

The Significance of the Number 40

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Of all the types and shadows of the Old Testament, none is as pervasive and important as the shadows revealed in the relationship between "forty," and the fulfillment of promises.

- The rains (in Noah's day) fell for 40 days and nights (Gen.7:4).
- Israel ate Manna for 40 years (Exodus 16:35).
- Moses was with God in the mount, 40 days and nights (Ex. 24:18).
- Moses was again with God 40 days and 40 nights (Ex. 34:28).
- Moses led Israel from Egypt at age 80 (2 times 40), and after 40 years in the wilderness, died at 120 (3 times 40; Deut. 34:7).
- The spies searched the land of Canaan for 40 days (Num. 13:25).
- Therefore, God made Israel wander for 40 years (Num. 14:33-34).
- 40 stripes was the maximum whipping penalty (Deut. 25:3).
- God allowed the land to rest for 40 years (Judges 3:11).
- God again allowed the land to rest for 40 years (Judges 5:31).
- God again allowed the land to rest for 40 years (Judges 8:28).
- Abdon (a judge in Israel) had 40 sons (Judges 12:14).
- Israel did evil; God gave them to an enemy for 40 years (Judges 13:1).
- Eli judged Israel for 40 years (1 Samuel 4:18).
- Goliath presented himself to Israel for 40 days (1 Sam. 17:16).
- Saul reigned for 40 years (Acts 13:21).
- Ishbosheth (Saul's son) was 40 when he began reign (2 Sam. 2:10).
- David reigned over Israel for 40 years (2 Sam. 5:4, 1 Kings 2:11).
- The holy place of the temple was 40 cubits long (1 Kings 6:17).
- 40 baths (measurement) was size of lavers in Temple (1 Kings 7:38).
- The sockets of silver are in groups of 40 (Ex. 26:19 & 21).
- Solomon reigned same length as his father; 40 years (1 Kings 11:42).
- Elijah had one meal that gave him strength 40 days (1 Kings 19:8).
- Ezekiel bore the iniquity of the house of Judah for 40 days (Ezekiel 4:6).
- Jehoash (Joash) reigned 40 years in Jerusalem (2 Kings 12:1).
- Egypt to be laid desolate for 40 years (Ezek. 29:11-12).

- Ezekiel's (symbolic) temple is 40 cubits long (Ezek. 41:2).
- The courts in Ezekiel's temple were 40 cubits long (Ez. 46:22).
- God gave Nineveh 40 days to repent (Jonah 3:4).
- Jesus fasted 40 days and nights (Matthew 4:2).
- Jesus was tempted 40 days (Luke 4:2, Mark 1:13).
- Jesus remained on earth 40 days after resurrection (Acts 1:3).
- Women are pregnant for 40 weeks (time of testing).

The number forty is used by God to represent a period of testing or judgment (the length of time necessary to accomplish some major part of God's plan in his dealings with various portions of mankind). The 40 days of rain in the days of the flood were the judgments of God. The 40 day periods of fasting, testing, and communing with God that were faced by Moses and Jesus were a form of God's judgments. The forty years that the Israelites spent in the wilderness were also the judgments of God. Various leaders in Israel who reigned for 40 year periods were put there BY God according to His Will and Judgments. Egypt was left desolate for 40 years because of God's judgments. I could go on and on, but I think these examples should suffice for now.

The maximum number of "stripes" allowed for punishment was 40. "Stripes" have to do with judgment (including God's). See Luke 12:47-48. When God brings judgment upon His people, it may be rightly termed, "stripes". When Peter states (about Jesus) "by whose stripes ye were healed" in 1 Peter 2:24, he is quoting from Isaiah 53:5 which is a prophecy concerning spiritual and not physical healing as many teach. Although physical healing from God is a wonderful blessing, spiritual healing is an even greater blessing. Our salvation is dependent on the fact that Jesus bore the stripes that you and I deserve to bear. In other words, Jesus' bore the main force of the judgments that should come upon you and I as sinners. Isaiah's prophecy shows the judgments of God were poured out upon Jesus for our healing.

Forty sons of a judge in Israel (Abdon), whose name means "servitude" represents the product or offspring of a judge who serves in Israel. Once again we see the number 40 used in connection with the subject of judgment.

There were ten lavers in Solomon's temple, and each one contained 40 baths of liquid volume (over 350 gallons each). Do these have anything to do with judgment? Yes, because the water in the laver was symbolic of the word of God which "washes" us as followers of Christ today (Ephesians 5:26, Rev.22:1-2).

I believe one of the easiest "40s" to use to illustrate this symbolism is the story of Noah and the flood. There are two basic forms of judgment that God sends forth. One is the type that He pours out upon the ungodly. This would be the kind we see illustrated in the flood, and also the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. The other is the type that He sends upon His people in order to awaken them or bring them to a closer "walk" with Him.

We know that, in Noah's day, the rainfall coming down from "heaven" had two different affects. Obviously, it was a destructive force as far as the lost were

concerned. They were outside of the ark of safety, and therefore beyond any hope of survival. However, when the water hit the earth it raised the ark. Raising the ark heavenward symbolizes our being "lifted up to sit in heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:6). The same waters that destroyed the wicked also caused the people of God to be lifted up (thanks to the ark).

God poured His judgments upon the ark. He knew it would stand fast. It was built to His plans and specifications. Why would God require the people to build an ark if He did not plan on sending the same judgments upon it as he sent upon the people who were not in it? The Ark was a God given escape route from judgments which fell upon them all. The forty days and nights of the flood are symbolic of God's judgments which fall primarily upon his people and the spiritual ark today. Even though the wicked drowned right away, God still had a purpose for the ark to go through the 40 day and night period in order to picture the spiritual type. The judgments of God had to fall upon even his true people, but He had provided a means which would save them from those judgments.

Generation

We can easily see from Numbers 32:13 and Hebrews 3:8-10 that God calls 40 years a generation. Matthew 1:17: from captivity in Babylon (586 BC) until Christ is 14 generations. 586 BC to Christ' birth is 586 years, divided by 14 is 41 years. This is important, as it will benefit us in studying the meaning of Jesus' words in Matthew 23:36; 24:34, Mark 13:30, and Luke 21:32.

We are about to put some biblical pieces together in a puzzle that can solve a lot of unknowns and uncertainties in some major doctrinal areas. Let us look at the "pieces" we have figured out so far: 1) The number 40 has to do with God's judgments. 2) God speaks of a generation as 40 years. 3) Jesus speaks of judgments that will come upon a particular generation of the literal Jews.

Wilderness

We find the most significant numerological type of all in one of the most striking events in the account of Scripture - the forty years of wilderness wandering leading up to the possession of the temporal land of promise. In fact, Paul himself wrote that the surrounding events of the wilderness wandering "were our examples" (I Corinthians 10:6), and that "they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world (aion-age) have come" (verse 11). It is this event which presents the clearest correspondences to the redemptive work of Christ, and the time-frame of its fulfillment.

To be more specific, the exodus out of Egypt and into the promised land, by the children of Israel under Moses, is a direct shadow of the exodus of the New Testamentary generation from the cross to the entrance into the eternal land of rest. We will see a number of similarities between the two; not only in the area of principles and concepts, but also in the chronological time-frame of the periods under consideration.

In looking at the above chart, we find a number of very important conceptual correlations that display the relationship between (1) the typology of the Exodus to the land inheritance, and (2) the fulfillment from the cross to the second coming of Christ:

1. The first established a temporary contract of God with the people He chose- the Old Covenant. The second established a permanent contract- the New Covenant.
2. One introduced the first Passover with the blood of lambs. The other fulfilled the type with the sacrifice of the final Passover Lamb (i.e. Jesus Christ).
3. One brought God's people physical deliverance by crossing through the Red Sea. The other brought God's people spiritual deliverance by the working of the cross of Christ, whereby we 'cross through' the Crimson sea.
4. The first was preceded by physical slavery- the bondage of the Hebrews in Egypt. The second was preceded by spiritual slavery, man's bondage to Spiritual Egypt (i.e. The elements of the Law [Gal. 4:3] and the 'body of sin' - [Rom. 6:6]).
5. Fifty days after the first Passover in Egypt, the Law was given to the nation of Israel at Mount Sinai, written upon tables of stone. (according to Jewish tradition - Ex. 19:1). Fifty days after the final Passover was sacrificed, the Law was given to the "Israel of God", written upon their hearts by the Spirit of God (II Cor. 3:3; Heb. 8:10, Acts 2).
6. On the day that the Law was given, 3,000 died for worshipping the golden calf, signifying the covenant of the law that brought death (Ex. 32:28; cf. II Cor. 3:16-18). On the day the Spirit was given, 3,000 were added into Christ and received life (Acts. 2:41), signifying the covenant of the Spirit that brought life.

The correlation does not stop with the initial workings of the exodus, but also with the entrance into the land of temporal rest, forty years later. Just as the children of faith were allowed to enter into the temporal land of rest the first time, the children of faith in the generation directly following the cross of

Christ were given entrance into the eternal land of rest. Therefore, besides the conceptual similarities, there is also a direct chronological solidarity between the two, for:

7. With each covenant, a 40 year transition period followed the initial act of deliverance, unto the entrance into the land of promise.

Christ specifically told the disciples at the last supper, "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:2-3). This reception was into, what is described in Hebrews as, "a better country, that is an heavenly" (Hebrews 11:16). The significance in this, is that the believers among the people of Israel did not receive the promises of the Promised land, when they entered into Palestine (Hebrews 4:6-9). This promise was in regards to the fulfillment of redemption and eternal life in the kingdom of God, which entrance was corporately given to all believers at the end of the 40 years from the cross to the coming of Christ.

The following points continue the shadow of the Exodus, and show the chronological similarities between the two. The purpose of this is to show the time-frame of the believers' entrance into the heavenly country, for which Palestine only stood in shadow:

1. Both forty year periods are described as a time of particular "temptation" (Hebrews 3:8; Luke 8:13, 11:4, 22:40), through which they must needs endure unto the end, to be saved (Hebrews 3:13-14).
2. During both periods, the people hardened their hearts, tempted God, and distinctly rejected the word of the Lord.
3. During both periods, the people saw God's works forty years (Hebrews 3:9; Acts 2:17-21). God manifested Himself to His people by signs and wonders; in the desert under Moses' leadership, daily manna, miraculous supplies of water or meat, and the appearance of the cloud and the fiery pillar revealed God's presence. In the transition period to the New Covenant, the apostles had special gifts of healing, prophecy, and tongue-speaking. These gifts were specifically slated to end, once Christ had come, and not until (I Corinthians 13:8-10).
4. During both periods, God was particularly grieved with the generation of men then living (Hebrews 3:10; Mat.23:34-36).
5. During both periods, the wicked were severed from among the just, and not allowed to enter into the land of promise (Hebrews 3:11,17; Matthew 12:30, 13:49).
6. At the end of the first 40 year period, the Israelites of faith entered the temporal land of promise, in which God enabled them to defeat their physical foes. At the end of the second 40 year period, salvation was complete, and God's people entered their eternal Promised Land in which God enabled them to defeat their spiritual enemies (I Corinthians 15:26,54-57).

The physical illustrations in the Old Covenant are fulfilled in each case by the spiritual realities of the New Covenant. The second is a spiritual (rather, an eternal) covenant with victory over spiritual slavery and spiritual death, bringing eternal deliverance through a spiritual Passover resulting in our new eternal life and eternal salvation.

While Old Testament Israel's exodus was from the bondage of Egypt, the New Testament Israel's exodus was from the bondage of the Old Covenant Law. The most recognizable passage that depicts this "new exodus" is found in I Corinthians 10:1-11. Paul wrote, "Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and

they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come." His contextual foundation for this statement was the Old Testament exodus from Egyptian bondage. He wrote that they had passed through the sea (verse 1). They ate manna and drank from the rock (verse's 3-4). He then relays how they wandered in the wilderness (verse 5), became idolaters (verse 7), tried the Lord and were destroyed by serpents (verse 9). This shows us that, just like the "type and shadow" of the Old Testament and their deliverance from bondage, the New Testament saints were undergoing the same exodus. The only difference was that Paul's generation was the reality to which the Old Testament example pointed.

Moses: A type of Christ

It almost goes without stating that Moses was a "type" of Christ. In Deuteronomy 18, Moses told the nation of Israel, "The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken;" (verse 15). Peter testified in Acts 3 that Moses was speaking about Christ (verses 19-26). Notice these similarities:

Parallels	Moses	Christ
Born under persecution	Exodus. 1:8-22	Matthew 2:16-18
Begins ministry with miracles	Exodus 3:20; 4:1-9, 17; 7-14	Matthew 4:18-25
Contended with masters of evil	Exodus 7:11	Matthew 4:1
Controlled the sea	Exodus 14:21	Matthew 8:26
Discredited at home	Numbers 12:1	John 7:5
Endured Murmurings	Exodus 15:24	Mark 7:2
Escapes infanticide	Exodus 1:22, 2:1-10	Matthew 2:16-18
Established memorials	Exodus 12:14	Luke 22:19
Fasted 40 days	Exodus 34:28	Matthew 4:2
Fed Multitudes	Exodus 16:15	Matthew 14:20
Gives the law on a "mountain"	Exodus 20	Matthew 5-7
Had 70 helpers	Numbers 11:16-17	Luke 10:1
Had a radiant face	Exodus 34:35	Matthew 17:2
Made intercession	Exodus 32:32	John 17:9
Preserved at childhood	Exodus 2:2-10	Matthew 2:14, 15
Re-appeared after death	Matthew 17:3	Acts 1:3
Spends early days in Egypt	Exodus 2:6-14	Matthew 2:13-15

The importance of this fact should not be overlooked. Moses was a "picture" of Christ. He was the "type and shadow," whereas Christ was the "reality." In fact, there are many comparisons of this in the New Testament. For instance, in Hebrews 3, a very important comparison is made.

In Hebrews 3:1-19, we not only have a comparison of Moses and Christ, but also the people that each one delivered. There is a similarity between these two events — Israel "after the flesh" was delivered by Moses from Egyptian bondage, whereas Israel "after the Spirit" was delivered by Christ from Old Covenant bondage. This is the same thing that Paul wrote in 1 Cor.10:1-11.

Paul very clearly taught that the exodus of Old Covenant Israel was the "example," or the "type and shadow," for the exodus of New Covenant Israel's reality. That is to say, the exodus of Israel "after the flesh" was a physical picture of what the real exodus was to be like — the spiritual deliverance from the bondage of sin-death. Now with this in mind, we need to determine the duration of Moses' reign over the nation of Israel. In doing so, we can conclude how long the Messianic reign of Christ was. We find our answer in Acts 7:36-37. If Moses was a "type of the One coming,"

and his reign was forty years, it would stand to reason that Christ's Messianic reign would also be forty years!

David: A type of Christ

The other Old Testament person we want to look at is David. David was promised that one of his seed would be established on his throne (2 Samuel 7:12, Psalm 132:11). Somewhere along the line, David's seed became "David" (Jeremiah 30:9, Ezekiel 34:23-24; 37:24-25). David was from Bethlehem (1 Samuel 17:15, Luke 2:4), just like Christ was (Matthew 2:1, John 7:42).

Of particular interest is a prophecy found in Hosea 3:5. Notice that "David" would be Israel's kind "in the last days." From this we can conclude that this "David" was a symbolic reference of Christ. In fact, He was from the lineage of David and was called the "Son of David" on various occasions. Also notice that "David" would be a shepherd to God's people (Ezekiel 34:23-24; 37:24-25). This should remind of Christ's own words in John 10:11,14. The disciples also recognized and understood the significance of this reference (Hebrews 13:20, 1 Peter 5:4, Revelation 7:17). It should be obvious from these verses that Jesus Christ was the fulfillment of those prophecies cited above. Now, if David and his reign as king over Israel after the flesh, was the "type and shadow" for Christ's Messianic reign over Israel after the Spirit, then to be able to determine the length of Christ's Messianic reign, we must determine the length of David's reign over the nation of Israel (2 Samuel 5:4, 1 Kings 2:11). David's reign was forty years!

Thus, if Christ is the reality to which the above Messianic prophecies pointed, and David and Moses were a "type" of Christ, and their reign was forty years, it stands to reason that the Messianic reign of Christ would also be forty years. With all of this information, we can safely conclude that the "thousand years" John mentioned in Revelation 20 were actually the forty year period between the ascension of Christ (AD 30) to His second and final coming at the destruction of Jerusalem (AD 70).
