

Significant Lessons From The Seemingly Insignificant

#28 Why Did Jesus Linger For 40 Days?

The Feast of Weeks was first observed at Mt. Sinai when God met His people with dramatic phenomena and presented them with His Law. The Feast of Weeks/Shavuot/Pentecost was fulfilled in Acts 2 at Pentecost when God met His people with dramatic phenomena and they received The Holy Spirit.

There was a 50 day period in the Old Testament between the Feast of First fruits and the day of Pentecost/Shavuot/Weeks. There is also a 50 day period in the New Testament between the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead [First Fruits] and the day of Pentecost.

However, the NT 50 day period is divided into 2 parts: Jesus Christ remained on the earth after His resurrection for 40 days before He ascended into Heaven. Then there was a 10 day waiting period before the day of Pentecost when they received the gift of the Holy Spirit.

What is the significance of the number 40?

- It occurs in the Bible about 150 times.
- It is associated with a trial, a probation, testing or hardship which one must endure.
- The trial ends: If one passes his tests, he becomes more spiritually aware.
- There are also 15 references to 40 year periods of trial, and one to a 400 year period.

1. Moses, Elijah and Jesus fasted in the desert for 40 days each.

As the ultimate test of faith, these 3 men used their fasts to achieve specific goals.

- ❖ Moses proved his loyalty to God and received the Ten Commandments.
- ❖ Elijah went 40 days without food or water at Mount Horeb. He gained instruction on how to lead the people of Israel.
- ❖ Jesus thwarted Satan's temptations.
- ❖ Each passed his tests and gained new insights into God's ultimate plans for what was next.

2. Gen. 7:12 God destroyed every living thing on Earth by flooding it for 40 days.

God called on Noah to build an ark that could hold two of every living creature on earth, as well as Noah's family. Then God caused it to rain for 40 days and 40 nights.

God made a covenant that He would never flood the Earth with water again.

3. Moses lived 40 years in Egypt and 40 years in the desert before God selected him to lead His people out of slavery.

4. Ex. 24:18 Moses was on Mt. Sinai for 40 days and 40 nights.

The Israelites were left to themselves for 40 days while Moses was on the mountain.

5. Deut. 9:18, 25 Moses interceded on Israel's behalf for 40 days and 40 nights.

6. Num. 13:25 The Israelite spies spent 40 days to spy out Canaan.

7. Deut. 8:2-5 The Israelites wandered in the desert for a total of 40 years. The first generation refused to enter the Promised Land due to unbelief. After years of roaming and funerals, God allowed His people to enter and claim their inheritance.

❖ Sometimes patience is necessary for God to fully reveal His divine will.

8. Judges 13:1 Before Samson's deliverance, Israel served the Philistines for 40 years.

9. I Kings 19:8 When Elijah fled from Jezebel, he traveled 40 days/nights to Mt. Horeb.

10. I Sam. 17:16 Goliath taunted Israel for 40 days before David defeated him.

11. Jonah 3:4 Jonah powerfully warned ancient Nineveh, for 40 days, that its destruction would come because of its many sins.

12. Ezek. 4:6 The prophet Ezekiel was instructed by God to lay on his right side for 40 days to "bear the iniquities" Judah.

In the Bible, forty is used for time periods, forty days or forty years, which separate "two distinct epochs."

13. Acts 1:3 There were 40 days between Jesus' resurrection and His Ascension.

3 Purposes of the 40 Days:

Acts 1:3-4 To whom also he showed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them 40 days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God:

⁴ And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me.

1. Convince the disciples of the FACT of our Lord's physical, bodily resurrection
2. Speak of things pertaining to the kingdom of God
3. Command them to WAIT in Jerusalem

Question: Why did the Lord linger for 40 days?

Consider: During this 40 day period, Jesus spoke with the apostles concerning things pertaining to the Kingdom of God. [Acts 1:3]

Let's examine the Olivet Discourse in Matt. 24.

Recall: Matt. 23 Jesus has just given the 7 woes to the Pharisees.

Matt. 23:36-39 Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation.

³⁷ O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!

³⁸ Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. ³⁹ For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

Note: Next is the Olivet Discourse, Matt. 24 & 25, which is shortly before Jesus was crucified.

Matt. 26:1-2 And it came to pass, when Jesus had finished all these sayings, he said unto his disciples, ² Ye know that after two days is the feast of the Passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified.

Note: The Olivet Discourse in Matt. 24 & 25 is a private conversation.

Mark 13:3 And as he sat on The Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew asked him privately,

Note: Jesus' teaching in this discourse refers to Israel and God's future program for Israel; and NOT the Church.

Matt. 24:1-3 And Jesus went out and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to show him the buildings of the temple. ² And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down. Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?

When Jesus gave this prophecy, 69 weeks of Daniel's 70 weeks [490 yrs.] prophecy found in Dan. 9:24-27, had just been completed. [483 years had passed.] 1 week = 7 years

Recall: Dan.9:24 Seventy weeks [490 years] are determined upon thy people [Israel] and upon thy holy city [Jerusalem], to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy. [6 goals in the 490 years]

1. Daniel said: After 69 weeks [483 years] the Messiah would be executed and the people of a coming ruler would destroy Jerusalem and the Temple.
2. Matt. 20:17-19 A few days before, Jesus had told the disciples He was going to be arrested and crucified, and then on the third day He would be raised to life.
3. Jesus just told them, in Matt. 24:1-2: The temple and all its related buildings would be torn down with not one stone remaining on another.
 - o This was a repeat of a warning He had given the people of Jerusalem three days previously in Luke 19:41-44.

In spite of all this, the disciples seemed surprised by what He was saying. According to Mark 13:3 Peter, James, John and Andrew took Him aside and asked Him to explain when and how all this would happen. What are the disciples thinking? They were under the impression Israel was 483 years into a 490 year period that would see the culmination of God's plan for mankind. I think they understood Daniel's 70 Weeks prophecy but didn't know there would be a GAP of time between the 69th and 70th Weeks, and Jesus didn't mention one. We know this because after the resurrection the disciples asked if He was now going to restore the kingdom to Israel [Acts 1:6]. It all became clear to them 38 years later when the city and the sanctuary were destroyed without the Abomination of Desolation having taken place.

- Up until this private conversation, they had assumed the magnificent Temple King Herod was building was part of the preparation for restoring their Kingdom to its former glory.
- Jesus just told them it was all going to be destroyed.

Matt. 24:3 Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?

Matt. 24:4-14 Jesus mentioned a handful of general signs that don't appear to have any clear relevance to time.

- ❖ He warned them many false messiahs would come claiming to be Him.
- ❖ He warned of wars and rumors of wars. Don't be alarmed! For all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. [24:6]
- ❖ He gave "birth pang" signs such as famines, earthquakes and pestilence.
- ❖ These are signature signs of coming judgment that Jesus said would lead up to the end. All these are the beginning of sorrows. [Matt. 24:8]
- ❖ Then Jews would be persecuted and put to death and hated by all nations.
- ❖ This would cause many to turn away from the faith to hate & betray one another.
- ❖ False prophets would appear and deceive many people.
- ❖ The love of most would grow cold, but he who stood firm to the end would be saved.

Finally, in Matt. 24:15, Jesus gives them the first clear sign.

When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place,...

1. They knew this had happened once before almost 200 years earlier. The Syrian ruler, Antiochus Epiphanes, set up a statue of Zeus in the Temple and sacrificed a pig to him.
2. Jesus said when they saw that happen again, immediately flee into the mountains.
3. Jesus said the abomination of desolation will trigger the Great Tribulation, a terrible time of judgment, the worst the world has ever seen or will see. [Matt. 24:21]
4. Jesus said if He didn't bring it to an end at the appointed time, no one on Earth would survive, but for the sake of the elect He would bring it to its end. [Matt. 24:22]

Matt. 24:29-30 Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

Consider: In all this, He never mentioned the Church. The birth of the Church is 50 days after His Resurrection at Pentecost.

Consider: He did not even hint at the fact that >2,000 years would separate their time and the time of the 1st clear, specific sign. [abomination of desolation in the holy place]

- Jesus spoke of everything as if it was going to happen to them.
- Jesus was addressing them as representatives of Israel.

From our perspective, Jesus could have been much more specific, especially with the earlier signs. But the clear explanation of how things would unfold didn't come until the Council of Jerusalem 20 years later. In effect, James told the group of early Church leaders,

"Israel is being set aside until the Lord takes from among the Gentiles a people for Himself. Then He'll return to rebuild David's fallen tabernacle." [Acts 15:13-18].
During the Olivet Discourse, Jesus made no mention of this happening!
What Was He Waiting For?

Why the 40 days between His resurrection and His ascension?

- He did no public teaching or healing.
- The first appearance of Jesus was to Mary Magdalene.
- Jesus also appeared to Mary The Mother of James, Salome, and Joanna.
- Luke 24:13-16 Jesus appeared to 2 disciples on the road to Emmaus.
- John 20:19-20, 24 Last appearance of Jesus on Resurrection Sunday.

After His meeting with the disciples on Resurrection Sunday, there were a few more recorded appearances.

1. John 20:26-31 8 days after Resurrection Sunday, He appeared to the disciples with Thomas present. "Peace be with you."
2. John 21:1-23 Seven Disciples At The Sea Of Galilee - Breakfast on shore
Peter; Feed My Sheep
3. Matt. 28:16-20 Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them. ¹⁷ And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted. Jesus gives them the "Great Commission."
4. I Cor. 15:7 One appearance was to James.
5. I Cor. 15:6 He was seen of above five hundred brethren at once.
This was His only public appearance.

Otherwise, the Bible is silent about how He spent His time.

- There's no account of discussions being held on how to launch the Church.
- He didn't fill in any of the blanks from the Olivet Discourse.
- We know why He didn't go back to the Temple. He told the leaders there they wouldn't see Him again until they said, "*Blessed is He Who comes in the name of the Lord*" [Matt. 23:39].

The Unmistakable Sign

Before the cross, these leaders had asked the Lord for a sign to prove He was the Messiah. Matt. 12:38-40 Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee. ³⁹ But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: ⁴⁰ For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

Consider: He fulfilled this just a short time later.

- Surely they knew of His resurrection, but none of the officials sought Him out.
- His resurrection was the most unmistakably miraculous sign He could have given them. It didn't take any faith to interpret, and it couldn't have been fabricated.
- When I rise again in 3 days, that's how you'll know I'm your Messiah. That sign will prove it to you beyond a shadow of a doubt.

Consider: The three day/three night sign may not have been the Lord's only reason for comparing Himself to Jonah. God sent Jonah to preach a simple but devastating message of destruction to the Ninevites. "Forty more days and Nineveh will be overthrown." [Jonah 3:4]

- Jesus had repeatedly warned Israel of the consequences of rejecting Him.

Matt. 21:43 He said, "Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit."

Remember: Luke 19:41-44 "As He approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it and said, *If thou had known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.* ⁴³ *For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side,* ⁴⁴ *And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; Because Thou Knewest Not The Time Of Thy Visitation.*

- Jesus waited 40 days for the leaders of Israel to recognize that He had fulfilled the unmistakable sign of the prophet Jonah proving that He was their Messiah. [Matt. 12:39-40]
- Had they accepted Him, the 70th week of Daniel would have begun, and everything the Lord told the disciples would have happened in their generation.
- Because they still didn't believe in Him, Israel was set aside and the clock has been stopped from that day to this one while the Lord takes a people for Himself from among the Gentiles.

Acts 1:6-8 When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? ⁷ And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.

Consider: Wouldn't the obvious answer have been: Israel had been temporarily set aside, like James would later announce in Acts 15:13-18, unless that hadn't been confirmed yet waiting for their response?

Then He ascended into Heaven.

Possible Conclusion: These 40 days were Israel's time of probation or trial.

40 is associated in the Bible with trial.

- Jesus had given them the unmistakable sign He promised, one that no one else could ever give them, and now He was giving them time to recognize it and respond.

- I think His offer of the Kingdom was still on the table during that time.
- He was waiting for them to accept Him as Messiah.
- When they didn't, the Lord left to wait in Heaven for them to call on Him.

[He fulfilled the prophecy of Hosea 5:15.]

Hosea 5:15 I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face: in their affliction they will seek me early.

- The door was opened for the Church and the Gentiles.

Acts 14:27 And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles.

Zech. 12:10 says the time will come when Israel will admit their guilt.

And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.

Joel 3:20-21 God will forgive them as soon as they ask Him.

But Judah shall dwell forever, and Jerusalem from generation to generation.

²¹ For I will cleanse their blood that I have not cleansed: for the LORD dwelleth in Zion.

Israel will finally receive the Kingdom that He has been waiting 2000 years to give them.