

LENT

REPENT *and* REMEMBER

“The Lord your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, that he might humble you, testing you to know what was in your hearts” (Deuteronomy 8:2). After freeing his people from slavery in Egypt, God tested them, and in their hearts he found sin and rebellion.

God fed his people, but they rejected what he provided. *“The people spoke against God and against Moses, ‘Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we loathe this worthless food’” (Numbers 21:5).* During the forty days of Lent, we repent of our sins, sins not so different from those of the Israelites. The Lord daily provides for our needs, yet we become wasteful and selfish with the food, clothing and shelter he provides. We complain about his gifts and want more.



The Israelites quarreled with Moses. They doubted the presence of God and questioned his care. *“The people of Israel ... tested the Lord by saying, ‘Is the Lord among us or not?’” (Exodus 17:7).* During Lent we confess our quarrels and anxious thoughts. Like the Israelites, we may doubt that God is truly with us as he has promised to be.

Israel turned from God and worshiped a golden idol as god. *“[Aaron] received the gold from their hand and ... made a golden calf. And they said, ‘These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!’” (Exodus 32:4).* We may not bow down to idols of gold, but we seek other gods, things that consume our time and attention, idols of money, work, possessions or popularity.

Lent is a season of repentance, a time to remember that, like ancient Israel, we daily sin against the God who saved us. But Lent is also a time to remember our Lord Jesus Christ. During his forty days of testing in the wilderness, Jesus stood in the place of Israel—he stood in our place. He was tempted and remained faithful.

Jesus was tempted to doubt God’s provision and turn stones to bread. He was tempted to put God to the test and throw himself from the temple. He was offered glory and power, if only he would fall down and worship the devil (Matthew 4:1-11). Against each temptation, our Savior stood firm: *“He humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross” (Philippians 2:8).*

During Lent we repent and remember our Lord’s perfect obedience, his faithful response in every temptation. In his innocence, it was our sins he carried in his body to the cross, *“and with his wounds we are healed” (Isaiah 53:5).*

