

# Walking with Jesus

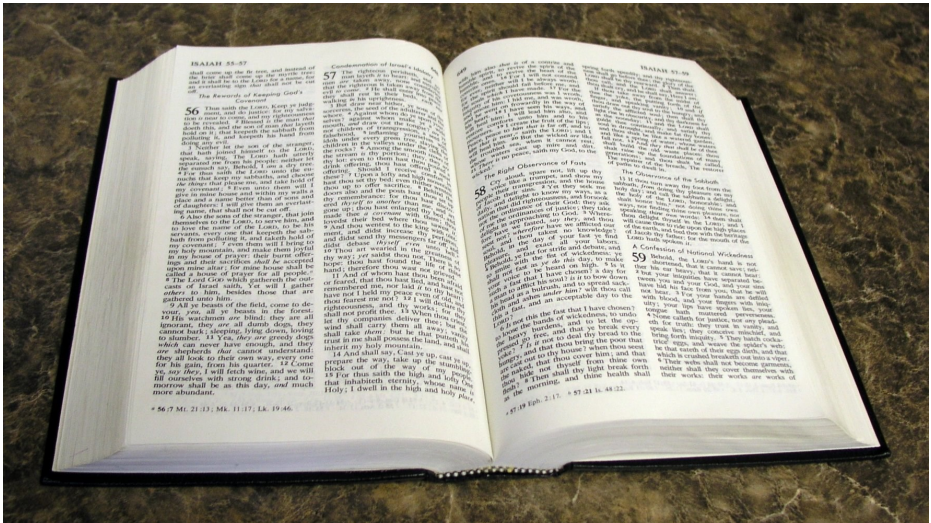
on the road to the cross

Lent  
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Week 6

Insight from the Scriptures



I think there's a tendency in today's church to downplay the importance of the Old Testament or 'Hebrew Scriptures' as Jews prefer to call them. Some even suggest that the God of the Old Testament is warlike and vengeful whereas in Jesus, he is loving and merciful, almost like two different Gods! But the Hebrew Scriptures were Jesus' Bible! He studied them from his youth (Luke 2), quoted from them, used them to defeat Satan when tempted. Later, after his resurrection, on the Emmaus road, he explained them to his confused disciples: "And beginning with Moses and all the

Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself." (Luke 24:27). Afterwards, "They asked each other, 'Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?'" (24:32).

Prayer

Lord God, thank you for all the Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments. May we treasure them in their entirety, even the bits we find hard to understand, and may our hearts "burn within us" as your Spirit teaches us through them.

## Moses meets God

There's an amazing passage in Exodus 34:5-7 where God reveals his nature to Moses. "Then the Lord came down in the cloud and stood there with him and proclaimed his name, the Lord. And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, 'The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin.'"

Here is God, describing himself to Moses! Many think of God as uncaring, if he even exists, but he longs for Moses (and us!) to grasp his true nature. The Hebrew word 'rachamim' means mercy or compassion and the word 'rachim' means something like darling or beloved.

Intriguingly, the root word that conveys mercy also connects to pregnancy; a mother's womb is called 'rechem'. When I think about how a child is protected in its mother's womb, I think about how God protects us and nurtures us, watches over us. We are his beloved.



## Prayer

Thank you Lord, that the Creator of the universe is such a God - "compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in love and faithfulness."

Make us like you.

## Isaiah glimpses heaven

What an amazing vision the prophet Isaiah had; he was witnessing the worship of Almighty God in His heavenly realm.

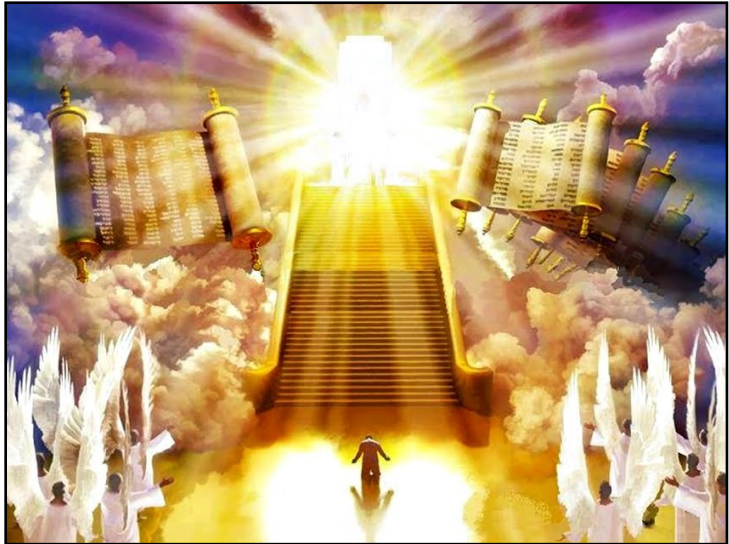
"In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the LORD, high and exalted, seated on a throne; and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him were seraphim, each with six wings: with

two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. And they were calling to one another: 'Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.'" (Isaiah 6:1-3).

In traditional Jewish worship these verses are recounted each day as the person praying seeks to join their voice with the

praises of the heavenly host.

In Hebrew, 'holy' (kadosh) means 'set apart, other, different, unique' and the word is



repeated to grab our attention. Only God is absolute holiness but he calls us to be holy too. (1 Peter 1:15).

### Prayer

Lord God, you are holy. Fill us with your Spirit and help us to be different and not to allow the world around us to squeeze us into its mould. Amen.



## Why doesn't God just forgive us?

Because God is holy, he cannot just turn a blind eye to sin. We even demand that our human leaders call out corruption and wrongdoing, how much more should God!

In Exodus 32:32 we see Moses pleading once again with the Lord to forgive the sins of the Israelites. Why doesn't God just forgive them? Well, forgiveness isn't some-

thing that can be casually dished out on demand, like sweets to naughty children! Forgiveness is a deep problem that only God can and ultimately will resolve. Moses asks God to forgive; in Hebrew 'to carry' their great sin. Somebody has to bear this sin. Ultimately, God will carry it

himself so that we can be spared. This is the meaning of forgiveness (the offended party carrying the offence rather than inflicting its consequences—**death**—on the offender).

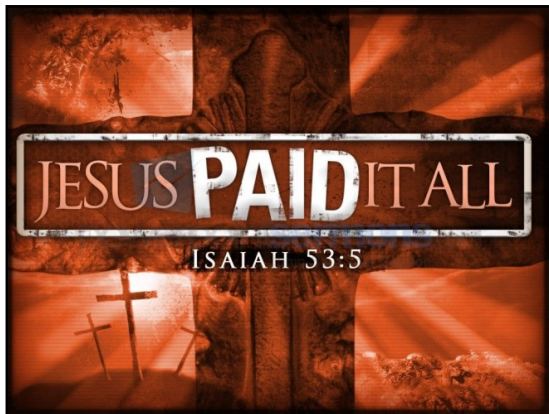


## Prayer

Dear Lord, thank you for your mercy in forgiving us at your own cost. We lift our nation and our leaders to you. We pray for all those in authority. Give them wisdom especially as they guide us through this pandemic.

## The Suffering Servant

Isaiah 53 is one of the most riveting chapters in the Old Testament, pointing toward the suffering servant to come. We see so many prophecies relating to Jesus, particularly to his death, showing the Messiah not as a conquering political saviour, but as God's answer to the deep problem of forgiveness. Spend some time meditating on these astonishing verses:



It was for this that Jesus “set his face towards Jerusalem”. When Jesus died on the cross he said, “It is finished”! He had done what he came to do. he had borne the sins of the world.

“Surely he took up our pain  
and bore our suffering,  
yet we considered him punished by God,  
stricken by him, and afflicted.  
But he was pierced for our transgressions,  
he was crushed for our iniquities;  
the punishment that brought us peace was on  
him, and by his wounds we are healed.  
We all, like sheep, have gone astray,  
each of us has turned to our own way;  
and the Lord has laid on him  
the iniquity of us all.”

*(Isaiah 53:4-6)*

## Prayer

Lord, we can only bow in worship. Hallelujah, what a Saviour.

## Sins washed away

### Psalm 51:5,7,8

“Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me ... Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones you have crushed rejoice.”

true. It's liberating, because it chimes with what we know about our own hearts – that we constantly miss the target and fail to live up to even our own standards, let alone God's! I praise God that I am a forgiven sinner, daily being transformed by grace.



If you ask people what sin is, most will start by going through a list like murder, theft etc. But is sin just these negative acts? The Hebrew word for sin ('chet') is related to the word 'lehachita' which means making a mistake or missing a target. Today in our secular society, it's considered old-fashioned and insulting to think of oneself as a sinner. But in fact, I think the opposite is

Corrie Ten Boom said: “God has forgiven our sins and he has thrown them in the deepest sea, and put up a sign: ‘No fishing’.”

### Prayer

Lord, help me to believe you when you say that if we confess our sins to you, you are faithful and will forgive us our sins. Forgive us when we “fish them” back up again and again.

## Judgement and Mercy

As we read the Bible, we see that God will punish sinners in his anger and forgive sinners in his mercy, two difficult concepts to hold together.

removed our transgressions from us”.

His anger against sin is real, but his nature is to forgive all who seek his mercy.



Psalm 103:8-12 tells us that “The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. He will not always accuse, nor will he harbour his anger forever; he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he

## Prayer

Father, you do not treat us as we deserve or repay us according to our sins. Your love is so great (‘as high as the heavens’) and your forgiveness as wide as the globe. Your Son, Jesus Christ was called the ‘friend of sinners’ and gladly accepted what was intended as an insult. Thank you that you are my friend.

Amen.