

QUESTION: In your "Analysis of the Crucifixion - A. Scourging of the victim" - the last sentence is "I believe Jesus took all forty of them (40 stripes, minus one for humanitarian purposes)." Would you please enlighten me to your thoughts on why 40 and not 39? I find the idea intriguing.

ANSWER: This is only an opinion, and we can't prove it dogmatically from Scripture, but there is a Scriptural principle involved concerning why God uses the number forty so many times in His word. We see forty days and forty nights for the judgment of God being poured out on the world in the flood of Noah. We see Moses on the mountain for forty days, eating and drinking nothing (a miraculous fast - kids, don't try this at home!) while he received the Law, and we see from the New Testament that the law cannot save, but only kills. We see Jesus being tested and tempted by the devil for forty days in the wilderness (also a miraculous 40-day fast). So we see that **the number 40 has a significance in the Bible of referring to times of judgment, testing and trial.** I believe there may be other times the number forty is used in the Bible, but I don't have time for a major in-depth study here, so we will look at these most familiar ones:

1.) The judgment of God being poured out on the wicked world in the flood of Noah. The flood, which began with forty days and nights of rain and water gushing forth from inside the earth (Genesis 7:11), was a judgment upon the sin and wickedness of the whole earth.

- **Genesis 6:11-13** "Now the earth was corrupt in the sight of God, and the earth was filled with violence. And God looked on the earth, and behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way upon the earth. Then God said to Noah, 'The end of all flesh has come before Me; for the earth is filled with violence because of them; and behold, **I am about to destroy them** with the earth.'"
- **Genesis 7:12 & 17** "And the rain fell upon the earth **for forty days and forty nights.**" "Then the flood came upon the earth for forty days; and the water increased and lifted up the ark, so that it rose above the earth."

2.) Moses on the mountain for forty days while he received the Law. We see from the New Testament that the Law cannot save or give eternal life, but only kills (brings judgment). In fact, the Apostle Paul calls the law "engraved on stones" (the Ten Commandments, the Old Covenant) **the "ministry of death"**! So, as Moses received the Law up on the mountain for forty days, it was also **a sign of judgment**, because the Law only brings death - no one can ever keep it perfectly.

- **Exodus 34:28** "So he was there with the Lord **forty days and forty nights**; he did not eat bread or drink water. And he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments."
- **II Corinthians 3:5-8** "...our sufficiency is from God, who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for **the letter (the written Law) kills**, but the Spirit gives life. But if **the ministry of death, written and engraved on stones**, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of the glory of his countenance, which glory was passing away, how will the ministry of the Spirit not be more glorious?"
- **Romans 5:20** "Moreover the Law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more."

Definition: "The LAW ENTERED that the OFFENSE might abound" - "The Law" refers to the Old Testament Law and commandments God gave to Moses and the Israelites. Keeping the Old Testament Law could **NEVER** give a person eternal life. **Salvation and eternal life HAS ALWAYS BEEN by FAITH in GOD.** The Law

serves the purpose of SHOWING US HOW FAR WE ARE from GOD'S PERFECT STANDARD, and thus shows us that we CANNOT SAVE OURSELVES, and that **we NEED A SAVIOR!! The Law DEFINES SIN**, shows us how sinful we are, how destructive sin is in our lives, and how HORRIBLE sin is in God's sight.

- **Read Galatians 3:16-25** (Verse 19) "What purpose then does the Law serve? It was added because of transgressions (sins), till the Seed (Christ - see verse 16) should come to whom the promise was made; and it was appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator." (Verse 21) "Is the Law then against the promises of God? Certainly not! For **if there had been a law given which could have given life**, truly righteousness would have been by the law." (Verse 23) "But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed (when Christ came)."

3.) Jesus being tested and tempted by the devil for forty days in the wilderness. It was God's plan for Jesus to be tested by the devil, because we see that the Holy Spirit was the one who brought Him into the wilderness in the first place. It was Jesus' time of testing and trial before His public ministry began, and again we see the number forty. Jesus passed the test.

- **Mark 1:12-13** "And immediately the Spirit drove Him into the wilderness. And He was there in the wilderness **forty days**, tempted by Satan....."
- **Luke 4:1-2** "Then Jesus, being filled with the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, being tempted **for forty days** by the devil...."

4.) Jesus taking the full forty lashes of the scourging as part of our punishment for sin. In Isaiah 53, the word of God tells us that the Messiah "was wounded for OUR transgressions, He was bruised (crushed) for OUR iniquities; the chastisement for OUR peace was upon Him, and **by His stripes (from the scourging) we are healed.**" Transgressions refers to all the times we have violated God's laws and commandments (the Old Covenant - the "ministry of death" remember?). Iniquities refers to wickedness, unrighteous acts, and just "doing our own thing" in rebellion against God (see Isaiah 53:6). **Chastisement means PUNISHMENT.** Jesus took the full punishment for our sins, in order for us to NOT be punished by God. Yes, the complete atonement was finished by His death on the cross, but the "forty stripes" or full amount of lashes from the scourging, was a significant part of **the JUDGMENT of God being "laid on Him"** for our sins and iniquities. Praise God! We, as believers in Jesus Christ, will never be punished for our sins, because Jesus took our punishment on Himself. Hallelujah!

- **Isaiah 53:5-6 & 12** "But **He was wounded for OUR transgressions**, He was bruised (crushed) for OUR iniquities; the chastisement for OUR peace was upon Him, and **by His stripes** (from the scourging) **we are healed.** All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and **the Lord has laid on Him (Jesus) the iniquity of us ALL.**"
- **II Corinthians 5:21** "For **He made Him who knew no sin (Jesus) to BE SIN FOR US**, that we might become the RIGHTEOUSNESS of God in Him."
- **Isaiah 53:11** "He shall see the travail (suffering) of His soul, and be satisfied. By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many, for He shall bear their iniquities."
- **I Peter 2:24** "Who **Himself bore our sins in His own body** on the tree (cross), that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness - **by whose stripes** (wounds) you were healed."
- **I John 3:5** "And you know that He was manifested **to take away our sins**, and in Him there is no sin."