

What is Lent?

✝ Lent is a [Christian Festival](#).

Lent is the time when Christians prepare for [Easter](#) by thinking of things they have done wrong.

40 The forty days (not counting Sundays) before [Easter](#) is known as **Lent**. This is the time of year in England when the days begin to lengthen with the coming of Spring.

February 2008							March 2008						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa	Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
						1	2						1
3	4	5	6	7	8	9	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
10	11	12	13	14	15	16	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
17	18	19	20	21	22	23	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
24	25	26	27	28	29		23	24	25	26	27	28	29
							30	31					

The weeks of Lent were once the time when new Christians, who were to be baptized on [Easter Eve](#), were taught about the Christian faith and life. Those who had already been baptized thought again about the promises they had once made and promise to be true to them. Lent was a time for spring-cleaning lives, as well as homes.



✝ **Why are Sundays not counted in the 40 days?**

Sundays are always a day of celebration in the Christian church and so they cannot be included in the 40 days of Lent. Sundays commemorate the Resurrection.

✝ **When does Lent begin?**

Lent begins on [Ash Wednesday](#), the day after [Pancake Day](#) and , six and a half weeks before [Easter Day](#). The last week of Lent begins with [Palm Sunday](#), which celebrates the day Jesus entered Jerusalem and the people lay down palms at his feet.

✝ **When does Lent end?**

Lent lasts for 40 days and ends the day before [Easter Sunday](#), which is known as [Holy Saturday](#). Sundays are not counted in the forty days. (Find out why further down the page.)

In the Roman Catholic Church, Lent officially ends at sundown on [Holy Thursday](#) (Maundy Thursday), with the beginning of the mass of the Lord's Supper.

✚ Why does Lent last for 40 days?

The 40 days mark the 40 years of the Israelites going through the desert and the traditional 40 days of Jesus fasting in the desert.

✚ What happens during Lent?



Fasting

During Lent, Christians used to **fast** (give up food) but now a days some people try to give up their favourite food, such as chocolate, and not giving into temptation. Others might give up all dairy products. The Orthodox Church keeps Lent more strictly and people give up both meat and dairy products.

Lent is a time when Christians remember the 40 days and nights Jesus spent alone in the desert without food being tempted by the Devil. Jesus used this time to prepare for His work by fasting and praying.

Bible Study

Many churches hold special Lent services. In some towns the churches of different denominations join together in groups to discuss and share their Christian faith.

Fasting in different Religions

Different religions fast for different reasons. Sometimes people fast because they believe that suffering makes them closer to God. Fasting is believed to concentrate the mind on holy thoughts. There are some religions such as Buddhism and Sikhism, that don't encourage fasting because they don't believe it helps deepen religious strength.

Jews

Yom Kippur is the Day of Atonement when Jews believe they are punished for past sins and can pray for the future. It is a solemn time when Jews feel they have to show they want forgiveness for their sins by practising self-discipline. They do this by fasting and praying.

Muslims

Ramadan is the month when Muslims fast from before sunrise to sunset. It remembers the time when the Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) received the first revelation of the Qur'an, the Muslim holy book, from the Angel Jibril.

Hindus

Hindus fast at festivals and at other times to show devotion to the Hindu deities (gods). They fast on certain days of the month such as Purnima (full moon) and Ekadasi (the 11th day of the fortnight) and also on certain days of the week depending on their favourite God and its special day.