



WHAT IS LENT? Every religion has its own seasons in the same way that every generic calendar year does. If you take a look at the month of February, you'll stumble upon holidays such as Valentine's Day and US Presidents' Day.

However, these two examples are representative of global and government-related holidays. Another category of holidays is all about religious days of celebration. One of the most significant periods of time for followers of the Christian faith is a season known as Lent.

We know that Lent is a time period that typically begins in February or March. Lent holds a plethora of importance for followers of Christ. However, what exactly does Lent mean, and why is it so important to the various Christian denominations?

The Lenten season is an incredible historic and symbolic time for Christians. The religious season dates back to Jesus Christ's life on earth. He lives forever in the hearts of his followers, but the Lenten season is a direct reflection of the days that eventually led up to his crucifixion. The day Jesus was nailed to the cross in Jerusalem is recognized as Good Friday in modern times.

Lent begins the day of Ash Wednesday, which is a religious day that is observed for the sake of recognizing our faults as human beings and taking the time to repent for the sins we have committed throughout our lifetimes.

Though not all Christians abstain from eating meat and drinking on Ash Wednesday, members of many denominations will participate in a full day of fasting once a week, typically on Fridays. In regard to fasting, there is no hierarchy of devotion to one's religion or dedication to the season of Lent. Just because one person decides to fast for the entire six weeks, that doesn't mean their faith is stronger or better than someone who doesn't restrict their intake. Fasting is simply an additional way of paying mind to one's deep repentance for prior sins, but the decision is optional, and more importantly, it's entirely personal.

In today's Christian community there are many iterations of fasting. Many people make a vow to fast from things such as negative thoughts, gossiping, social media, binge watching shows on streaming sites, alcohol, and much more. New traditions also include adding things to your life for these 40 days such as setting aside time to meditate and pray each day, visiting homebound, and engaging in service to our community. Giving alms to the poor is another ancient tradition of the Lenten season. For many, the money they would have used for an item they are fasting from during Lent is collected and donated to organizations.

How Long Does Lent Last?

The Lenten season is six weeks long in the Christian liturgical year. Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, which falls on a different day each year, but looking at the calendar, Ash Wednesday will always fall on the seventh week prior to Easter. The day that Easter falls on each year is in relation to something known as the paschal full moon. This refers to the ecclesiastical full moon that takes place any day after March 21st, the Spring Equinox.

The cyclical movements of the moon dictate the exact date, but Easter is always on the Sunday that follows the full moon of Passover. Easter denotes the end of the six weeks of Lent.

The Significant Days During Lent

The entire Lenten Season is important and significant, but there are days that are more symbolic than others. Those days are Ash Wednesday, Palm Sunday, Holy Thursday, Good Friday, Holy Saturday, and Easter.