



2022 3Q In the Crucible with Christ—Lesson 3 The Birdcage

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

Read first paragraph, which is a quotation from the book *The Ministry of Healing*:

“In the full light of day, and in hearing of the music of other voices, the caged bird will not sing the song that his master seeks to teach him. He learns a snatch of this, a trill of that, but never a separate and entire melody. But the master covers the cage, and places it where the bird will listen to the one song he is to sing. In the dark, he tries and tries again to sing that song until it is learned, and he breaks forth in perfect melody. Then the bird is brought forth, and ever after he can sing that song in the light. Thus God deals with His children. He has a song to teach us, and when we have learned it amid the shadows of affliction we can sing it ever afterward” *The Ministry of Healing* 472.

What does this concept mean to you?

Is God the one who sometimes brings us to dark places? And if God brings us to dark places what would be God’s purpose?

- Did the master put the songbird in the dark to punish it for wrongdoing?
 - Does God lead us to dark places to punish us?
 - Is punishment for sin something that requires God to inflict it?
 - If God were not to use power to inflict punishment for sin would there be no punishment for sin?
- What is the purpose of the master putting the bird into the dark? To get the bird to stop listening to every distraction and learn to hear the voice of the master.
 - How does this apply to us?
 - What song does God wish to teach us?
 - Isn’t it the melody of love?

Does this prophecy from Revelation have any bearing on the illustration? Are the illustration of the songbird and the prophecy communicating the same idea?

“And they [144,000] sang a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders. No one could learn the song except the 144,000 who had been redeemed from the earth” (Revelation 14:3 NIV84).

What is this song? It is a song of their experience—and this is why only the 144,000 can learn it. You had to go through it in order for your life to resonate with the experience of it.



What is the song that God wants us to learn? It is a song of love and trust in Him? Of living out His methods in the face of opposition?

Does this idea that God leads us to dark places to cut out the distractions of this world in order to learn from Him the melody of love and sing the song of heaven mean that all dark experiences are from God?

- Did God lead the prodigal son to go off into wild living and end up in the pigsty?
- Did God lead Jonah to run away?
 - No, but God did send the storm and the fish—who is responsible Jonah being in the dark place inside the fish?

SUNDAY

The lesson focuses on the journey the Israelites took when leaving Egypt.

They had just gone through the 10 plagues and Pharaoh finally relents and lets them leave Egypt. The pillar of fire by night and cloud by day is leading them and God leads them into what appears to be a trap—backed up against the sea with Pharaoh's army bearing down on them. Why?

- Couldn't God have acted to prevent Pharaoh's army from leaving Egypt so the people were never frightened like this?
- Couldn't God have opened an earthquake to swallow the Egyptian army miles away so the people never saw them?
- Couldn't God have led the people to a different place a fortress of some sort? In fact, couldn't God have had pillars of rock rise out of the ground and form a fortress around the people from which they could have fought?
- Couldn't God have opened the waters and have the people walk through and be safe on the other side before the Egyptians pinned them against the sea?

Why did God handle it this way?

Was God doing something more than leading them out of bondage? What?

What is the lesson for us?

Does God ever lead us to places where we are helpless and cannot overcome in our own strength? Or do such moments only come from the actions of evil people attacking us or our own foolish choices?

If we pray to God for more faith what is required in order to gain more faith?

It is a law that strength comes through exercise, the law of exertion. If we want stronger muscles we must lift weights and if we start with five pound weights and master that and want to grow stronger



what must we do? Add weight, and after we master the 10 pound weights if we want to grow strong what must we do? Add weight, and if our trainer keeps adding weight as soon as the current weight is easy, do we complain and grumble and ask why are you always burdening me?

So what will God do for us if we ask Him to strengthen our faith?

- Is this an abuse of power on God's part?
- Is it punishment?
- Why does God put us into difficult positions to strengthen our faith?
- Why doesn't He just pour out the Holy Spirit to adjust the neurons in our brain to make us feel more confident? Because genuine faith is not about feelings. Genuine faith is confidence, trust, loyalty, devotion in and to God despite how we feel in the moment.
- And what is genuine faith based upon? Evidence, truth, experience. We might have a cognitive understanding of what faith is, but in order to have what some call a living faith, an active faith, a working faith, that requires us to exercise our trust or faith in God in real life circumstances.

So God allows events or brings circumstances that provides us the opportunity to exercise our faith and in so doing our faith grows stronger.

Which takes greater faith—to be in a difficult circumstance and reach out to God and God delivers you just as you desired, or to be in a difficult circumstance and reach out to God and you do not get the deliverance you asked for?

Are there any examples in Scripture of people reaching out to God to be delivered from something and they did not get what they wanted?

- Paul and whatever the thorn in his flesh was
- Paul's arrest and eventual execution
- The man who asked Jesus to solve his dispute with His brother

Read third paragraph, "Following 'the pillar'..." This is well said, following God will be a path filled with obstacles, struggles, stresses, and often pain—why?

- Because we are at war and God's enemies will attack us
- Because we live in a world damaged by sin and nature groans under the weight of it and God's people are not given "magical" powers to avoid the pain that sin has brought upon the world, but are given supernatural power from the Holy Spirit to overcome sin, overcome fear and selfishness in our hearts, minds, and characters despite the trials of this world.
- Because sometimes we make either rebellious or foolish choices that make things harder on us than God would have them be for us—and we must learn from our own actions to not only to listen to God but how His laws function, how reality works, and to choose to harmonize our lives with God's laws, Examples:
 - A person who lives an unhealthy lifestyle, but loves God and others and has given their heart to God, despite their being in a saving relationship with God will have more health problems—obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular problems, sleep and pain problems



etc. These trials and difficulties don't keep them from heaven, but make life more difficult as a result of lifestyle choices. They might have more financial strain because of medicines and other treatments they have to use. They might not be able to engage in the full range of activities they would like to etc.

- Another example is the over-empathizer who Satan cannot get to knowingly choose to do evil and harm another, so Satan tempts them with too many good activities and they take upon themselves the burdens of others and try to relieve others of the responsibilities God would have others carry. And they become exhausted, worn out and discouraged and often complain to God asking why God would burden them like this (Metaphor of a wagon). Further, taking upon oneself the burdens or responsibilities of another you see struggling prevents them from gaining the master, the skill, prevents them from growing stronger so it is not actually helping them but infantilizing them.
- Because we sometimes believe lies that cause pain and undermine trust

Happiness is a by-product of healthiness in all domains—physical, mental, emotional, relational, and spiritual. We cannot have the fullest happiness that God has for us as long as we are unhealthy. So the ultimate happiness comes when we are in heaven and this mortal puts on immortality. But we can still advance in healthiness and experience greater happiness here on this Earth by living in harmony with God's design laws for life. Because healthiness comes from harmony with the laws of health in all domains.

One of Satan's tricks is to get people to violate God's design laws somewhere—physical, mental, emotional, relational, spiritual—and in so doing they will suffer some unhealthy consequence which undermines happiness and then Satan tricks them into substituting pleasure seeking for happiness. And many pleasure seeking activities violate some aspect of the laws of health which only causes more unhappiness and people seek more pleasure to feel better. This is what drives many of the addictive behaviors whether chemical or behavioral.

MONDAY

The lesson points us to Exodus 17 in which the Israelites were traveling through the Desert of Sin and there was no water. They began to grumble against Moses who went to the Lord and the Lord instructed him to strike the rock and God brought water out from the rock for the people.

But the lesson points out that they were following the pillar which stopped at a place without water. Why would God stop at a place without water?

What was happening?

Consider they were in a desert, they had flocks and herds, and children, and they were thirsty. What would you do in such a circumstance—it's hot, your sweating, your children are flushed, your flock of sheep are looking weak, your water supply is gone—what would you be thinking and feeling?



Why didn't God lead them like any good caravan leader would from one oasis to another?

- Was God trying to upset the people?
- Was God punishing the people?
- What was God's purpose in stopping there?

Had the people had enough evidence thus far in their lives to be able to have faith in God?

Not only did they have the miracles in Egypt and the crossing of the Red Sea, but in Exodus 15 we read the follow, which took place before the events here in the Desert of Sin:

Then Moses led Israel from the Red Sea and they went into the Desert of Shur. For three days they traveled in the desert without finding water. When they came to Marah, they could not drink its water because it was bitter. (That is why the place is called Marah.) So the people grumbled against Moses, saying, "What are we to drink?"

Then Moses cried out to the LORD, and the LORD showed him a piece of wood. He threw it into the water, and the water became sweet.

There the LORD made a decree and a law for them, and there he tested them. He said, "If you listen carefully to the voice of the LORD your God and do what is right in his eyes, if you pay attention to his commands and keep all his decrees, I will not bring on you any of the diseases I brought on the Egyptians, for I am the LORD, who heals you." (Ex 15:22–26 NMIV84).

What is the lesson here? What does God want from them? Does love and trust require experience with the person? Is God placing them in experiences to give them opportunity to learn about Him, about their own limitations, and to learn to trust Him with the responsibilities that are not theirs?

Did this event at the Desert of Shur provide evidence that could and should have helped them when they reached the Desert of Sin?

Is there a lesson for us in this? We have nothing to fear for the future, except we forget how God has led us in the past.

Another of Satan's tricks, traps, warfare strategies is to get us so focused upon a problem (real or imagined, in Israel's case the lack of water was a real problem) that we forget God, we forget His providences, purposes, and will in our lives, and we falsely take upon ourselves a burden or responsibility that is not ours. We think of only human abilities, possibilities and solutions.

Did God bring them there for them to dig wells and find water?

Did God plan for them to solve the water problem?

In our lives, do we ever get so focused on a problem that we inadvertently take something upon ourselves that God never intended for us to resolve?

God longs for us to grow in our personal relationship with Him to become like Moses, someone who knew God personally and trusted Him. He wants us to become people who, when difficulties come, go



to Him and trust Him with the outcome while we fulfill only the responsibilities that are ours to fulfill. So when the people grumbled, Moses went to God.

Consider Moses' faith. If you were instructed to go before your church this weekend and strike the pulpit with your cane so that water would come out of it, would it take faith on your part to do this? Would you have any doubts or fears that if water doesn't come out you would look foolish and be laughed at or thought to have lost your mind?

If you were in Moses' position, would you have had any temptations to doubt? Would you have had any concerns about looking foolish in front of others?

What is necessary for us to overcome such temptations? To know God so well that we are certain God is directing and that we are not following our own feelings, desires, or imaginations. This only comes from spending time with God each day and growing our personal relationship with Him through Bible study, application of His truths and experiencing His providences as we walk through life with Him.

TUESDAY

The lesson focuses our attention on Jesus being led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness where He was tempted by Satan.

Read second paragraph, "Luke 4 is..." What is the difference the lesson is trying to make about Jesus being tested rather than tempted?

Are they suggesting that Jesus wasn't actually tempted in the wilderness, He was only tested in the wilderness?

Are they suggesting that God the Father and the Holy Spirit's purpose was to test Jesus and They didn't realize that if They led Jesus into the wilderness Jesus would be tempted by Satan, so They didn't lead Jesus into temptation that took them by surprise?

Or did the Father and Spirit know that Satan would tempt Jesus in the wilderness and the Spirit led Jesus there, just as Scripture says?

Doesn't the Bible say: "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin" (Hebrews 4:15 NIV84).

Was this a requirement of the plan of salvation?

Could Jesus become our Savior without facing temptations and overcoming them?



Then if it was part of His mission as our Messiah would the Spirit have led Him toward or away from completing His mission? Toward. So in Jesus' case, because of His unique position and purpose as our incarnate God and Savior, Jesus had to face Satan and had to go through the temptations and He also went through temptations later at crucifixion weekend and overcome them. Our salvation wasn't possible without this.

So, to suggest that in Jesus' case the Spirit was not leading Him in every step of His life, including out to be tempted, is to undermine the meaning, purpose, and accomplishments of Christ as our Savior.

With us, it is true God will not lead us into temptation because we are not the ones who can provide salvation or overcome the devil, and we do not have the responsibility of being the second Adam. But Jesus stood in a unique position in human history as a unique being as He was both God and man.

So, in my view, the lesson has mixed two similar yet distinctly different experiences here and if we don't disentangle these two experiences it will cause confusion. Jesus was tempted in all points like we are for the purpose of overcoming sin and becoming our Savior.

During the days of Jesus' life on earth, **he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears** to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. Although he was a son, **he learned obedience from what he suffered** and, **once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him** and was designated by God to be high priest in the order of Melchizedek (Hebrews 5:7–10 NIV84).

It was a requirement of His mission that He be tempted in all points like us, and to overcome by using ONLY His human abilities.

We on the other hand, are not capable of overcoming sin, we instead participate with God through faith to be cured or redeemed from sin via the victory and application of what Christ achieved.

When you think about the temptations of Christ, how is it that He was tempted in every way just like us?

In your experience are the worst and most difficult temptations for you the ones that present from some outside source, temptations to sin in ways that you have never before participated in, or are the greatest temptations the ones you have developed habits of doing and tempt you from within?

Did Jesus have any sinful habits to overcome?

Then how was He tempted in every way just like we are?

Because of the human nature that He assumed and that causes the temptation:

When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; **but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is**



dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death" (James 1:13-15 NIV84).

We are tempted by powerful human desires and emotions. Did Jesus suffer temptation from human desires and emotions?

In Gethsemane, did Jesus suffer with such great anguish that He felt as if He would die? Did He have human desires not to die, to not go through the cross? Did He even pray and ask His Father that if it were possible for Him not to go through the cross?

Where did those desires originate, from outside Himself or from the humanity He took upon Himself as our Savior?

And if He would have chosen to do what His emotions and desires were tempting Him to do what action would He have taken? Who would He have saved? He was tempted with fear and selfishness, which Adam imbedded into our species when He rebelled.

But with every temptation Jesus chose love and overcame the fear and selfishness of the sinful nature and ultimately chose to die in love rather than use power to stop people from killing Him in order to destroy the infection of fear and selfishness that Adam imbedded into humanity. In the humanity of Jesus God's living law of love was perfectly lived out and Jesus arose on the third day in a purified and perfected humanity. In Jesus Christ, the human species is redeemed, purified, made righteous and stands higher in God's universe than before Adam sinned, for in Jesus Christ a human now sits upon the throne of God.

Read the last paragraph, "Sometimes..." What law lens do you hear these words through?

If human law—imposed rules that require imposed punishment by the ruling authority—then sin is a legal problem and we are in trouble with God, who is required to use His power to inflict torture and death upon us. We cannot be saved in this model unless someone pays our legal penalty to the proper legal authorities in heaven. Jesus' blood, in this model, is the payment that the god of this legal system requires be presented to it, and if it receives this blood payment then this god can give a legal pardon to all who claim the legal payment.

But if we return to worshipping the Creator whose laws are the protocols upon which He built reality to operate, then we realize that sin transgresses or breaks God's laws and as the Bible teaches results in death unless God intervenes to eradicate the sin and restore in the sinner His living law of love.

"God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2Corinthians 5:21 NIV84).

So, just as the paragraph says Jesus is our Sin Bearer, but how? By bearing the sin condition that Adam infected the species with and overcoming the carnal nature and destroying it at the cross in order to open a new pathway out of sin back into actual righteousness.



Consider how Paul describes this destruction of the fallen man, the carnal nature, the infection of fear and selfishness that we inherited from Adam in order to create a new sinless humanity:

“But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ. [When you hear “the blood of Christ” are you thinking legal payment, death penalty paid, or are you thinking as the Bible teaches the life is in the blood, this is the life of Christ. We are brought near through His life, which perfectly lived out God’s law and eradicated the sin infection that separates us from God.] For he himself is our peace, who has **made the two one** and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, **by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two**, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility” (Eph 2:13–16 NIV84).

This is how I rendered it in *The Remedy*:

But now, you — whose minds were once far away, and who were practicing the principles of selfishness and survival-of-the-fittest — have been enlightened and brought near to God, and are in unity with Christ through the truth revealed when he died. For Christ himself is the Remedy that heals the species and brings peace. He has removed fear and selfishness that cause division, mistrust, prejudice, and hostility. He did this by partaking of our human condition, and—via the exercise of his human brain—he loved perfectly, thereby destroying in his flesh (in the humanity he partook) the selfish survival-of-the-fittest drive along with the lies of Satan. In this way, he destroyed the need for the law (with all its regulations) to expose Satan’s lies and methods. His purpose was to be the template of a new humanity born out of the unification of the two—our selfish, infected condition merged with his sinless state—thereby purging selfishness from the human heart, and transforming, healing, renewing, regenerating and recreating humanity back to God’s original ideal; and in this new being, to reconcile the human race—regardless of ethnic background—into loving unity with God and each other through the revelation of truth at the cross, by which he destroyed the lies of Satan, reestablished trust, and removed fear, selfishness, and hostility” (Ephesians 2:13-16 REM).

What about paid the penalty? What is the penalty? It is death, the wages of sin is death?

Why does breaking the law require the death of the sinner?

Why does tying plastic bag over one’s head require death?

If someone has a plastic bag over their head and hasn’t yet died and you want to lead them to life what do you have to do? Remove the bag, put them in harmony with the law. In the New Covenant God writes His law upon our hearts and minds, but He is only able to do this because Jesus actually, literally, by exercise of human abilities restored God’s law into the species human and destroyed from the humanity is took upon Himself the law of sin and death.



So, Jesus paid a price, no question, but to whom? Who required the price be paid in order for sinners to be saved?

What is it that has held humans in captivity of sin? Lies of Satan and our own fallen condition or carnal nature.

What is required to deliver us from sin? The truth to destroy the lies of Satan and restore us to trust and a new sinless nature.

Jesus provides both the truth, if you have seen Him you have seen the Father, and exposed Satan as a liar and fraud. And Jesus, as a human, developed a sinless human character and as it says in Hebrews 5:9 “once he was made perfect he became the source of salvation for all who obey him.” Jesus was always sinless, but Bible perfection is about maturity of character and character cannot be created it is developed by the intelligent being. After Adam sinned no human could develop a perfect sinless human character, so Jesus came, took up humanity damaged by Adam’s sin and perfected it, eliminating the drives of selfishness and restoring perfectly God’s law of love.

And this is all symbolically taught in the symbols of flesh and blood or bread and wine. Jesus is the Word made flesh, we must eat the flesh the Word which is the truth that destroys the lies and wins us to trust, and when we do, we open the heart and receive a new life, the life is in the blood, and then it is no longer I that live but Christ lives in me.

WEDNESDAY

Read last paragraph, “Whatever their trials...” Is the plan of salvation only about saving human sinners or are human sinners part of something larger going on?

Are there any Bible texts that indicate we humans are part of a larger universal war?

- The first chapter in the book of Job when Satan presents himself before the heavenly counsel reveals a larger sin problem than just humans
- “For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross” (Col 1:19–20 NIV84).
- “Put on all the armour that God gives you, so that you will be able to stand up against the Devil’s evil tricks. For we are not fighting against human beings but against the wicked spiritual forces in the heavenly world, the rulers, authorities, and cosmic powers of this dark age” (Ephesians 6:11-2 GNT).
- “And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan,



who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him” (Revelation 12:7-9 NIV84).

The sin problem is bigger than just a problem on Earth. God has a sin problem that threatens all of His intelligences throughout the universe and God has to resolve it in away that no only saves humanity but also stops the spread to other intelligences and permanently secures His universe from all future rebellion.

What is needed in order for God to do this?

Did the unfallen and loyal angels in heaven need the Cross? Yes, but did they need the same benefits as us? Not all of them. The angels needed the truth about God that Jesus revealed and they needed to see Satan exposed as a liar and fraud. This is what Jesus referenced when He said:

“Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself” (John 12:31-32 NIV84).

The word “men” in this text is supplied by the translators, it is not in the Greek. It should read “I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all to myself.”

Who is the prince of this world? This is referring to Satan, and from where is Satan being driven out? From the hearts and minds of all who embrace the truth about God that Jesus’ death reveals.

After the cross there are no more events like in the book of Job. Satan is no longer able to present himself in heaven to the loyal angels and try and mislead them? Why? Because the cross destroyed all his lies and secured the loyal angels in their loyalty and no heavenly being, after the cross, would listen to anything Satan has to say. They were sealed and secured.

The angels in heaven needed the truth the cross revealed in order to have all the doubts about that Satan’s lies presented removed.

We human sinners also need the truth about God, but we need something more, something the angels in heaven did not need. We need a new sinless nature, a new sinless humanity and we could not develop this. So Jesus not only revealed the truth about God but picked upon damaged and broken humanity and eradicated the infection of sin, the death causing principle and developed a perfect sinless humanity that He shares with us. We partake of what He developed via the indwelling Holy Spirit.

THURSDAY

Read the bottom green section, “Almost all...” There is no question that it is extremely valuable and important to remember what God has done for us in the past.



How does remembering what God has done in the past help us deal with trials today?

And what if we misinterpret what God has done in the past does that undermine our ability to cope today?

For instance, we have the story of the flood and if we interpret it as God using power to punish wicked people versus God using power to keep open the avenue for Messiah to save and heal wicked people from sin, does that make a difference in how we cope today?

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Podcasts: We have a weekly, 15-minute podcast that you can subscribe to in various ways. Goto our website > Main Menu > Resources > Podcasts and select from our archive of current and past episodes.

Remedy app: The Remedy is available as a free app and includes the New Testament, Psalms and Genesis.

Building update: YAY! Our new HVAC system ductwork and fire dampers have been installed! Waiting on delivery of the 3 new air handlers, outside condensers, and 3 mini-split cassettes, one for each bathroom.

July 15-16, 2022: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at the United Healthcare Summit in Grand Rapids MI. His talk will be entitled COVID and the Manipulation of Your Mind. More details at <https://unitedhealthcaresummit.com/>

August 13, 2022: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at Sligo by the Sea, sponsored by Sligo SDA church at the First Presbyterian Church — 1301 Philadelphia Avenue, Ocean City, MD 21842. Dr. Jennings will lead SS at 10 a.m., sermon at 11 a.m. and have Q&A session in the afternoon.

September 8-10, 2022: Dr. Jennings and Dr. Curt Thompson will be presenting an Intensive together at the American Association of Christian Counselors National Conference in Dallas, TX. You can find more details about the event at <https://nationalaacc.com/>