



**2014 Reflections from Lent to Pentecost**

**(Part II - Restoration)**

**7 Holy Week Devotionals**

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**Come Along a little Farther.** For seven Sundays from Ash Wednesday to Holy Week we have contemplated Jesus' messages to seven churches (Part I-Preparation). During Holy Week we will look more closely at our Mediator, Jesus Christ. An Englishman named John Owen is cited by many contemporary theologians as their primary influence other than the Bible.<sup>1</sup> Owen lived from 1616-1683 and his works fill twenty-four volumes averaging 600 pages each. His last book is truly exceptional and went to print the week before he died. In Beholding the Glory of Christ<sup>2</sup> Owen promised readers two benefits which drew me in:

- 1. Contemplating Christ and his glory will give true rest and satisfaction of mind during the trials of this life.**
- 2. It will carry us cheerfully, comfortably and victoriously through life and death and all we have to face in either of them.**

John Owen had discovered something extraordinary to make such bold claims. His life was marked by deep losses, constant troubles and poor health, yet he kept sharing what he was learning from the Lord until his very last days. A week before he died, he wrote one last journal entry that sums up the end of a distinguished life . . . or he would say the beginning of a more glorious one:

***"Die then frail and sinful flesh: dust you are to dust you shall return. I yield you up to the righteous doom of the Holy One. Yet in that also I give you into the hand of the great Refiner, who will hide you in your grave by your***

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.desiringgod.org/biographies/the-chief-design-of-my-life-mortification-and-universal-holiness>

<sup>2</sup> Owen. John. The Glory of Christ: (1683)[Note: Unless you enjoy reading tedious 17<sup>th</sup> century theology I suggest reading Owens' works in the easier-to-read but still challenging Puritan Paperbacks from Banner of Truth <http://puritanpaperbacks.com/>].

*consumption, purify you from all your corruption and disposition to evil. And otherwise this will not be.*

*After a long sincere endeavor for the mortification of all sin, I find it will never be absolutely perfect, but by this reduction into the dust. You shall no more be a residence for the least remainder of sin to eternity, nor any clog to my soul in its actings on God.*

*Rest therefore in hope; for God, in his appointed season, will call to you, and you shall answer him out of the dust. Then shall he, by an act of big almighty power, not only restore you to your pristine glory, as at the first creation, when you were the pure workmanship of his hands, but enrich and adorn you with inconceivable privileges and advantages. Be not then afraid; away with all reluctance. Go into the dust, rest in hope; 'for you shall stand in your lot at the end of the days' (Daniel 12:13)."*



**Face forward.** You may have seen the recent premier of "Resurrection," an American fantasy drama television series based on the book The Returned by James Mott. The series follows the residents of Arcadia, Missouri, whose lives are upended when their loved ones return from the dead, unaged since their deaths.<sup>3</sup> No doubt, the death of someone you loved changes you forever. But how would you be different if, by a magnificent turn of events, they returned to you again? For the next seven days we will press into the wonder of Jesus' resurrection and his return to his friends and family (not a fantasy).

**Watch for Signposts.** John Owen's writings will provide some markers along the way, but God himself will teach us as we reflect on five very important words: CHRIST DIED FOR OUR SINS. After Easter Sunday (and Monday) we will continue reflecting together for seven more Sundays until Pentecost, which celebrates the coming of the the Holy Spirit (Part III - Refreshment).

*Elaine E. Atchison*

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<sup>3</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Resurrection\\_\(U.S.\\_TV\\_series\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Resurrection_(U.S._TV_series))

## 2014 Calendar of Reflections: Lent to Pentecost



### Part I: Preparation [separate pdf]

- ✿ March 9 First Sunday
- ✿ March 16 Second Sunday
- ✿ March 23 Thirds Sunday
- ✿ March 30 Fourth Sunday
- ✿ April 6 Fifth Sunday
- ✿ April 13 Palm Sunday
- ✿ April 14 Holy Week Monday

### Part II: Restoration

- ✿ April 15 Holy Week Tuesday
- ✿ April 16 Holy Week Wednesday
- ✿ April 17 Maundy Thursday
- ✿ April 18 Good Friday
- ✿ April 19 Holy Saturday
- ✿ April 20 Easter Sunday
- ✿ April 21 Easter Monday

### Part III: Refreshment [separate pdf]

- ✿ April 27 First Sunday
- ✿ May 4 Second Sunday
- ✿ May 11 Third Sunday
- ✿ May 18 Fourth Sunday
- ✿ May 25 Fifth Sunday
- ✿ June 1 Sixth Sunday
- ✿ June 8 Pentecost Sunday

**Holy Week Tuesday**  
**"We Shall Behold Him"**  
**John 17:24 and 1 John 3:1-2**



At the 1982 Dove Awards, Sandi Patti sang Dotty Rambo's "We Shall Behold Him" for the first time. Since then, I've heard dozens of people try to hit those high notes, and the lyrics are still etched in my brain whenever I hear the word *behold*.<sup>4</sup> John Owen used Jesus' prayer in John 17:24 as a starting point to disciple his small congregation about the glory of Christ: ***"Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to [behold] my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world."***

**Captivating glimpses.** Owen addressed three big questions: 1. What are we able to see of Christ's glory? 2. How do we see it? 3. What is the difference between our present sight of him, and the future sight we will enjoy in Heaven? The fullness of Christ's glory is beyond our present spiritual faculties, but we can experience rich glimpses of it. Owen's NOW or NEVER attitude gave me a jolt: "No one shall ever behold the glory of Christ by sight hereafter, who does not in some measure behold it by faith here in this world. Our part is to look deeply and diligently until we become captivated and long for more. God will guide us to a beginning here on Earth, and to fullness there in Heaven where we will see him face to face."

**Just as he is.** "See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and such we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know him. Beloved, now we are children of God and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when he appears, we will be like him, because we will see him just as he is." (1 John 3:1-2) Do you desire the day you will receive that sight?

***Jesus, I want to learn to see you as you are today, already exalted and ruling. I know that for now my abilities are limited, but I don't want to live beneath what you intend for me here and now. Help me to learn to behold your glory until I am transfixed on you alone. Amen.***

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<sup>4</sup> <http://noeastorwest.blogspot.com/2012/03/we-shall-behold-him.html>

**Holy Week Wednesday**  
**"What Did You Expect?"**  
**2 Corinthians 4:3-6**



**God is Mysterious.** Children have a profound way of looking at things, as shown in Children's Letters to God: "Dear God: Are you really invisible or is that just a trick?" (Lucy) "Dear God: It is great the way you always get the stars in the right places." (Jeff) "Dear God: What does it mean you are a jealous God? I thought you had everything." (Jane) "Dear God: I'm doing the best I can." (Frank) <sup>5</sup>

**His Odd Shape.** I haven't struggled to believe in God's existence, as much as I have needed assurance that the Bible is trustworthy. The abundance of Messianic prophecies that Jesus has fulfilled helps me accept other challenging passages. I still grapple with many questions, like the incomprehensible shape of one God in three Persons. C.S. Lewis agreed that reality can be odd. "It is not neat, not obvious, not what you expect . . . besides being complicated, reality, in fact, is usually something you would not have guessed." <sup>6</sup> Like little Frank, we must do the best we can with the things God has graciously revealed to us in His written Word.

*"And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God; for God who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness' has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." (2 Corinthians 4:3-6)*

**God you are spirit and you live outside of time and space as we understand them. It was so good of you to come to us in a shape we could understand, as a man who was fully human and fully God at the same time. I am depending on you to shine Light in my heart so I am able to perceive your glory in Jesus' face. Amen.**

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<sup>5</sup> Hample, Stuart and Marshall, Eric. Children's Letters to God. Workman Publishing Company, 1991.

<sup>6</sup> Lewis, C.S. Mere Christianity. MacMillan Publishers, 1952.

**Maundy Thursday**  
**"The Word With Us"**  
**John 1:1-5, 14-18 and Colossians 1:13-14**



*"In the beginning **The Word** already existed. **The Word** was with God and **The Word** was God. He existed in the beginning with God. God created everything through him, and nothing was created except through him. **The Word** gave life to everything that was created, and his life brought light to everyone. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness can never extinguish it . . . So **The Word** became human and made his home among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And [those of us who were eyewitnesses] have seen his glory, the glory of the Father's one and only Son . . . from his abundance we have all received one gracious blessing after another. For the Law was given through Moses, but God's unfailing love and faithfulness came through **Jesus Christ**. No one has ever seen God. But the unique one, who is himself God, is near to the Father's heart. He has revealed God to us."* (John 1:1-5, 14-18, New Living Translation)

**We have seen God.** Through the Spirit of Christ, prophets spoke God's words, but they did not live long enough to see Jesus, the representative of invisible God (Colossians 1). Jesus displayed God's glorious, infinite wisdom for us to adore from a distance. John Owen pointed out that God's love casts out envy, hatred, malice, revenge and all their fruits: unreasonableness, rage, fierceness, persecution, oppression and murder. Man's failure to love like God is responsible for the darkness in this world. God came into our world so that we might not be forever separated from him. Through his willing sacrifice, Sin and Death were cast away, so we are no longer cast away. **"For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins."** (Colossians 1:13-14)

**We have Light.** Owen wrote that if we don't own this "all other truths are useless to our souls." Do you look upon Jesus as a teacher or good man only? Imitating his actions falls short of his brilliant glory. Why do you honor Jesus? Is he magnificent in your eyes? Our duties in his kingdom are privileges and advantages. Value, esteem and enjoy the wisdom and love of God manifested by Jesus' life, betrayal, arrest, suffering and death.

***Almighty God, I could not come to you, so you came to me. You sent yourself, The Word, who was working with you from the beginning of everything. He left Heaven and became one of us for a time. Jesus, you broke through time and space and all darkness for us. What glory! Amen.***

**Good Friday**  
**"Behold the Lamb"**  
**Isaiah 1:10-12, 18; 40:9-11; 53:6-7**



***"All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned —every one— to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth."*** (Isaiah 53, ESV)

**Why a Lamb?** The Bible's first reference to lambs was when Abraham set seven aside to prove that he had dug a well. The next was when he assured his son that God himself would provide the sacrifice in Isaac's place.<sup>7</sup> God's perfection and Sin can never intermingle. God required the life of an innocent animal for the forgiveness of sins. An unblemished lamb became the appropriate symbol. Death was not symbolic for the animal, whose blood was poured out on the altar. The family that raised each lamb and watched it die, fully realized its value.

**The Coming Shepherd.** Eventually, God had enough of burnt offerings, which could not change the human heart. Isaiah was told to announce the Savior's coming: *"He will tend his flock like a shepherd; gather the lambs in his arms; carry them in his bosom, and gently lead those with young."*<sup>8</sup> That prediction was pondered for centuries until John (the Baptizer) saw Jesus walking toward him and announced, ***"Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"*** (John 1:29) How could the Shepherd also be the Lamb? The story of the Cross is the story of Jesus, who took our place, whose blood released us from Sin's penalty. We had nothing to do with raising or offering up this sacrifice to God. God himself provided what was needed to redeem us. The Mediator between humanity and their Creator caused infinite dishonor and humiliation for **The Word**, who willingly became human and made his home among us (read Isaiah 53). How will you show him your esteem on the anniversary of his great Sacrifice?

***Jesus, as I imagine standing beneath the cross and consider what you did for me I am struck speechless. You alone are worthy to be praised. Amen.***

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<sup>7</sup> Genesis 22:1-18

<sup>8</sup> Isaiah 40: 10-11

## Easter Vigil (Holy Saturday)

### "The Afterglow"

#### 2 Corinthians 3:7-18



A few weeks after I began following Christ, I attended a student retreat that ended on Palm Sunday. Afterward I was glowing with the warmth of my new found faith. Before we parted, each person was given a rusty nail to carry the week before Easter. I've never forgotten how it felt to clutch the rough spike intended to remind us of Jesus' suffering on our behalf. On Easter Sunday, we threw the nail away as a symbol of the Resurrection. Easter is still my favorite holiday (i.e. holy day). Reserving time during Holy Week to meditate deeply on Jesus' death has an affecting power on my heart. Historically, Holy Saturday is for reflecting on the grief and despair of Jesus' family and friends. Thankfully we already know what happened on the third day. John Owen wrote, "In this do our souls live and are renewed to be like Jesus, the first-born resurrected human."

**The old is gone.** Paul taught the Corinthian Christians that "**the old way, with laws etched in stone, led to death, though it began with such glory that the people of Israel could not bear to look at Moses' face. For his face shone with the glory of God, even though the brightness was already fading away. Shouldn't we expect far greater glory under the new way, now that the Holy Spirit is giving us life?**" (2 Corinthians 3:7-8)

**The new has come.** "If the old way, which brings condemnation, was glorious, how much more glorious is the new way, which makes us right with God! In fact, that first glory was not glorious at all compared with the overwhelming glory of the new way. So if the old way, which has been replaced, was glorious, how much more glorious is the new, which remains forever!" (2 Corinthians 3:9-11) We no longer fear condemnation but live with great hope because God accepted the ultimate and final sacrifice.

**Afterglow.** Jesus' followers thought the "Light of the World" had been extinguished, but later their eyes were opened to see that God has freed us from the Curse. "But whenever someone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. For the Lord is the Spirit, and wherever the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. So all of us who have had that veil removed **can see and reflect the glory of the Lord.** And the Lord —who is the Spirit— makes us more and more like him as we are changed into his glorious image." (2 Corinthians 3:16-18) This kind of hope overcomes any despair that threatens to overcome me, for Jesus has overcome the world.

**What wondrous love is this, oh my soul? What wondrous love is this that caused the Lord of bliss to bear the dreadful curse for my soul? Jesus, transform my heart so I will reflect your great love to others. Amen.**

**Easter Sunday**  
**"Comes the Wondrous Hour"**  
**Matthew 28; Mark 14; Luke 24**



**Ring the bells.** In the church where I grew up, at the end of the children's hall, there was a small closet. Inside, a thick rope was attached to the big bell overhead. Every Sunday we took turns ringing the bell that called the congregation to worship time. I still have a thing about bells, just ask my kids. Every Easter I go through the house ringing a little bell to remind anyone who hasn't already heard that "He is risen (He is risen indeed)!"

**Good News Spreads.** Early Sunday morning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to visit the tomb but an angel announced that Jesus had risen from the dead. Frightened, but also joyful, they ran to tell the disciples. Jesus appeared to them on the way and they ran to him, grasped his feet and worshiped him. He said, "*Don't be afraid. Go tell my brothers to leave for Galilee and they shall see me there*" (Matthew 28:1-10). The disciples were grieving and weeping and Mary told them what had happened, but they did not believe her. Peter jumped up and ran to the tomb to look and saw that it was empty, but went home wondering what had happened. Jesus appeared to two more followers on the roadside . . . they rushed back to tell the others but no one believed them either (Luke 24:12-32).

**What finally changed?** Still later Jesus appeared to the eleven . . . he rebuked them for their stubborn unbelief because they refused to believe those who had seen him after he had been raised from the dead." (Mark 16:9-14) He showed them his pierced hands and feet, ate a fish as they watched and recounted all he had told them before. This reminds me of my Muslim friend Noor, who read the story and exclaimed, "But no man ever came alive again!" "Exactly" my friend said, "Because Jesus is much more than a man." Good news changes everything for those who will receive it.

***Christ Jesus, you knew that first Resurrection Day, how hard it would be for your closest friends to believe that you are alive again. Others were convinced they had eliminated you forever, but the Gospel continues to be proclaimed two thousand years later. Alleluia, you are alive today! Amen.***

**Easter Monday**  
**"50 Days of Easter?"**  
**Luke 24:16,30-35; 1 Corinthians 15:45-49**



**Where is your Jesus?** Have you left Jesus on the cemetery path or the road to Emmaus or in the upper room? For most of us, Easter ends when the last hymn is sung, the last dish is washed or the last egg is hunted. However, Easter is actually a season that lasts fifty days. We must trace the last 40 days Christ spent on Earth, plus the "waiting days" after he returned to heaven before the Holy Spirit arrived. As he departed, Jesus promised, *"And now I will send the Holy Spirit, just as my Father promised. But stay here in the city until the Holy Spirit comes and fills you with power from heaven."* (Luke 24:35-49).

**A Man or a Ghost?** Exercising our minds to contemplate Jesus in his glory can be difficult. We are familiar with the idea of Jesus who was humble and gentle and wept. Would we recognize the exalted Lord Jesus? Soon after rising he traveled incognito to Emmaus. He had a new body, incorruptible and heavenly . . . still recognizably human, but different enough to elude his two friends. He challenged them to open their eyes: *"Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and enter into his glory?"*<sup>9</sup> Later they commented that their *hearts had burned within them*, but only Jesus could give them the ability to understand all that had just happened.

**Jesus Christ or Christ Jesus.** Sometime I purposely use "Christ Jesus" to remind myself that **The Word** has resumed his former glory and power, though as yet his kingdom has not been fully revealed. *"So also it is written, 'THE FIRST MAN ADAM BECAME A LIVING SOUL'. The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. Just as we have borne the image of the earthy, we will also bear the image of the heavenly."*<sup>10</sup> Christ Jesus is working within his image bearers as we prepare to live with him in the glorious Kingdom to come.

***Christ Jesus, I want to know you as both Jesus and Christ. Will you show me your glory? Thank you for being a life-giving spirit to me. Amen.***

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<sup>9</sup> Luke 24:16,30-35

<sup>10</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:45-49