



October 28, 2007

The Numbers Of God Forty

The number forty appears early in the scriptures and is used by God many times in the text. While some numbers refer directly to God, as we shall see later in the numbers three and one, the number forty occurs within the context of a display of God's power. In this there are elements of judgment and preservation. The earliest occurrence of this is in the story of the flood during the days of Noah. The world was consumed by wickedness with the exception of Noah who found grace in the sight of God (**Gen 6.8**). When the ark was completed God told Noah, "***For yet seven days, and I will cause it to rain upon the earth forty days and forty nights; and every living substance that I have made will I destroy from off the face of the earth.***" (**Gen 7.4**). The waters fell for this period of time as God had stated destroying the evil of mankind while preserving the eight souls that were aboard the ark. Peter refers to this salvation by water in his writings (**1 Pet 3.20-21**). Later, as the ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat, Noah waited for forty days before he opened the window of the Ark (**Gen 8.6**). Salvation and judgment are also found in the commandments, ordinances and regulations that were given to Moses at mount Sinai. Having set boundaries around the mountain, God descended and commanded Moses to come up to him. "***And Moses went into the midst of the cloud, and gat him up into the mount: and Moses was in the mount forty days and forty nights.***" (**Ex 24.18**). While on the mountain for this period the children of Israel made a golden calf and began to worship it (**Ex 32**) which brought a judgment against them by God. Moses later went back into the mountain for another forty days and received a second copy of the commandments from God. "***And he was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights; he did neither eat bread, nor drink water. And he wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, the ten commandments***" (**Ex 34.28**). As the children of Israel neared the land of Canaan spies were sent to search out the land and were

gone for a period of forty days (**Num:13:25**). Upon their return, however, ten of the spies gave a negative report concerning the inhabitants of the land which angered God and brought a judgment against them. God stated, "***After the number of the days in which ye searched the land, even forty days, each day for a year, shall ye bear your iniquities, even forty years, and ye shall know my breach of promise.***" (**Num 14.34**). Their unbelief led to this judgment against them but even in this the element of preservation is found as God continues to care for his people. "***And the children of Israel did eat manna forty years, until they came to a land inhabited; they did eat manna, until they came unto the borders of the land of Canaan.***" (**Ex 16.35**). This was not the only way in which God cared for his people as Moses reminds them as he prepared them for his departure. "***Thy raiment waxed not old upon thee, neither did thy foot swell, these forty years.***" (**Deut 8.4**). Even in this God made a way for them to prove their faithfulness to him and demonstrated his care at the same time. Some may see events such as this as the harshness of God, and that element exists here, but in the midst of trial he still cares and provides for us so that we can turn to him and be saved. God also preserved the life of the prophet Elijah as he fled from Ahab and the evil queen Jezebel, feeding him with food that sustained him for forty days. (**1 Kng 19.8**). Again the preservation of God is seen in his care for the prophet. The prophet Ezekiel demonstrated the judgment of God against Israel by lying on his right side for forty days (**Ezek 4.6**). During his time on earth, Christ fasted for forty days before being tempted by Satan who first tempted Jesus to command stones to be made into bread (**Matt 4.1-4**) to which Christ answered that man lives by the word of God, not the physical. Later, after the resurrection, Christ was with the disciples and others for a period of forty days before he ascended (**Acts 1.3**). Christ brought the message of salvation, and judgment, into the world by which all of mankind can be saved.

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