one meal a day permitted. Eating of flesh including fish was forbidden.

Eventually the character of Lent became abstinence from pleasurable activities, alms giving, along with increased religious devotion instead of a long rigorous fast.

Lent in Latin: Quadragesima: Fortieth.

The date for Easter has been set for thousands of years. It all has to do with the full moon of the Pashal, or Passover, full moon. Easter will fall between [March 22](#) and [April 25](#). There are mathematical formulas that are used to determine when Easter will fall in any year.

Lent allows Christians to remember Jesus's fasting in the desert. It is a time of giving things up and a test of self-discipline.

There are many foods that some Christians do not eat in Lent, such as meat and fish, fats, eggs, and milky foods. Some Christians just give up something they really enjoy, such as cakes or chocolate.

The word Lent isn't to be found in the Bible but in this preparation, I discovered the following biblical references that cover the Lenten theme and therefore the number "40" has special spiritual significance for preparation to the understanding.

Exodus: So Moses stayed there with the Lord 40 days and 40 nights neither eating or drinking and wrote down the covenant, the ten words on the tablets.

1 Kings: He (Elijah) rose and ate and drank and sustained by this food he went on for 40 days and 40 nights to Horeb, the mount of God. He entered a cave and there he spent the night.

Jonah: 3:4. Carried a message to Nineveh that their city would be overthrown in 40 days.

Joshua 5:6: For the Israelites travelled in the wilderness for forty years, until the whole nation, all the fighting men among them had passed away, all who came out of Egypt and had disobeyed the voice of the Lord.

Matthew 4: 1-3: For 40 nights and 40 days he fasted and at the end of them he was famished. "Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread." But Jesus was not moved. "Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" This continues through the chapter to verse 11. Also, the Lord's 40 days of fasting in the desert remind believers that He experienced temptation just as all people do yet He was without sin.

Mark 1 12-13: Thereupon the Spirit sent him away into the wilderness and there he remained for forty days tempted by Satan. He was among the wild beasts and the angels waited on him.

Luke 4 1-2: Full of the Holy Spirit, Jesus returned from the Jordan, and for forty days was led by the Spirit up and down the wilderness and tempted by the devil.

Joshua 5:6: Also, the Lord's 40 days of fasting in the desert remind believers that He experienced temptation just as all people do yet He was without sin.

Hebrews 4:15: For ours is not a high priest unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who, because of his likeness to us has been tested in every way.

Another biblical example used in support of Lent is Matthew 9:15 where Jesus explains that the disciples will fast once, He is gone, not while He is still with them. The period that Christ is referring to is the time after His crucifixion.

Violet symbolizes mourning as we anticipate Christ's suffering on the cross and also symbolizes royalty celebrating the King of Kings resurrecting from the dead. In mediaeval churches the sanctuary was usually veiled from sight. Hooks from which the veil was hung can still be found in some churches.

Lenten Hymns that inspire me:

Forty Days and Forty nights

I will offer up my life

Seek ye first the kingdom of God

All my hope on God is founded

Longing for light, we wait in darkness

Searching other sites brought up a daily prayer list for a special reference each day

"Lent, then, serves as a time to reflect on one's own mortality and sins. It's a time for reflection and recommitment and, as a way of pursuing those aims, people will often give up something they treasure. It can be something small like eating chocolate or it can be more serious sacrifices."

it is a time of spiritual renewal in which we draw closer to Jesus and more committed to furthering his kingdom on earth.

And finally: A period of penitential preparation for Easter.

