

Use of the number 40 in the Bible

What does it symbolise?

A forty time period in the Bible whether it is days or years can indicate a time of **trial** or **testing**.

It can also be a symbol of **judgement** or **punishment**.

Forty has also been connected with **periods of peace**.

A symbol of our spiritual development

So the number 40 could really be a wonderful symbol of our spiritual life which starts with the **testing of our faith** in this life, continues with **judgement** when Jesus returns, and if the judgement is in our favour will result in **eternal peace** for us in God's kingdom.

Notice how Jesus' ministry started with **40 days of trial** in the wilderness and ended with **40 days of peace** after His resurrection.

Below is a list of how these three symbols of 40 have been used in the Bible.

Trial or testing

- Moses on the mountain 40 days and 40 nights
Exod.34:28
- The spies spend 40 days in Canaan
Num.13:25
- Goliath presents himself to Israel for 40 days
1 Sam.17:16
- Elijah's 40 day fast
1Kings 19:8
- 40 days until Nineveh is punished if they don't repent
Jonah 3:4
- Jesus fasting in the wilderness 40 days
Mark 1:12-13

Judgement or punishment

- Rained 40 days and 40 nights
Gen.7:12
- Punishment of 40 stripes
Deut.25:3 see also 2 Cor.11:24
- Israel wanders 40 years in the wilderness
Deut.8:2
- Israel ruled by the Philistines for 40 years
Judges 13:1

Peace or reward

- 40 year periods of peace for Israel
Judges 3:11, 5:31, 8:28
- Solomon reigns for 40 years in Jerusalem
2 Chron.9:30
- Jesus seen on earth after His resurrection for 40 days
Acts 1:3