

RUSSELL SANDERS
8-26-2025
THE NUMBER FORTY

Certain numbers in the bible have significance, a special or a particular meaning. Such is the case with the number forty. It is a number associated with preparation. It is preparation for the next period of life, or whatever one is “transitioning to” that is very different from previous life experience.

When God sent the great flood, it rained for 40 days. Transition was made from the pre-flood evil into a newly established earth.

Moses was pre-ordained by God to free Israel from bondage, but how was he prepared for it? First, he spent his first forty (40) years of life in Egypt where he was raised, trained, and educated in the royal court. These were skills he would need later. Secondly, he spent forty (40) years in the wilderness area tending Jethro’s flocks. Here he learned of the hazards of the wilderness and learned what he would need to know as he led Israel in the wilderness. More preparation for what was “next to come.” Then he spent forty (40) years with Israel in the wilderness as they were being prepared as a people to enter and take over Canaan.

Moses also spent forty (40) days on the mountain as God gave him the Ten Commandments. This was preparation on how to instruct Israel about their God.

When Elijah feared that Jezebel would kill him, he went into the wilderness. God intervened, feeding him, then sent him to Mount Horeb (I Kings 19) on a forty-day fast which prepared him for the next phase of his ministry.

King Saul reigned forty (40) years as Israel’s first king. David was anointed as king for forty (40) years (seven in Hebron, thirty three in Jerusalem). King Solomon reigned for 40 years also.

After John baptized our Lord, Jesus went into the wilderness where he fasted for 40 days. It was preparation for His ministry that immediately followed.

As Jesus walked the earth for forty (40) days following His resurrection, it was a dual purpose of preparation. First, He was preparing the Apostles and many other believers for their transition into their new role as “the church,” His “body,” His “bride.” They needed to see Him alive as an affirming, faith building matter, and give additional instruction. Secondly, it was preparation for Him to ascend to His heavenly throne with the Father.

Personally, I had forty (40) years with my first wife, a woman with a uniquely strong faith. I learned much about faith, about miracles, and more before she passed away. It prepared me for my next phase of life and new aspects of ministry with my wife Helen, a woman of strong faith and very gifted both spiritually and naturally.

God gives us periods of preparation for “what is yet to come” even though we may have little idea of “what” it is. He is faithful both to prepare us and to carry us through. Praise Him.