

6 Weeks of Daily  
Devotionals



# PREQUEL

SEEING JESUS IN  
THE OLD TESTAMENT



**RIDGEFIELD**  
church of the nazarene

One of our core values here at Ridgefield Church of the Nazarene is our commitment to *Pursue God Passionately*. We do this not only during weekend worship services, but we want to help you pursue God every day. God wants to speak to you and teach you personally how to follow him. How does this happen? Through regular quiet times with God with Bibles open, we stay spiritually *hydrated*.

If you have tried to read the Bible on your own, you may have struggled with the part we call the Old Testament. Comprising two-thirds of the Bible, this part was written *before* Jesus. It contains a mixture of stories, poetry, and more. It is sometimes difficult to reconcile how God is portrayed in the Old Testament versus what we see in Jesus. Finally, it is so difficult to know how to apply these ancient teachings to our modern-day lives.

This spring, in the weeks leading up to Easter, we want to help you understand and apply the Old Testament. In these books we find numerous prophecies, images and object lessons that directly pointed to the coming, death and resurrection of Jesus.

This short book contains six weeks of daily devotional readings. Each day contains a Scripture reading and a brief devotional thought that will teach you, encourage you, or help you live out your faith in Jesus. These devotionals were written by our pastoral staff members and adult Sunday School teachers. We hope you are inspired this season to not only understand the Old Testament, but to more fully appreciate the rescue mission of humanity lead by Jesus the Son of God.

**We also invite you to join us every weekend leading up to Easter as we go deeper with some of these themes.**

**Join us for a service at 6:30 PM on Saturdays or at 9:00 or 10:30 AM on Sundays.**



# Monday, March 11

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## SCRIPTURE READING: EXODUS 12:1-11 & 46

Scripture tells us the sacrificial lamb would be chosen for its perfection. Under the shepherd's care, these lambs were preened for perfection against sickness, deformity and broken bones. These, when ready, would be herded up the streets of Jerusalem to the temple mount and used for the atonement sacrifice for the sins of the people.

Each household would secure a male lamb on the 10th day of the first month. Hebrew tradition says it was embraced into the family. At the end of the 14th day, the lamb would be taken to the priest and sacrificed. Something perfect and innocent would be their joy and sorrow. (See Deuteronomy 12:1-7)

Who knew this sacrifice would be enacted for millennia as a dress rehearsal for the coming Messiah even to the mode of his death. It was Rome who brought crucifixion to a science. Even the scourging was designed to inflict excruciating pain, but break no bones, to draw blood, but not too much. Those who crucified knew precisely where to place the nail: right below the palm between the two wrist bones. When pierced, they would not break bones. The Greeks included the wrist as part of the full hand. Therefore, Scripture was fulfilled in that, "not one of his bones would be broken." (Psalm 34:20) To the very end, the Passover lamb, our Savior, was the perfect sacrifice.

"We all like sheep have gone astray... and the lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all." (Isaiah 53:6)

-Toni Thomson



## Tuesday, March 12

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### SCRIPTURE READING: EXODUS 12:11-30; JOHN 1:29; 1 PETER 1:18 & 19

We are familiar with the Exodus/Passover story. God sent Moses to deliver His people from oppression and bondage. Pharaoh refused to let God's people leave Egypt resulting in God's judgment of ten plagues—the last one was the death of every firstborn son and male animal in the land of Egypt. God gave specific directions to the Israelites to prepare a sacrifice, take some of the blood from the sacrifice and smear it on the sides and top of the doorframes. Death came to all those who did not have the blood on the doorframes, but passed over the homes where the blood of the sacrificial lamb was applied.

The sacrificial lamb of the Passover symbolized God's Son, Jesus Christ—the Messiah, who would shed His blood and take the role of the sacrificial Lamb of God so that we can have eternal life. "...John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, 'Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!'" (John 1:29) Jesus' blood was poured out for the forgiveness of our sins. (Matthew 26:29). We are redeemed with the "precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect." (1 Peter 1:19)

*Reflect on the day you accepted this great salvation and Jesus' blood was applied to your heart's door. Pray a prayer of thanksgiving for this wonderful gift of eternal life.*

-Frieda Goode



# Wednesday, March 13

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## SCRIPTURE READING: DEUTERONOMY 16:1-8 & 1 CORINTHIANS 5:1-13

In First Corinthians 5:6a, there was a feast concerning “bread” that Paul called his non-Jewish congregation to observe. “Your boasting is not good. Don’t you know that a little yeast leavens the whole batch of dough?” This statement may seem a little strange to us, but in a world where baking bread was a daily activity, it made perfect sense. Adding yeast, the leavening agent to dough would cause it to rise. A tiny amount of yeast would infiltrate the entire batch of dough until it was completely leavened (or puffed up).

First Corinthians 5:7 reads: “Get rid of the old yeast, so that you may be a new unleavened batch.” Paul is clearly talking about the biblical observance of the Feast of Unleavened Bread given to ancient Israel by God during the old covenant era and as was also observed by Jesus.

Paul’s words indicate this Festival was now imbued with a new spiritual meaning about Jesus as our Savior and His work in us. Paul knew this leavening affects the entire lump of dough. He equates this to the spiritual leavening of “malice and wickedness.” Paul uses leavening as a symbol for sinful thoughts and behavior that can saturate our lives.

We Christians must understand this hidden work of spiritual leavening. God wants more than just a profession of belief from us. He wants the celebration of Unleavened Bread to be filled with the meaningful symbols of our Lord’s death and resurrection.

*Jesus wants us to be spiritually de-leavened*

-Jim Gola



# Thursday, March 14

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## SCRIPTURE READING: ECCLESIASTES 4:9-12 & HEBREWS 10:24-25

My sisters and I are very close. When we gather to celebrate some occasion, we laugh at the old stories, we share new ones, and there is always a lot of fun and laughter. But underneath the joy and laughter, are the memories of struggle and torment. Over the years, the things that truly bonded us were the times we survived. We each had our own burdens that we all gathered to carry together. What truly makes us family is that we journey together.

It's interesting to look at the various elements of the Passover. The Seder meal itself is filled with great symbolism and meaning. There is even significant beauty in the structure itself. Each ritual ordered to tell a story and represent the journey. But this celebration is more than just a joyful party with laughter. It's a recognition of pain and struggle. It's a retelling of the survival of the people of God. What truly bonds us in the Passover is the camaraderie in the pains of the journey. It's a reminder of our shared history in the sacrifice of a Savior. The body of Christ has some amazing survival stories. The one that bonds us together at the deepest level? It's about a man who represented the purest of innocence, yet took on the weight of the deepest guilt. It's the story of a people who still gather weekly to celebrate with great joy the Resurrected King. It's a journey we are on together.

*Write your own Psalm of Praise, a simple written prayer, to God for how the body of Christ has been a part of your journey.*

- J. Scott Davis



# Friday, March 15

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## SCRIPTURE READING: DEUTERONOMY 15:21 & DEUTERONOMY 17:1

Before the Passover Feast, a family would get one perfect lamb and bring him in as a pet to take extra good care. On the night of the feast, the lamb would be slaughtered and prepared as food for the feast. The Jewish tradition would make this sacrifice very meaningful. Isaiah 53:10 tells of the cost of Jesus to the Father.

In Ridgefield, there is a family with five children, and they live on a farm with many pet animals. The hard event for the children is when a pet grows and they have to sacrifice it for food. They attend the Spanish service on Saturday nights. I regularly brought my small dog, whom I named *Buddy*, their children just loved playing with him. One Saturday night, while the children were saying goodbye after the service, I got the idea to give the dog to them. Their mom and dad said it was okay and they took Buddy home to live with them.

The boys grew to love Buddy more every day, all day and night. One day, while petting the small dog, the boy asked his father, "When are we going to eat Buddy?"

It hurts so much to give those you love.

*Today, as you pray, think about how much it hurt God the Father to send his beloved Son Jesus to die for us. Thank you, Father!*

-Loren Hanna



# Saturday, March 16

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## SCRIPTURE READING: GENESIS 2:4-7 & 1 CORINTHIANS 15:39-50

Genesis is a book of beginnings. All that is finds origin in God's act of creation. Even that which is "man-made" was formed from elements that already were. Paul reveals the contrasting nature between Adam and Christ. The natural being came first and the spiritual second. (1 Corinthians 15:45-46) Adam, created as a living soul, was made head of God's original creation. Christ, the spiritual, was made head of the new creation. Adam lead man through the door into chaos. Christ leads to life. (1 Corinthians 15:22)

We begin as flesh and find the effects of Adam's fall, the inclination to act in sin. Transformation comes in realizing that which was in the beginning must give way to that which came next, the spiritual. There is a built in calling within each of us to be drawn toward what is next, the fulfillment of the spiritual that comes only in Christ.

Though raised in the church with no memory of a day without Christ as my savior, as a teen I felt a need for something deeper, something complete. At 15, I made the decision to move Christ from being part of my world to being the center. No longer would He fit into my life. Instead, my life would fit around Him. The rest of my journey has been arranging of the pieces of my life around Him. Now, I am different. I am no longer what I was in the beginning.

*What's your step forward? Accepting Christ as Savior? Moving Him from part to center? Maybe life pieces need rearranging. Let's all take our next step together.*

- J. Scott Davis



# Sunday, March 17

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## SCRIPTURE READING: GENESIS 22:1-19

Abraham had waited many years for a son, who is now a young man in the prime of life and God says sacrifice him as a burnt offering. I know that Abraham has learned over many years to trust God. But his only son Isaac, the son he loved?

God was testing Abraham with a supreme test of loyalty and faith. When we are tested it develops our character. The next day he was out cutting wood for the sacrifice. Loading the donkey, he called to his two servants and Isaac to set out for a three-day journey to the place God had directed him to.

When they arrived Abraham said to his servants "stay here while Isaac and I go up and worship then we will return" (Genesis 22: 5). No doubt, just simple faith in God's provision. "We WILL RETURN."

As I read this I could see a picture of God's own son Jesus Christ carrying the wood to his sacrifice on the cross obediently obeying his Father like Isaac was willing to give up his life at his father's request.

*Lord give me the strength to willingly obey when you call.*

-Don Bancel



# Monday, March 18

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## SCRIPTURE READING: GENESIS 32:22-32

Jacob fearfully awaited to meet his brother Esau after years of disagreement and separation. Relying solely on his own strength and might, Jacob considered the possibility of what might happen in this meeting and planned for his “worst case scenario”.

Have you ever acted like Jacob? Have you ever taken decisions in your own hands and pushed God aside?

As Jacob neared encountering Esau, God showed up, and Jacob was forced to wrestle with Him. In the night of wrestling with his Creator, Jacob lost sight of all other things and became focused solely on God and seeking His blessing. When we truly ask Jesus in, our identity and purpose change as we are made new. Jacob was changed as God injured his hip, a beautiful and loving reminder that we must not rely on our own strength but on His. Regardless of the outcome of his meeting with Esau, Jacob knew that God had changed him and was with him. We can find peace in those same truths. Although we may come out of the wrestling beaten and bruised, we often find ourselves with an indescribable peace from God.

What are you fearful of today? What do you need to wrestle with God about in prayer and give to Jesus? *Take time today to spend with God and seek Him in your weakness. Humble yourself and cry out for His blessing in this area of your life. Like Jacob, you will be forever changed.*

-Randy Meade



# Tuesday, March 19

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## SCRIPTURE READING: EXODUS 6:1-8 & EXODUS 14:5-13

The day finally dawned. Plagues had passed. The unblemished lamb was eaten. Death had passed over. Moses was leading God's people out of Egyptian slavery and darkness. Their hopes soared. Marching, God led them to the sea. With their enemy behind them and the great waters before them they were blocked, hemmed in. The Lord instructed Moses, "Lift up the rod, stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it..." In the sight of His people, God made a pathway in the sea. He has made a pathway for us, his people, also.

As God told Moses to lift his hands, Christ's hands were stretched wide, nailed, and pierced for us. "Father forgive them..." He spoke on our behalf. "It is done." He fought for us. He did it all. We did nothing and received everything - peace with God. Christ suffered and fought the power of death, darkness, and the devil. Nothing can hold us ever again. He will make a pathway even in our deepest affliction. We are His. We are not forgotten.

Hebrews 12:1-3 says, "Let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance...fixing our eyes on Jesus..." *today, let us humbly bow and say, "You are my God. I will follow you."*

-Deborah Pfeifer



# Wednesday, March 20

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## SCRIPTURE READING: JOSHUA 17:18 & JUDGES 1:1-36

The book of Judges covers arguably the darkest period of Israel's history. What begins on a note of victory is soured by partial obedience. Rather than driving the Canaanites from the land (Joshua 17:18), they are allowed to stay, often pressed into forced labor. The result is a pattern where the people "do what is right in their own eyes" and fall into chaos. When they cry out for help, God raises up temporary deliverers to save them, eventually falling back into their old patterns. What continues is a spiral into depravity.

As a kid, I remember being given chores and I would often sort of do them. There is a huge difference between obedience and partial obedience. There is a difference between making curfew and sort of making curfew, between taking out the garbage and sort of taking out the garbage. I became less concerned about what my parents wanted and more concerned about how to accomplish a level of making things look good. Spiritually, we can do the same thing. In partially obeying God, we pick through what He asks and do only what is needed to look or feel good. The result is doing what is right in our own eyes and eventually spiraling downward. We sometimes wonder "where the joy went".

Through the Judges, these temporary saviors, God foreshadowed His permanent solution. Christ, the final salvation of all who cry out for lasting deliverance. He brings freedom to those imprisoned in cycles of chaos.

*Lord, search me and reveal any areas of partial obedience in my heart. Give me lasting freedom from the cycles of chaos that haunt me.*

- J. Scott Davis



# Thursday, March 21

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## SCRIPTURE READING: PSALM 105:1-22

[God] sent a man before them, Joseph, who was sold as a slave. They afflicted his feet with fetters; he himself was laid in irons, until the time that his word came to pass, the word of the Lord tested him. (Psalm 105:17–19, NASB)

Joseph has a wonderful God given dream. In His excitement he shares it with his father and brothers. In his dream everyone is bowing down to him. He believed everyone would be excited with him. He asked them, “what do you think of the dream?” They hated his dream and planned to kill him. Instead, they settled for selling him as a slave to Egypt. This is opposite of God’s vision. Joseph is a model slave to his Egyptian master. Eventually he ends up in prison falsely accused.

When God gives a vision for your life, family, ministry, or career, just like Joseph’s dream don’t be shocked if the opposite happens.

Joseph’s response wasn’t to give up on God. Others with less character would have blamed God, or doubted God’s promise. Scripture states, “until the time that the promise came, the word of the Lord tested him.” When the situation is opposite of the vision, don’t give up on God’s promises. Words of faith are so important. Remember God’s vision and keep pressing on.

*Through the promise, God is testing our faith and our persistence, when we will hold on when times are tough. When we pass the test, then like Joseph, the promise will be fulfilled.*

-Will Thompson



# Friday, March 22

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## SCRIPTURE READING: PSALM 136:1-26

Within my wonderful childhood, my only playmates were often my sisters. As the youngest and the only boy, I was at the mercy of their agenda. When singing together, I was restricted to singing “echo.” Playing Little House on the Prairie, the cat played a human. I was relegated to Jack the dog. And don’t even get me started on playing Barbies! It felt like a bondage from which I needed rescue. It was either that or be cast out to wander in a wilderness of solitude. As a people person, that was torture and plagued with dissatisfaction.

The Israelites were enslaved in Egypt. In escape, they cried for deliverance from their enemy through the waters. Wandering in the wilderness, they lived a cycle of dissatisfaction, disobedience, and repentance. All along the way, they found miraculous rescue. Delivered from slavery, they passed through parted waters. Repeatedly forgiven, the wilderness wanderings eventually brought them to the promised land. All of these rescues came from one place.

We often need rescue. Slaves to sin. Needing escape from our pursuing enemy. Crying from the wilderness for a way out. Our Great Rescuer was also theirs. Their journey is ours and even reflects His own. He returned from Egypt, came through the waters of His own baptism, and was victorious over the temptations of hunger and dissatisfaction in the wilderness. Through all of this, He became the atonement for all. His pattern is patience. His rescue is forgiveness. We embrace it with faith.

*Evaluate your current place. Is it bondage to sin? Dissatisfaction? Lack of trust? Longing for rescue? Remember, He brings rescue in forgiveness. Embrace it again.*

- J. Scott Davis



# Saturday, March 23

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## SCRIPTURE READING: NUMBERS 21:4-8

As a kid, we took a lot of road trips which are some of my greatest memories. My sisters and I would sit in the backseat laughing and singing songs. Inevitably, these trips would digress into extreme boredom. We would get impatient and someone would start the impending flood of complaints with “Are we there yet?!?” Then came the onslaught of unhappiness. Mom was always prepared with a game of some sort or one of her impromptu stories and boredom was vanquished.

The Israelites were not so lucky. As they traveled on their long journey, they grew impatient and grumbled to God. Moses did not tell them stories, start a game, or sing song with them. Instead, God sent venomous snakes. However, in response to the people’s repentant cries, and at God’s instructions, Moses crafted a snake from bronze. If bitten, simply looking upon this snake displayed on a pole, the very image of their punishment, would save them.

Years later, a man came upon the earth to bring a different kind of salvation. Because of the sins of the people, Jesus found Himself on a different pole. This pole was a symbol of death among the people. He became the very image of their punishment. To this day, all who will look upon Him and cry out for forgiveness are saved. Impatience and grumbling can lead to desperate actions. It’s easy to get impatient for the things of God to happen. Let us not tire on the journey.

*Make a list of frustrations, impatience, and grumbings. Read through them before God and turn them into prayers of surrender.*

- J. Scott Davis



# Sunday, March 24

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## SCRIPTURE READING: DEUTERONOMY 6:1-25

"Be careful that you do not forget the LORD, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery." (Deuteronomy 6:12)

"We have been the recipients of the choicest bounties of Heaven. We have persevered these many years in peace and prosperity, but we have forgotten God," Abraham Lincoln, 1863.

The Israelites were slaves of the Egyptians, the Africans of the Americans till 1865, and humanity to sin. In all cases slavery was wrong. God used Moses to rescue the Israelites, Lincoln/the Union Army the Africans, and Christ all of mankind. These slaves were: chattel, marketable, and disposable.

The same as the unborn child. Since 1973, over 54,000,000 babies have been aborted in the US. (Chris Smith-politifact) Jonathon Van Maren writes, "Wild cheering and applause erupted in the New York State legislature as lawmakers voted on Tuesday to declare abortion until birth a "fundamental right" and strike any protections for children in the womb from the books," Included was infanticide for those that survived. The unborn is a slave to its mother, abortionists, marketers, and researchers. Surprisingly, 17 states in U.S. have similar laws, however, 80% of Americans are against late term abortion. (CBN News)

Christians need to fast and pray for the cleansing of the Court system, legislators and Christian leaders who will stand up for the unborn.

"If Christ sets you free, you are free indeed."

-Will & Toni Thompson



# Monday, March 25

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## SCRIPTURE READING: ZECHARIAH 12:1-14:21

When the church began the project to remodel the upper-level offices and Café, we would hear people say, "just wait until its done." Then as time went on and problems developed, we began to hear, "is it ever going to get done?"

It was like that for the Jews of Zechariah's time. They lost hope, finally stopped work on the temple, and only looked out for themselves. God spoke to them many times about changing their ways but they did not want to listen. In Zechariah 8:14 God declared that he had determined to do good to Judah and Jerusalem, so in 9:9 he promises them "your king will come to you. He is righteous and victorious. He is humble and riding on an ass, on a colt, the offspring of a donkey." (CEB) I see Jesus Christ the promised Messiah. I also see the Holy Spirit in 12:10, "I will pour out a spirit of grace and mercy on David's house and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem. They will look onto me, the one they pierced and they will mourn," and again in 13:1 when he declares, "On that day a fountain will be opened to the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to cleanse them from sin and impurity."

All of this points forward to the Apostle John when he described the death of the Messiah Jesus Christ on the cross. The Roman soldiers fulfilled this scripture as they "pierced His side with a spear." and looked on "Him whom they pierced." (John 19:31-37).

*God's word promises that He will take away your burden, restore your joy and give you freedom and the joy of the Spirit when we look to the Lord for renewal. Thank you Jesus.*

-Don Bancel



# Tuesday, March 26

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## SCRIPTURE READING: PSALM 41:9 & LUKE 22:47

We look upon the action of Judas with disgust. For thirty pieces of silver he sold Jesus out. He even used with a kiss to identify the Holy One.

We can be guilty of selling our Lord out for so much less. Compromises in our every-day life can be a deceptive betrayal to the name we identify with. Word spoken in an unloving way, those little lies we tell without a second thought, all can be a much higher price of betrayal. The flesh can easily show up when least expected. As we go about our daily lives, our challenge is to not betray our Lord at any cost.

We do, however have the strength of the Holy Spirit to overcome the weakness of the flesh. We are God's workmanship. In that we can take comfort.

*Lord, help us to remain faithful in all we do. Give us the strength to never embarrass or betray you with or words or deeds. With Your strength we can stay the course that is before us. Let us give You the kiss of worshipping and not the kiss of betrayal.*

-Butch Petrick



# Wednesday, March 27

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## SCRIPTURE READING: NUMBERS 6:1-21

The Nazirite vow is one of complete consecration to the Lord. In the text mentioned above, it was for a period of time determined by the person making the vow.

The strongest example of devotion to God is shown in the person of Jesus Christ.

What would it look like for believers of today to take such a vow? It is not just abstaining from certain thing but also abstaining from every appearance of evil. It is a vow of undying love, a commitment of service to the One that paid the price for our failures, a love that hurts when Jesus hurts. A love that moves when told to move. It is truly one that loves God with all our soul mind and strength.

If we are to put on Christ, as Paul told the Galatians, then we must be separated from the world in such a way that people can easily see the differences made in us, by the power of Jesus. For us to put on Christ is like making a vow to God that Jesus lives in us. Not unlike the Nazirite vow, God has called us to a holy life style, which can only happen with His strength.

*Lord Jesus, please aid us in letting Your presents shine thru the lives that you have given us. Help us commit ourselves to be wholly devoted to the You.*

-Butch Petrick



# Thursday, March 28

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## SCRIPTURE READING: PSALM 22:1 & MATTHEW 27:46

Imagine what it must have been like for Jesus, the one that said to the Father; "I thank You that You hear Me always." hanging there all alone, He totally felt forsaken and in despair.

Quite often we feel forsaken by our God. In time we wonder if He hears our prayers. When we struggle with hearing God's answer to our needs, which we think to be very urgent, we have every reason to be ignored by the Creator of the universe. Our sins have separated us from our God.

It was at that very moment that Jesus cried out those words above that the sins that separate us from the Heavenly Father rested upon our Redeemer. Had it not been for that moment, then we could never expect God to hear anything we say to Him. Had he not taken, in that moment, our sins then we would still have to bear them alone.

We must give so much glory to Him for the love He that has shown to us by the suffering Savior's sacrifice.

*Lord, always help me to remember what my sins have cost You. May my heart forever be thankful for the words that were spoken, on my behalf, on that cross, "My God, My God why have You forsaken Me?" Because it was at that moment You made possible the fellowship I have with You.*

-Butch Petrick



# Friday, March 29

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## SCRIPTURE READING: LEVITICUS 16:1-34

I will gladly help with almost any cleaning job around the house, but I *hate* dusting. It is slow, tedious work, and no matter how careful I am, it always has to be done again a short time later. I have thought about how to build a house with no horizontal surfaces in order to avoid this never ending chore!

The Day of Atonement was one of the major yearly observances of the Jewish people. But unlike the other festivals, it was no celebration. It was a day was to solemnly approach God to seek forgiveness for sins.

Inside the temple was a room, farthest from the door, covered by a heavy curtain. It was not only a holy place. It was called “the holiest of holy places.” In the center of this room sat the famous Ark of the Covenant, believed to be God’s footstool on earth. This was as close to God as a human could ever get. And only the high priest, one this one day of the year, could enter this room, and with fear and trembling of getting too close to or offending a perfectly holy God. Before he could seek cleansing for the people’s sins, he had to make atonement for his own sins. At the end of the day, everyone accepted by faith that their sins had been accounted for and taken care of. Until next year, when they would do it all over again. Every year.

But Jesus changed all of that. Hebrews 10:1-18 tells us that Jesus, the perfect high priest from heaven, offered himself as a “once and for all-time” sacrifice. Why don’t we make sacrifices anymore? The Bible tells us that when your sins are forgiven by Jesus, “sacrifices for sin is no longer necessary.” (Hebrews 10:18).

*Do you find yourself asking for forgiveness for your past sins over and over? In the name of Jesus, you can claim once-and-for-all-time forgiveness of those past sins!*

-Jason Matters



# Saturday, March 30

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## SCRIPTURE READING: NUMBERS 17:1-13

I remember many times in my youth and young adulthood when I saw others around me getting recognition or opportunity that I felt I also deserved. My grumbling spirit was dissatisfied with someone else's achievement and I had outbursts of jealousy. Truly embarrassing memories.

Moses and Aaron had been chosen by God to lead the people, but there were some who were jealous and began grumbling for the right to have an equal share in control. God had grown weary of the grumbling and moved to settle it once for all. We see in this passage how God had 12 men chosen as a pool from which He would choose the leader. Aaron's rod of dead wood not only came to life and sprouted, but it produced actual fruit. Overnight! This rod was kept in the temple as a reminder to the rebellious that their grumbling should end. It became the tangible reminder that God had chosen and it was a call to repentance.

Many years later, another piece of dead wood was used by God. Instead of bearing fruit, it bore a man. A man that was God's chosen one to end the division between God and man once for all. That dead wood became a symbol for all generations that God's love triumphs all rebellion. That cross continues to serve as a tangible reminder that God has given a call to repentance. A call that still goes out to the rebellious to this day.

*Lord, in my journey with you, have mercy upon my rebellious and grumbling spirit as I seek to become what you have planned for me.*

- J. Scott Davis



# Sunday, March 31

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## SCRIPTURE READING: GENESIS 14:17-20 & HEBREWS 7:1-28

Melchizedek is a deeply mysterious figure. Paul describes him as “without father or mother, without genealogy, without beginning of days or end of life, like the Son of God he remains a priest forever.” (Heb 7:3) He appears twice in the Old Testament and bears a great likeness to Jesus. Paul brings out a list of similarities in Hebrews 7:11-28.

After Abraham’s victory over the kings, Melchizedek provides bread and wine to refresh and blesses him in the name of the Most High God. In grateful response, Abraham gives him his tithes. Jesus, seeing the coming victory over death, gathered His friends for communion with bread and wine. To this day, we gather in His name and consume together bread and wine as a symbol of His victory. With grateful hearts we bring Him our tithes.

Melchizedek came from nowhere, played his part in foreshadowing Christ, and disappeared into history. When we take time to slow down and breathe, we are able to pay closer attention to the details of our lives. In these details, we can see the glimmers of the presence of a king and priest who is still active in our lives and all around us. Those moments go as quickly as they come. They come on the scene, play their part in the history of our lives, and are gone. They go and are easily forgotten, but the work and very real presence of Jesus stays with us now and for eternity.

*Lord, help me slow down to see you in the mundane. Reveal yourself in the places I ignore. Awaken my eyes and remain with me.*

- J. Scott Davis



# Monday, April 1

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## **SCRIPTURE READING: JEREMIAH 31:31-34; MATTHEW 5:17-20; JOHN 1:29; LUKE 22:20**

We are so blessed to be recipients of the New Covenant. Jesus, our ultimate sacrifice, came to fulfill the Law of Moses and to establish the New Covenant between God and His people (Matthew 5: 17-20). John exclaimed about Jesus, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29). When we partake of communion we hear Jesus' words, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out God for you." (Luke 22:20) This new covenant is often called the Law of Grace.

Jesus' sacrifice on the cross changed everything! Because of the sacrifice of Jesus, our sins can be forgiven. (John 3:16) Because of the sacrifice of Jesus, His laws are written on our minds and hearts. Because of the sacrifice of Jesus, we can have a relationship with God and know Him personally. (1 John 5:19) Because of the sacrifice of Jesus, He lives within us. (Ephesians 3:17, 2 Corinthians 13:5) Because of the sacrifice of Jesus, we no longer are slaves to sin. (Romans 6) These are just a few of the many blessings we enjoy because of the shed blood of Jesus.

*Thank God for the ways your life has been changed because of the New Covenant--the shed blood of Jesus.*

-Frieda Goode



# Tuesday, April 2

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## SCRIPTURE READING: EXODUS 12:21-23 & SECOND CORINTHIANS 5:21

The last sacrifice that the children of Israel would make while under the bondage of Egypt would be the Passover Lamb. By marking their doorposts with the blood from this sacrifice they would be spared from the Angel of Death passing through the land. They were then told to observe this sacrifice the rest of their days on earth.

When John the Baptist would proclaim that Jesus is the Lamb that takes away the sin of the world, he was stating that Jesus was the final Passover Lamb. Jesus had to be a lamb without blemish. He was also willing to offer Himself up for the sins of the whole world. Although He knew no sin He became sin for us, thus taking our place so that death could pass over us and we could experience renewed fellowship with the Creator. Because of this sacrifice, which God is well pleased with, we can now be declared righteous in Him.

Much like the Jews, we are to take the blood of that final sacrifice and apply it to the doorposts of our hearts. Then we are to remember that sacrifice all the days of our live.

*Lord help us to always be mindful of that final sacrifice that You gave to take away our sins. Give us the strength to show the world that Your blood is applied to our hearts.*

-Butch Petrick



# Wednesday, April 3

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## **SCRIPTURE READING: ISAIAH 35:5-6B; LUKE 4:16-21; MATTHEW 11:2-6**

On YouTube, I had the privilege of seeing reactions when people were able to hear and see for the first time. I reached for the tissue and shed tears of joy along with them as I watched them laugh and cry with joy!

Isaiah 35: 5-6b tells of a time when the blind would see, the deaf would hear and the lame would walk. We read in the gospels several instances when Jesus' ministry included physical healing, "Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people" (Matthew 4:23). In Matthew 9 Jesus healed a paralyzed man, but first he did something far more important: He forgave his sins. Jesus knew he had a greater need. Jesus came so that the spiritually blind could see, the spiritually deaf could hear the Good News and the spiritually lame could walk with God. When we come to Christ, he restores our sight, gives us ears that hear His truth, and He helps us to walk in His paths.

Isaiah 35 points to the time when all our physical ailments will be removed with Jesus' victory over death. Those who have accepted Christ's forgiveness will be able to say with Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:55-57, "Death has been swallowed up in victory." "Where, O death, is your victory?" This is perfect healing.

*Meditate & thank God for your spiritual healing.*

-Frieda Goode



# Thursday, April 4

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## SCRIPTURE READING: JEREMIAH 30-31

This is one of the most critical prophetic sections in the entire Old Testament.

The broken-hearted weeping prophet can rejoice for a while. Jeremiah has received a vision of God's plan for the future of his people. God is going to bring Israel and Judah back from captivity and restore them to the land. He is also going to free them from all their oppressors and they will be ruled by the Messiah.

God plans to make a new covenant with Israel. God says he will "put My law in their minds and write it on their hearts"(31:33) This will change them from the inside out, not the outside in. A believer will know God in a personal way and he will be able to willingly obey from his heart when God calls.

This is a challenge to all of us to keep looking forward, beyond today and to God's plans for our future." Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful." (Hebrews 10:23)

*God's law belongs in the heart.*

-Don Bancel



# Friday, April 5

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## SCRIPTURE READING: NEHEMIAH 1:1-2:10

As our Sunday School Class travels verse by verse through the Old Testament we discovered in each (and every) chapter the Lord has placed a message designed to encourage us in our Christian walk. The Book of Nehemiah is no exception. We are discovering that Nehemiah was a prototype of Jesus: the life of Nehemiah mirrors that of Jesus; both in His first and second comings.

Nehemiah was the cupbearer of a king. He sat at the right hand of the King, and he was willing to die for the King. Jesus dwells at the right hand of the Father, and was willing to drink the cup the Father had for him, even though it meant his death.

Nehemiah was so moved by the condition of God's people and the beloved city Jerusalem, that he was willing to give up his exalted position, make a treacherous trip, and work under the most difficult of conditions to save his people. Jesus willingly gave up his position at the right hand of God to rebuild our walls of salvation and free us from the clutches of the enemy.

Upon seeing the condition of Jerusalem, Nehemiah openly wept. Later Jesus would also weep over the state of Jerusalem.

As Nehemiah began rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem he ran into and had to overcome three characters who tried to stop him, Sanballat (a picture of Satan), Geshem (a picture of the World), and Tobiah (a picture of the Old Nature). Jesus similarly defeated Satan's attacks, rebuilt our salvation and restored the glory to God's name that had been lost. Jesus defeated Satan's call of worldly compromise, and nailed the old nature to the cross!

-Dan French



# Saturday, April 6

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## SCRIPTURE READING: RUTH & LUKE 1:68-75

The story of Boaz and Ruth is one of the best love stories in the Bible. Ruth finds herself without provisions and protection. She is husbandless and childless. She has declared to her mother-in-law that Naomi's God would be her God. Enters Boaz, Ruth's near relative. As he beholds her loyalty and beauty he cannot help but want to bring her under his cover. According to their laws, he must seek to remove any person nearer to her so he has the right of redemption. With all the obstacles out of the way he takes her under his wings.

We, like Ruth, find ourselves spiritually broke and unprotected. We are open to the attacks of Satan. We need a redeemer, one to buy us back. Who is closer to our spirit than Jesus? Jesus has seen our broken and contrite hearts and spirit; He willingly paid the price of redemption. Unlike Boaz, Jesus paid for us by giving His life that we could be free from Satan's grip.

Have you allowed your heart and spirit to be broken before God so that He will buy you back? It is not too late to allow Jesus to do the redeemer's work in you.

*Help us to have the spirit of brokenness that You desire in Your redeemed ones. Thank you Lord God for buying us back from the sin we have sold ourselves into.*

-Butch Petrick



# Sunday, April 7

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## SCRIPTURE READING: PSALM 22:1-31

During the writing of this psalm, God uses King David's quill to show the events that would take place on the cross at Calvary. David cries out to God because of the persecution and pursuit from Saul. David lived a life of vulnerability just as Christ did. But in all of this David trusted that God would fulfill His word, delivering him and making him the King of Israel. Through the trials before him God would form a character worthy to be king.

Vulnerability can have different effects on people. The outcome for David was one of solid faith, not in himself but in the Almighty God that chose him to become king. An outcome that thought it not indifferent to cry out "My God, my God why have You forsaken me?"

As we live a life of vulnerability we must learn to trust that God will keep His promises to us just as He did with King David. Let God use our weaknesses to show His glory to those around us that don't know of His wonderful blessings He wants to shower on them.

*Lord in all of our vulnerability let us grow to be the children of the one true King. Let us proclaim that it is in You that all of our vulnerable is covered.*

-Butch Petrick



# Monday, April 8

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## SCRIPTURE READING: MALACHI 4:1-6

The Jewish nation still waits for the coming of Elijah Centuries after his departure. Elijah's coming is thought to precede the coming of the Jewish Messiah.

For we Christians, this prophecy was fulfilled in the gospels. "For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John. And if you are willing to accept it, he is the Elijah who was to come." (Matthew 11:14). The Bible makes it quite clear that John the Baptist is called "Elijah" because he came in

the "spirit and power of Elijah" (Luke 1:17), not because he was Elijah in a literal sense. John the Baptist was the forerunner who pointed the way to the arrival of the Lord, just as Elijah filled that role in the Old Testament.

Some commentators offer Malachi 4:5-6 ( Parentheses Mine) as an intriguing prophecy: "See, I will send you the prophet Elijah (John) before that great and dreadful day of the Lord comes. He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers; or else I will come and strike the land with a curse."

John the Baptist's warning in Matthew 3:2-3 still rings in our ears today. "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!"

The question is...are we still listening?

-Butch Petrick



# Tuesday, April 9

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## SCRIPTURE READING: ISAIAH 55:1-13

This passage of scripture gives us a clear understanding of the meaning of Jesus' death. He was a guilt offering, to take our sin upon himself, and he gave his life to pay for it in full. (Isaiah 53:4-6)

Out of the old testament, we find that men from Isaiah's time looked at suffering as a sign of divine disfavor and did not understand why the Messiah should suffer.

He was not the conquering hero they expected. This prediction of the suffering servant clearly indicates the suffering of Jesus Christ valued by God was rejected by men. His death won us salvation.

Now the Lord calls out; "come, all who are thirsty, come to the waters:" (Isaiah 55:1) *God is still calling to us who feel dry, come to Him and be satisfied. His love still pours like rain to hydrate your soul.*

-Don Bancel



# Wednesday, April 10

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## SCRIPTURE READING: ISAIAH 65:1-2 & ROMANS 10:9-21

The main points from our verses for today are mentioned twice in scripture: first in Isaiah, and again in Romans 10:20-21. In these verses, we see God revealing himself to his people and reaching out his hands to them. He had a plan to repair his relationship with humankind when he sent Jesus.

There is a certain amount of vulnerability involved when someone reaches out to repair a broken relationship. I'm not sure if God feels vulnerable when he pursues people that may reject him, but I know I do! Think about how scary it is to ask someone on a date or how hard it is to initiate a conversation to fix a relationship. I think these feelings of fear and vulnerability show just how much we care about how the other person responds. Do you think that God might care that much about how we respond to his pursuits?

Our verses describe two different responses to God's plan. First, some unsuspecting people said yes to Jesus and were changed forever! However, the ironic twist was that the Jews, God's chosen people, missed what God wanted to do in their lives. They were described as being obstinate. Have you ever tried to fix things with a spouse or a friend and felt they were being obstinate? It's hurtful!

*How are you going to respond to God's pursuit of you? He has put his heart on the line and is waiting for your response.*

-Erica Matters



# Thursday, April 11

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## **SCRIPTURE READING: ISAIAH 61:1; LUKE 4:16-20; MATTHEW 11: 2-6**

I read about a man named Frederick who grew up as a slave in the early nineteenth century. He experienced slavery's brutality. He was taken from his mother as an infant. As a child all he had to eat was runny corn meal dumped in a trough that kids fought to scoop out with oyster shells. He worked in hot fields before sunup until sundown. He was whipped, kicked and beaten. However, when he considered trying to escape to freedom, he struggled with that decision. He had some friends that he did not want to be separated from and he feared that if he failed in his escape, his life would be much worse. Finally, he developed the courage and escaped. He left his chains and experienced true freedom. (Illustration from Preaching Today, Kevin Miller)

Are you (or someone you know) held captive in a cycle of sin? Are you or someone you love living in bondage to sin? Are you anxious about your life—your job, relationships, health, finances, health? Are you brokenhearted? Have you been hurt deeply by someone? Jesus is still in the healing business today. Like Frederick, we can sometimes be comfortable with our bondage, but remember, Jesus came to release the captives, to bring sight to the blind and set the oppressed free. Run to Jesus!

*Re-write Luke 4:18 in the form of a prayer. Pray daily for yourself or someone else who needs freedom in Christ.*

-Frieda Goode



# Friday, April 12

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## **SCRIPTURE READING: ISAIAH 9:2-3 & MATTHEW 4:12-17**

Pastor Paul Batterson writes this: “Paul likens us to shining stars, and the word shine means to reflect. The scientific term is albedo. It’s a measurement of how much sunlight a celestial body reflects. The planet Venus, for example, has the highest albedo at .65. In other words, 65 percent of the light that hits Venus is reflected. Depending on where it’s at in its orbit, the almost-a-planet Pluto has an albedo ranging from .49 to .66. Our night-light, the moon, has an albedo of .07. Only seven percent of sunlight is reflected, yet it lights our way on cloudless nights.”

We all have the ability to reflect the light of Christ to those around us who are living in darkness. The real question is...are you? Are you reflecting the light of Christ in the way you live? Is your life being transformed from a life in darkness into a life growing in His likeness as you grow in His light? As light grows brighter, darkness disappears. As we continue to grow and be transformed in Christ, may His light continue to be reflected in our lives as we shine for Him, not only as believers in Christ but through the lives we live as we make this world a “brighter” place shining His light.

*Pray to God that your response to those around you is a response of reflecting the light of Christ in everything you do and say. Go and be the light of Christ to the world today.*

-Grant Peltzer



# Saturday, April 13

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## SCRIPTURE READING: ZECHARIAH 9:9-12

In this passage of the Old Testament we see Jesus triumphantly entering Jerusalem, riding on a donkey. He comes humbly to break Satan's bow, which is the sign of death by sin. Also He brings judgment and peace into Zion with Him. Our King comes, humbly riding on a donkey, instead of proudly on a horse like most king would come into the city. God tells the people to rejoice because of Jesus' entering into their presents.

We must open our heart's gates to allow Jesus to triumphantly enter in. As He came into Zion, His desire is to conquer sin and thus give life to the people of God. It is His desire to replace our tired and dead lives with life, peace, joy and happiness. As Zion represents a sign or waymark, let us allow Jesus to use us as sign to the lost around us.

*Lord thank You for the peace you bring to us. Lord let us always remember that You are the author and finisher of our faith. Help us to be the true Zion of God. Use us to show the world of Your abundant love for them. May ever keep our eyes on You and live the peace and joy that only you can provide.*

-Butch Petrick



# Sunday, April 14

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## SCRIPTURE READING: PSALM 22:1-20

Like many kids my age, I enjoyed collecting baseball cards. I would walk to 7-11 with my friends, buy a pack of cards for 44 cents (including tax), rip of the waxy wrapper, toss the stick of powder-coated bubble gum into my mouth, and thumb through the cards looking for my favorite players. Growing up in Minnesota, it was a good day when I found anyone who played for the Twins! Then I discovered that some of those cards had value! With every new pack of cards we would page through the magazine trying to find out if we were holding treasure. If our card wasn't listed, it was considered a "common" and basically worth nothing.

Sometimes I wonder why the longer we serve Christ, familiarity and complacency set in and we no longer see Jesus as an invaluable treasure but merely a "common." Jesus is anything but common!

Did you notice verses 1, 7, 8, 16 and 18 in Psalm 22? If not, read them again. Did you know that this was written 800 years before the Romans invented crucifixion as a method of capital punishment? And there are more. In fact, some Bible scholars see as many as 400 prophecies, appearances and foreshadows of Jesus in the Old Testament. And what are the odds of one man, Jesus of Nazareth, fulfilling them? One scientist explained it this way. What are the odds of any one many in human history fulfilling only eight of the sixty major prophecies fulfilled by Jesus? Imagine covering the entire state of Washington with silver dollars, seven and a half feet deep. Then ask a blindfolded man to draw one silver dollar from anywhere in the pile. What are the odds that he would pick up a specially marked silver dollar? The odds are 1 in 100, 000, 000, 000, 000, 000. Jesus is one-of-a-kind, and is anything but common. He is THE Savior from God.

-Jason Matters



# Monday, April 15

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## SCRIPTURE READING: ISAIAH 52:13-15

I recall my stay in the hospital almost two years ago, fighting for my life with double pneumonia, sepsis, heart and kidney failure amongst other issues. My physical condition was deteriorating. I was a mess. Lying in a hospital bed, I relied on nurses and other medical staff for almost everything as my physical limits were, well, limited. I was embarrassed as I didn't have the strength to take care of my body and needed the assistance of the nurses for help. They were my caregivers. My shortcomings were humbling. I spent a lot of time praying to God asking how this could happen to me at such a "young" age. But I learned that true peace is only through God and that He is with us during every moment. I learned that there are many circumstances and depths of our lives where we can't plunge, and that there are always untested limits.

Yet, Jesus has no limits. He came down from heaven in human form and went down further. He entered into the saddest and lowest human conditions—grief, humiliation, betrayal, and torture. Then he died in the worst way possible, his unimaginable physical pain accompanied by the mental anguish of being abandoned by God. There is no darkness into which a human being can descend that Jesus has not already descended. It is through the blood of Jesus Christ and the power that still continues as Jesus shares the depths of our darkest times.

*Pray for understanding that there are no depths of our lives that Jesus cannot reach. God will NEVER abandon us and is always walking with us through ALL circumstances.*

-Grant Peltzer



# Tuesday, April 16

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## SCRIPTURE READING: ISAIAH 53:1-3

Isaiah spoke of the Messiah 700 years before Christ was crucified on the Cross for our sins. Similar to today, the Gospel was confronted with disbelief and resistance. The world blocked out God as Isaiah spoke of the coming Savior. The Messiah came as a speck of light in the darkness, and the world did not recognize Him. People found Jesus to be plain and unexciting in His time on earth, and so often we make the same mistake today.

Our selfish temptations blot out the true desire in our hearts for Christ. Worldly influences tear Him down as we are drawn toward outward appearance and temporary happiness. We mistakenly reject the beauty and hope found in our Savior. Jesus knew pain so well, but yet we turn away to hide our faces from Him, overwhelmed by our own pain and rejection that seem bigger than Him. In moments of weakness we minimize the Savior, placing Him under a pile of brokenness, fear and resentment.

Why did the one Isaiah spoke of suffer? Because He loved then and He loves today. The suffering, rejection, and torment He endured then allows Him to enter into our suffering now. Jesus is with us in our pain, our fear, and our brokenness, and because of His great love and mercy, He wants to set us free.

*Where are you hurting today and in need of the Savior's touch? Give it all to God right now and let the healing power of the cross wash over you as you believe. Thank you, Jesus.*

-Randy Meade



# Wednesday, April 17

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## SCRIPTURE READING: ISAIAH 53:4-6

*“And by His stripes we are healed.”*

Why is it prophesied in Isaiah 53:4-6 that Jesus must be stricken with our transgressions, afflicted in pain with great sorrows and bruised for our iniquities? Jesus allowed the bodily penalty of disobedience that we might in turn have healing. We see this in that phrase at the end of verse, “by His stripes we are healed.” In another words, “by Jesus’s wounds healing was acquired for us.” This healing was completed our heritage through the wounds that Jesus bore on His body.

As believers we have physical rights in Christ. “...who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed. (1 Peter 2:24 (NKJV)) Peter’s Hebrew lineage gave him insight into Old Testament scriptures because he understood the language entirely and since he was inspired by the Holy Spirit, he gave the correct meanings to those words of Isaiah.

We are grateful to Jesus for hanging on the cross, taking our sicknesses and healing us. Jesus was wounded that we might be healed.

Pray the Scriptures: *Dear Jesus we are thankful you died on cross that we would have life and life abundantly (John 10:10b). Agreeing with scriptures of the statement of the Lord, I confess that by his stripes I am healed (1 Pet 2:24). I shall live and not die. (Ps 118:17) Jesus is my awesome medical doctor. Amen*

-Will Thompson



# Thursday, April 18

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## SCRIPTURE READING: ISAIAH 53:7-8

N.T. Wright, a leading English New Testament scholar, Pauline theologian, and retired Anglican bishop, writes:

“The message of the resurrection is that this world matters! That the injustices and pains of this present world must now be addressed with the news that healing, justice, and love have won. If Easter means Jesus Christ is only raised in a spiritual sense—[then] it is only about me, and finding a new dimension in my personal spiritual life. But if Jesus Christ is truly risen from the dead, Christianity becomes good news for the whole world—news which warms our hearts precisely because it isn't just about warming hearts. Easter means that in a world where injustice, violence and degradation are endemic, God is not prepared to tolerate such things—and that we will work and plan, with all the energy of God, to implement victory of Jesus over them all.”

Jesus was deprived of justice and was treated as though he had been violent and deceitful. Yet He was content doing the will of the Father. The same must be true for us today. If we make success as the world defines success, we run the danger of losing everything. If we are to walk in the footsteps of the prophet Isaiah as well as the Son of God, we need to be prepared to leave the outcome of our servanthood in the hands of God, being faithful and true in every circumstance.

*As you prepare for your day, the focus of our lives must be on the will of God for our lives. If our focus is on the world and worldly matters, we will lose everything. Pray for God's will for your life not only for today but on a daily basis.*

-Grant Peltzer



# Friday, April 19

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## SCRIPTURE READING: ISAIAH 53:8-9

If you thought Jesus' death was the end of the story, you thought wrong. His perfect life, His innocent death, and His burial in a rich man's tomb was just the beginning of his mission to save us from our sins.

When Sunday came, the intermission during the Jesus story began anew. His resurrection forever shredded the temple curtain giving us joy, hope, peace, forgiveness and eternity with God. No! His story is not over yet. If you think it is, your life will not change.

Easter is not the final act. The resurrection of Jesus' shows us that there is still another act to follow. Jesus matched the Messianic expectations of the Hebrew Scriptures. The fulfillment of many prophecies concerning Him are to be found in the pages of the New Testament.

Easter might be the time for you and I to review the many Jewish Messianic prophecies concerning our Savior. When doing so, allow Him to speak through not only your mind, but also your heart as you eagerly seek HIS truth. In God's great mercy in the resurrection of His Son Jesus Christ from the dead, He has given us new birth into a living hope. He has given us an inheritance that can never perish, unlike that of the world's. The prophecies that have matched a particular description, including suffering, silence at his arrest and trial, death and burial in a rich man's tomb give proof to His resurrection and subsequently ours. (Isaiah 52:13-53:12).

*May this Easter renew our hope and expectations from our awesome God.*

-Jim Gola



# Saturday, April 20

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## SCRIPTURE READING: ISAIAH 53:10A

"Yet it was the Lord's will to crush him and cause him to suffer..."

How do we reconcile this to our understanding of God? How can a good and loving Father desire for his son to suffer? Doesn't this portray God to be a cruel and abusive Father?

As Christians we refer to today as "Holy Saturday." In our Easter story, today Jesus' body is lying in a cool tomb. His followers are weeping, if not still in shock. The PTSD caused by watching your friend die by crucifixion is unimaginable. How was any of this the Lord's will?

We must be careful not to pit God the Son (Jesus) against God the Father. Sometimes we imagine Jesus appeasing the wrath of God the Father. But if Jesus is just as much God as is God the Father (as we Christians believe he is), then Jesus' wrath against sin matched his Father's. And the compassion and mercy of the Father matched what we see in Jesus.

Jesus' sacrificial death satisfied *his own wrath* against sin.

In his sacrificial death, Jesus maintains his own sense of justice by offering himself for sin. So Paul notes that "he did it to demonstrate his righteousness at the present time at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Christ." (Romans 3:26 (NIV))

*In the perfectly unified mind of God the Father, Son & Holy Spirit, they shared the credit for the idea that would save you and me from ourselves and reunite us with God forever.*

-Jason Matters



# Easter Sunday, April 21

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## SCRIPTURE READING: ISAIAH 53:10-12

The first rule when interpreting prophecy is to ask what it meant to the original audience. Could there have been anyone in Isaiah's audience for whom these words were meant? Was there a faithful servant who needed some encouragement before walking into a painful situation? Only after answering this question can we look to the distant future. But these last verses make it clear that this *servant* will die and live again. Can we really imagine anyone expecting death and resurrection? It is clear that these words, spoken hundreds of years before Jesus was born, foresaw the ministry, the death and the resurrection of Jesus.

*Jesus died for your sins.* In these three verses we find five separate references to sins and sinners. The entire sacrificial system was a giant object lesson that pointed to Jesus' ultimate sacrifice of himself *for* sins. Jesus offered his life for *your* sins.

Notice this phrase in verse 11: "After he has suffered, he will see the light of life and be satisfied." Like the parent who sacrifices so much for his children, when we, his children, receive his forgiveness and new life, and our lives are transformed, he looks on us, smiles, and says, "it was painful, but worth it." He is satisfied. And just as we look forward to the day when we will see our Savior face to face, he looks forward to spending all of eternity with us, his children.

Over the last six weeks we have seen the great lengths God went to in order to bring us back to him. Our response to him should be nothing less than giving our lives and every part of ourselves to him.

*Jesus, you gave your life for me. I give my life to you. I give every part of myself to you. Fill me with your Spirit. Lead me. I am yours.*

-Jason Matters



# What's Next?

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We hope you have been inspired this season to experience Easter in a new way! Maybe you have discovered details about the story that you never knew before. We hope you have felt the value of a daily quiet time.

So now what?

It is pretty simple: Keep going! You have heard it said that it takes 21 days to develop a good habit. Well here is the good news: you are there! Can we encourage you to not give your good habits a break! (How about getting some rest from your bad habits?)

So here are a few spiritual habits that will keep you growing:

- **Experience a church service every weekend** where you can keep taking steps on your spiritual journey.
- **Join a Small Group or Bible Study** where you can grow in a supporting community of adults.
- **Read the Bible and pray every day.** If you are new to Bible reading, start with the stories of Jesus. Read one chapter every day and underline the one verse that speaks to you the most. The YouVersion Bible app (available on every operating system) not only has several Bible translations, but also has Bible reading plans to keep you consistent every day.
- Share with someone what you are reading or learning from God. Something good happens when we don't keep our faith to ourselves.

**We want to help you grow in your faith and reach your full potential in Christ.** If there is anything we can do to help, please don't hesitate to ask!





We invite you and your family to celebrate Easter with us!  
Saturday, April 20 at 6:30 pm  
Sunday, April 21 at 8:30 am, 10:00 am, & 11:30 am



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