



2022 3Q In the Crucible with Christ—Lesson 4 Seeing the Goldsmith's Face

by Tim Jennings

SABBATH

Read last paragraph, “God is seeking...” This is well said. God is seeking to purify us, to restore His image within us and this is the core purpose of the plan of salvation. We were created to be living showcases of the glory—the character and living law of God.

What does it mean to be created in God's image?

- Ability to love
- Ability to reason, think, and act
- Ability to procreate in our image

Which of these is least significant?

If someone loses or never had procreative abilities, they are sterile, does that mean they cannot be in the image of God, that they cannot bear the image of God?

Did Jesus as a human being procreate? Did He bear the image of God perfectly, in fact restored it completely into humanity?

So, what is the most important aspect of the image of God, a power akin to that of our maker? The power to think and to do—individuality, with intelligence, ability to comprehend, reason, understand and choose.

Will God use His power to destroy His image within us?

What about if we pray for God to use His power to destroy His image within us?

Can you think of any prayers that people pray that if God were to do what the person was asking it would destroy the image of God within them?

How about, “Father you take control. I surrender to you and I give over the driver's seat of my life to you for you to be in control of what I do. You tell me the answer, you decide for me what to do. I don't want to do it wrong, so you take control.”

If God were to do this, what would happen to the person? What would happen to the image of God in them?



What is the motive for such a prayer? Is it faith or fear?

The Bible says the mature are those who have developed by practice the ability to discern the right from the wrong Hebrews 5:14. God wants us to be mature, to grow, to understand, to comprehend, to do what is right because it is right and we understand and agree with God and choose it not merely because God has said it, but because we actually prefer it and freely want it.

Is God the only supernatural being who is working to have His image reproduced in humanity?

Satan is also working to have his image reproduced within us and this is the real bottom line focus and outcome of the war between Christ and Satan. It is a war for hearts and minds. These two beings—Christ and Satan—stand at the head of two divergent systems, two antagonistic kingdoms that operate upon opposing principles. Every being in the universe must decide on whose side they will be by the methods, principles, laws they prefer and practice in their life.

It is by our choices in whom we trust and who we choose to follow **BY THE METHODS WE EMPLOY** in how we live and treat others that we choose one kingdom or the other.

Do we prefer:

- Truth or deception
- Love or fear and selfishness
- Freedom or coercion, force, and control
- Design law or imposed law
- Sowing and reaping or rule-breaking with infliction of punishment

It is a law, the law of worship, that by beholding we are changed. If we worship a god that is like Satan in character, one who makes up rules and uses threats, intimidation, inflicted punishments to coerce and control and calls it justice then we become like that god and will use those methods upon others.

But if we worship Jesus who would not use power to punish His crucifiers but left His creatures free to reject and kill Him, then we, like Jesus present the truth in love and leave others free and we live out the principles of God as His law is written into our hearts by the Holy Spirit through our faith in God.

We are either being cleansed and washed by Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, purified and prepared as a temple for the indwelling of God via His Spirit, or we are being corrupted and turned into what the Bible calls a synagogue of Satan.

Every intelligent being, angels and humans, are created to be living temples where God dwells by His Spirit and it is Satan's goal to displace God from the throne of our hearts and minds and to establish himself as the ruler of our being. He does this by getting us to choose his method, principles, and laws over God's, even while we claim to be worshipping God or Jesus. Satan does this by getting us to have faith in the wrong god, the god who is like a dictator.



Remember the Jews in Christ's day who claimed both Abraham and God as their father, Jesus explicitly and directly told them that they belonged to their father the devil (John 8:44), yet they were certain that they were obeying Scripture and Jesus was teaching contrary to Scripture. They were not mad a Jesus because they didn't believe in God and Jesus did, but because Jesus presented a different God to the one they believed in.

Calling oneself a Christian, a follower of the Creator God, even a follower of Jesus does not establish one as a temple of God, a person who is restored to the image of God. What does? Worship God in truth as Jesus revealed Him to be in character, principle, and method and thereby surrendering in trust to the true God of love and having His living law of love restored into the heart as the operating system upon which we live, and breath, and function. Meaning, we love the Lord our God with all our hearts, minds, souls and strength and our neighbors as ourselves. We live out God's law, truth, love and freedom.

We don't do this in our own strength, we do this by our choice to trust God and receive His strength. **God never chooses for us, but we can never accomplish any victory over sin by our own ingenuity, wisdom, or power.**

- All the saving power comes from God.
- The truth that displaces the lies and wins us to trust comes from God
- The love that drives out the fear comes from God
- But the choice to respond to the truth and love of God is ours.
- And when we make that choice God enters the sanctuary of our souls with His healing and cleansing presence and removes the guilt, takes away the shame, imbues us with new motives, new desires, new longings for purity, goodness, love, kindness, honesty. As we identify with these new motives and desires and choose to apply them to our daily activities, decisions, practices and choices we receive power to carry out those choices. When we have moments of human weakness and don't do what our renewed hearts truly desire and allow an old habit to take over, or a situation to irritate us into an impulsive act that we regret—like Moses striking the rock—we are not cast off by God. We grieve in our hearts and go to God humbly, regretting our weakness and longing for His strength to never let God down again. And we receive God's forgiveness, acceptance, love, grace and power to succeed the next time.

The sin problem has never been a legal issue. It has always been a state of being issue. We are either reborn into love and trust and are being cleansed by God to be righteous or we remain in fear, selfishness, rebellion and sin and our souls are being corrupted, hearts hardened, and consciences seared.

SUNDAY

The lesson focuses our attention on Romans 8:29:



“For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers” (Romans 8:29 NIV84).

What does this mean?

Does this mean God predetermines who is save and who is lost? That God uses His power to save some but not others?

It is very simple really. What, according to Jesus is life eternal? Knowing God (John 17:3). This knowing is not cognitive awareness but an intimate connection with, an opening of the heart in love and trust to God.

And what is the only outcome for a sinner who genuinely and completely opens their heart in love and trust to God? Salvation—why? Because of who God is. God is love and God is the Creator and God will heal all who trust Him and restore them to sinless perfection.

So, God predetermined that all those who come back into intimate connection with Him will be conformed or transformed into the likeness of Jesus, restored to righteousness.

And because God is the Creator of time and time exists and operates at the behest of God and under the power and authority of God, just like gravity, just like the laws of physics, God is not constrained by time. God lives outside and above time and the past, present and future are alike outspread before God. So the Bible informs us that in our linear existence here in 2022, those people whom will come to love and trust God and know God in the future God as predetermined through the victory of Christ will be restored in heart, mind, and character to be like Jesus. But from God’s vantage point He already knows or foreknows who those people are because God exists at all points in time.

The third paragraph is an interesting quote from the book *The Desire of Ages*:

“The very image of God is to be reproduced in humanity. The honor of God, the honor of Christ, is involved in the perfection of the character of His people” *The Desire of Ages* 671.

What does this mean?

Why is God’s honor involved in the perfection of the character of His people?

If a person dying of terminal cancer is cured by a physician, restored to complete wellness, whose reputation is honored by that remedy and healing?

So God curing and healing sinners from sin reveals the truth about Him, His character, His methods, and that His law restored into the hearts and minds of living beings is the bases of life. God’s character is glorified and magnified by His people being restored to love and trust.



Read the last green section, “Imagine being on the field of a huge stadium...” Do you think it would help you make choices for God to consider such a viewpoint?

MONDAY

The lesson asks us to read Job 23:1-10:

Then Job replied:

- ² “Even today my complaint is bitter;
his hand is heavy in spite of my groaning.
³ If only I knew where to find him;
if only I could go to his dwelling!
⁴ I would state my case before him
and fill my mouth with arguments.
⁵ I would find out what he would answer me,
and consider what he would say.
⁶ Would he oppose me with great power?
No, he would not press charges against me.
⁷ There an upright man could present his case before him,
and I would be delivered forever from my judge.
⁸ “But if I go to the east, he is not there;
if I go to the west, I do not find him.
⁹ When he is at work in the north, I do not see him;
when he turns to the south, I catch no glimpse of him.
¹⁰ But he knows the way that I take;
when he has tested me, I will come forth as gold. (Job 23:1-10 NIV84)

Read the second paragraph, “Even amid...” Yes, Job trusted God and could not be shaken from his trust despite not understanding the issues, despite not seeing behind the scenes at the time. This is an excellent point to note. A very important lesson for us in our journey.

But what do you think of the idea that “he endured the refining fire”?

I have difficulty with this conclusion—was Job going through his trials because Job needed to be purified? Or was Job already settled, sealed to God, and purified in character?

Two texts to consider, the first is Job’s own words that follow what the lesson asked us to read:

- ¹¹ My feet have closely followed his steps;
I have kept to his way without turning aside.
¹² I have not departed from the commands of his lips;
I have treasured the words of his mouth more than my daily bread. (Job 23:11-12 NIV84)



Does it sound like Job is being purified from Job's perspective? Do we find Job confessing sin, repenting from unrighteousness like we see David doing in Psalms 51? No, we see Job protesting that this is not a result of sin and therefore is not some element of purifying him.

However, the Bible tells us that the human heart and mind is deceitful above all things and utterly wicked, so perhaps Job is self-deceived and he only thinks he is faithful to the Lord. Then, it would be best, in this case to get God's assessment of Job, which we find in Job 1:8:

“Then the LORD said to Satan, ‘Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil’” (Job 1:8 NIV84).

So, does it sound like in Job's case that he was going through his difficulties in order to be refined from some sin?

This is a great example of taking a passage like Job 23:1-10 out of context and using it to make a point that it doesn't actually make, of drawing the wrong conclusion.

This is how the Bible can be used, with all good intentions and honest motives, to introduce confusion and error. And this is why every person must study for themselves and be fully persuaded in their own mind.

Many misunderstand Scripture and inspiration. They think that if we find a Bible text that says something then because the Bible is inspired we are to apply it just as it reads without question. But this is not the purpose of the Bible. The Bible is inspired by God, but it is not a list of rules to obey, or proclamations and declarations to blindly follow.

The Bible is an inspired record of the sin problem and God's actions in resolving the sin problem. It is a revelation of God's character and methods in contrast to those of Satan. Thus it requires us to understand the setting, what is transpiring, why those words were spoken and by whom, what is the manifestation of the sin condition in that setting and how is God's intervention in that setting part of the healing solution. If we read the Bible as a list of rules or proclamations and simply apply them because the Bible said it, then our individual development is stunted, the image of God in us is not being restored, and we will often use a Bible rule in a setting where it causes harm rather than brings healing. Just like the Jews wanted to cast stones at the woman caught in adultery—they had a rule given by Moses and they wanted to apply it. But had they done so, not only would the woman have been killed, but all those who participated would have had their hearts hardened. As Jesus handled it, not only was the woman saved, but many of those who came wanting to throw stones left with seeds of truth working upon their hearts.

We are created in the image of God and are to be thinkers not mere reflectors of other people's thoughts. Jesus calls us into understanding friendship (John 15:15). God wants more from human beings than the obedience of a well-trained dog. God wants more than the obedience of a slave, “the master said it. I will do it, who am I to question.” God wants our understanding agreement. We are called to be mature, to develop by practice the ability to discern the right from the wrong. This



requires we actually comprehend God's character, His design laws, how reality works, what sin is, how it deviates from God's design and causes pain suffering and death.

The Bible reveals, through human history, reality—how God functions, how God's law functions, and how sin corrupts and destroys.

TUESDAY

Read first paragraph, "Jesus was in Jerusalem..." What lessons do you glean from the parable of the ten virgins and the sheep and the goats that is relevant to our preparing for Christ's return?

The lesson points out that the symbol of oil in the lamps of the wise virgins represents both the Holy Spirit and their own mature Christlike character. And the lesson asks, "In what way does the meaning of the story change, depending on whether you see oil as a symbol of the Holy Spirit or of the possession of character?"

What are your thoughts?

How is the oil connected to character such that both interpretations are true simultaneously?

Every single person develops a character, the only question is whether it is a Christlike character or a satanic character.

What is the only way we can develop a Christlike character? By the indwelling of the Holy Spirit!

Can we develop a Christlike character by our own initiative, our own strength, our own works, our own goodness, our own creativity, our own power, our own love? No! The only way we can develop a Christlike character is via the indwelling Holy Spirit who brings new motives, new desires, new understandings, new perspectives, new insights, godly love, and divine power to succeed. As the Holy Spirit brings all of this which Christ wrought out in His humanity to us, we choose to say yes, to prefer the godly over the carnal, to identify with and act in harmony with the godly, and in so doing the Holy Spirit empowers and develops us. We advance from truth to truth, insight to insight, victory to victory as we are convicted of things we need to renounce and step by step, choice by choice, as we follow the leading of the Holy Spirit our characters are transformed.

Thus the metaphor of a lamp, the oil is both the Holy Spirit which brings the victory of Christ, the truth, the love of God, the power of God, and the oil which burns to create light, which is a metaphor of gospel truth, is the light of our witness, our character transformation as we cooperate with the Holy Spirit that transforms us to burn brightly letting our light shine. But if there is no Holy Spirit in the lamp, there is no development of Christlike character and there is no light to shine forth.

What about the parable of the sheep and goats? What is it that determines the ones that God identifies as a sheep or goats?



This is a powerful parable of reality that reveals how every single person on Earth chooses for or against Jesus.

Have you ever wondered how it could be possible that *every* person in the world will make a choice for or against Christ? This is often a point of concern for some as they consider everything that needs to happen before the Second Coming.

This parable reveals that the choice for or against Jesus isn't a doctrinal choice, isn't a denominational choice, isn't a ceremonial choice, it is a choice on what law we internalize into our hearts in how we live and treat others.

As the world continues to globalize, as governments increase their coercive pressure, as liberties are removed, as lies increase, as fear and selfishness magnify, and as crisis after crisis occurs, governments will add to their laws and increase their demands, pressure, and control. As this happens, every person will be faced with the choice of whether they live out God's law or the law of sin and death.

God's law is the law of love, of truth, of liberty. It is manifested in loving God and others more than self, in protecting the downtrodden, in respecting the individuality of others.

The law of sin and death is the survival-of-the-fittest motive driven by fear and the need to protect self—especially at the expense of others. It is doing whatever one needs to do to survive, even if that means killing others to save self.

It is in how we treat others that we choose whose law we embrace—God's or Satan's; this is how every person chooses either to accept or reject Jesus in the last days, even those in far remote places who have never heard the name Jesus, for our Savior said:

When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left (Matthew 25:31-33 NIV84).

Jesus doesn't separate the people based on race, or nationality, or culture, or creed, or denomination, Jesus separates people based on what law they live out in the way they treat others, and thereby how they treat Him:

Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.'



Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?’ And the King will answer and say to them, ‘**Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.**’

Then He will also say to those on the left hand, ‘Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.’

Then they also will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?’ Then He will answer them, saying, ‘**Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.**’ And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life (Matthew 25:34-46 NKJV).

WEDNESDAY

The lesson points our attention to Daniel chapter 12, let’s read verses 1-4 & 10:

“At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people—everyone whose **name is found written in the book**—will be delivered. [what book? What does “name” mean? Character—so whoever is healed to have a character like Christ is in the book of life] Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt. [Two resurrections—all who have died throughout human history are only sleeping waiting for the resurrection and the final end. This is a very important point to realize, because all the deaths through human history are NOT the death that is the wages of sin. That death occurs after the judgment. People make errors in reading Scripture and concluding that the Flood, or first born of Egypt, etc. in which God put people to sleep, is God punishing people for sin, no it is not. It is God acting therapeutically to keep open the avenue for the Messiah.] Those **who are wise will shine like the brightness** of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever. But you, Daniel, close up and seal the words of the scroll until the time of the end. Many will go here and there to increase knowledge.... [Seal up what words? The prophecies in the book of Daniel, until the time of the end and then the truth of these prophecies will increase until the second coming of Christ. These prophecies began to be understood after the end of the 1260 years which occurred in 1798, which corresponds with the Great Awakening in Christianity and the advancement of the advent message—that Christ is coming again soon.] Many will be purified, made spotless and refined, but the wicked will continue to be wicked. None of the wicked will understand, but those who are **wise will understand**” Daniel 12:1-4 & 10 NIV84).



What will the wise understand that the wicked will not understand? God's methods—the wise know God and cherish and understand His character and law of love. The wicked do not. The wicked do not know God and do not know God's design laws. In fact, the wicked embrace Satan's methods and laws.

The lesson then asks what is the context?

The context is the final movements of the longstanding battle between the King of the North and the King of the South. If you haven't read my two blogs I this I encourage you to do so:

[KING OF THE NORTH VERSUS SOUTH AND TODAY'S END-TIME EVENTS](#)

[PREPARE! THE KING OF THE NORTH IS COMING](#)

King of the South is symbolically represented by Egypt—Pharaoh famously said, “Who is God that I should obey Him?” (Exodus 5:2), and the King of the South represents all the godless philosophies and worldviews Satan has used throughout history—paganism, Earth and Sun worship, evolutionism, humanism, communism.

King of the North is represented by both Babylon and Rome—Nebuchadnezzar famously accepted Daniel's God and immediately passed laws that whoever spoke ill of Daniel's God should be put to death. And thus King of the North represents all the systems of religious imperialism. Those forces who claim a belief in the God of the Bible but who merge with the power of the state and will use force to coerce consciences.

These two systems are both Satan's and they have warred back and forth throughout human history. In the prophecy of Daniel 11 the beautiful land is where God's people are found and they are caught in the middle between the war of Satan's two forces.

Do you see these two forces in Jesus day? The religious leaders who wanted Him crucified were part of the King of the North, religious imperialism, Pilate and the forces of pagan Rome were part of the King of the South. And these two forces were fighting each other and Jesus and His followers were caught in the middle. Did Jesus join either side? Did Jesus Apostles join either side?

You saw the same thing in AD 70 when the forces of the King of the South, pagan Rome, surrounded Jerusalem to attack the forces of the King of the North, religious imperialism of the Jews. And when they stepped back briefly, the people of God represented by the beautiful land, the true followers of Christ, fled Jerusalem and were not caught up in Jerusalem's destruction.

This is what we are facing in the world as we approach the end of time. The final movements are the King of the South attacks the King of the North and then King of the North rallies and storms out and destroys the King of the South and then Michael stands up and a time of trouble comes just as we read in Daniel 12. Liberalism is right now making its final assault on the forces of religious imperialism, but if our understanding of the prophecy is correct, it will only enrage those who align with the King



of the North and politically conservative forces who are willing to use the power of the state are going to storm out and destroy the forces of liberalism.

I think COVID with its worldwide mandates against individual liberty was analogous to Rome surrounding Jerusalem in AD 70. It is the warning to the people of God that the final assault is just on the horizon and we are to flee. But our flight is not a physical one like the Christians in AD 70, our flight is to flee with our hearts from identifying with and supporting those forces of either the King of the South or the King of the North, to not get caught up into this war between two of Satan's forces, but to advance the principles of God's kingdom.

God's people are in neither group, but God's people will find themselves sorely tempted to join one or the other of these two groups and that is the trap.

The trap is not in agreeing with some point, idea, or principle espoused by either group, the trap is in choosing the methods of Satan that both the King of the North and South utilize in advancing their agenda.

For instance, let's take the question of transgenderism. The King of the South is advancing a lie that there is no male or female, that the concept of man and woman is made up, that our gender does not originate in objective reality and thus any person by merely choosing to make a claim contrary to objective reality can declare their gender to be whatever they wish it to be. But this is so obviously false it becomes silly for any thinking person and reveals it is an assault on the image of God, not just gender, but on thinking. One cannot believe such fantasy unless one stops exercising one's God-given abilities to reason and think and rejects the principles of truth. Understand, a person cannot be transgendered if there is no male and female, if there is no man or woman. You can't take a TRANScontinental flight if there are no continents, you cannot transition from male to female or female to male if there is no male or female.

We must stop letting people who deny objective reality, who live in fantasy, be the barometer of our thinking. It is destructive and unhealthy to individuals and to society.

There is male, there is female, and there are people who have confusion about their gender. Those people are suffering with some condition that interferes with healthy functioning as God designed it and they need our compassion, understanding, and love, not condemnation. But compassion, understanding and love does not mean we surrender our thinking to those who are struggling. We wouldn't let a blind person tell us what color combination works best in our paint schemes, neither should we ever allow people who are gender confused to define human sexuality, male, female, or any aspect of gender.

The godless in society are pushing irrational ideas that are inciting outrage in people, like in some jurisdictions they require female children to use the same bathrooms as biological males who identify as female.



Or in the news this week a school board member announced she would be taking 9-12 year old students to an adult store to teach them about human sexuality in graphic detail.

<https://www.foxnews.com/us/washington-state-school-board-director-teach-sexual-pleasure-class-9-year-olds-sex-shop>

These types of behaviors from the King of the South are so outrageous they tempt righteous people to use the power of the state not merely to restrain people from doing harm, but to seek to punish.

We are right to recognize the truth of God's creation. He made them male and female. We are right to recognize that the healthiest relationships are loving marriages of a man and woman who love God and each other more than self. We are right to recognize that the healthiest families in which children do the best and grow up to be the most successful are families led by a biological male father and a biological female mother in which both parents love each other and function in mature ways.

But we would be wrong to coerce people to conform to our way of living. The balance in this world of sin are spaces in which our liberties do not injure those around us.

So with this in mind, read the second paragraph, "Daniel is told..." What is the difference between the wise and the foolish? What do the wise know and do that the foolish do not know and do not do?

The wise understand God, His character, His methods, His design laws which govern the operations of reality, and they live in harmony with them.

The foolish believe lies—either the lies of liberalism (King of the South) or the lies of religious imperialism (King of the North) and will utilize the methods of coercion to seek to make the world a better place in their image.

But the wise realize that God's kingdom is not of this world. What God wants is our love, trust, loyalty, devotion, friendship, understanding agreement, free and willing participation in living out His methods. And none of this can be achieved by external rules, threats and punishments. In fact, using such methods leads to rebellion.

THURSDAY

Read first paragraph, "A song goes like this..." In my blog for this week, [Only God Is Infallible](#) I describe how angelic perfection failed in heaven, how human perfection failed on earth, how God's faithful prophets can still make mistakes—like Moses striking the rock, Elijah running away, Peter compromising principles, that each one of us must have our own faith individually built upon the Rock Jesus Christ if we are to stand firm in the face of trials.

I conclude the blog with these two paragraphs:



As we approach the final moments before Jesus returns, the Bible warns us of terrible times, troublesome times, distressing times. Our fears will be inflamed and our worst anxieties aroused. Everything that we have built our safety upon will be threatened. And it is when our earthly securities are removed, when every single earthly support is stripped away—when our bank account is empty, our home is taken, our liberty destroyed, our family members abandon us, our friends betray us, our church rejects us, and we feel all alone—that we will either be standing upon the solid rock, Jesus Christ, or collapsing into ruin and despair.

Only those who have developed a personal, living faith in Jesus, who know God for themselves, who trust their lives, fortunes, families, and futures to our infallible Creator God, will be found standing firm. All those who have trusted in other humans—in dynamic speakers, in church leaders, in politicians—will, sadly, discover that they have placed their trust in the fallible.

The lesson points us to Ephesians 4:11-16 which reads:

It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and **become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ**. Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work (Ephesians 4:11-16 NIV84).

Then the lesson asks, “what does Paul say must happen before the fullness of Christ may be revealed in our Christian community?”

We must grow up, we must be mature. And what does that mean? What does it mean to be a mature Christian? We have developed the ability to discern the right from the wrong (Hebrews 5:14). And what is necessary to do this? We have come to understand the truth of God's design law and have rejected the childlike rules-oriented approach to life based on imposed law with imposed punishments.

Remember the [seven levels of moral development](#).

LEVEL 1: Reward and Punishment

Right and wrong is determined by whoever holds the power to rule by threat of punishment and hope of reward. Mercy (failure to punish) is seen by others at this level as being weak, rather than being moral. This is the level ancient Israel operated at as slaves in Egypt. They did what the task masters said in order to avoid punishment.

People at level one insist that God uses his power to torture and kill the unrepentant wicked, as evidenced when he first established his credentials to rule Israel by acts of punishment upon



the Egyptian gods, and by mighty, spectacular miracles demonstrating the Egyptian gods were not gods at all.

This level of thinking is so primitive that it doesn't even require a brain; the mind is completely sidelined. Animals, plants, and even bacteria can be conditioned to avoid painful stimuli and grow toward rewarding stimuli. It is Satan's goal to reduce mankind to "brute beasts and creatures of instinct" operating at level one.

Satisfaction Theory of the atonement most closely matches Level One thinking, which is summarized as follows: God said don't do something, but when we disobey and do what God said not to do, this dishonors and offends him. Therefore, in his justice, he responds with angry vengeance to execute the disobedient to satisfy his outrage. But then Jesus stepped in between God and man to become humanity's substitute. Thus, instead of killing man, God killed his Son in our place and is now satisfied that his honor and justice are preserved.

LEVEL 2: Marketplace Exchange

Right and wrong is determined by an equitable agreement between two parties, also known as quid pro quo – "I'll do something for you if you do something for me." At this level vengeance is a moral duty. People who do evil must be paid back with an equal amount of pain and suffering, in other words, "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." To not return pain and suffering is considered immoral. This was ancient Israel saying at Sinai, when the law was first read, "All the Lord has said, we will do."

Ransom Theory of the atonement most closely matches Level Two thinking, which is summarized as follows: Because earth and humanity are now the legal property of Satan and under his control, the devil claimed legal rights to this earth and the lives of the descendants of Adam and Eve. Therefore, God struck a bargain with the devil to exchange the life of Christ for the lives of the rest of humanity.

LEVEL 3: Social Conformity

Right and wrong is determined by community consensus, for example, when a child says, "But everyone else is doing it." Right is deemed right by the approval of peers.

This was ancient Israel when they wanted kings. All the other nations had kings, so it must be right, thus Israel demanded to have kings.

Governmental Theory of the atonement most closely matches Level Three thinking, which is summarized as follows: In order for everyone to be convinced that God is fair and right in dealing with sin and sinners by inflicting torturous punishment, somebody has to pay the price. That somebody is Jesus, because he's the only one who could pay that price to get mankind off the hook.

LEVEL 4: Law and Order

Right and wrong is determined by a codified system of rules, impartial judges, imposed punishments, and respect for authority. Right is getting a proper pay or reward for good work, and proscribed and



inflicted punishment for breaking the rules. Authority figures are rarely questioned, “He must be right, because he is the President, the Judge, the Pope, God, etc.”

This was ancient Israel at the time of Christ – “we have a law!” they proclaimed, as they sought to stone Jesus for healing on the Sabbath. This is much of our modern world, with its codified laws, courts, prosecutors, judges, juries, and imposed rules. Authority at this level rests in the coercive pressure of the state to bring punishment upon those who deviate from the established laws. At this level, police agencies and law enforcers are required to monitor the population, searching for breaches in the law in order to impose standardized penalties.

Penal Substitution Theory of the atonement most closely matches Level Four thinking, which is summarized as follows: Jesus died to pay the legal penalty the law demanded and the heavenly judge imposed. The law must be kept. Man broke the law, thus justice demands and requires the imposition of the proper punishment. Someone had to be executed to pay the legal penalty. Jesus became our substitute and was executed in our place by God the Father (as the righteous judge) to pay that penalty. In doing so, the integrity of the law is maintained and sinners can be pardoned, but only if they claim the legal payment made by Jesus.

LEVEL 5: Love for Others

Right is determined by doing what is in the best interest of others, realizing people have value in who they are irrespective of the rules. Wrong is determined, not by a checklist of rules, but by not doing what is actually helpful and beneficial for another.

Jesus demonstrated this when he touched lepers, spoke to women, socialized with tax collectors, and healed on the Sabbath. The Pharisees, operating at level four and below, wanted to stone Him for breaking the law.

Moral Influence Theory of the atonement most closely matches Level Five thinking, which is summarized as follows: Sin separated us from God and corrupted our hearts, so that we no longer trusted God, but God loved us too much to let us go, so Christ’s death was the means to reach us with his love and restore us to trust in him.

LEVEL 6: Principle-Based Living

Right is understanding the design protocols and principles upon which life is constructed to operate and intelligently choosing to live in harmony with them. Right is not doing something because a rule says to do so, but because it is understood to actually work this way.

This was Jesus living out God’s character of love in all He did, and the Apostles after Pentecost. It is understood that God says what is right because it is right, because it is the way things actually are. It isn’t right simply because God said it.



Recapitulation and Christus Victor Theories of the atonement most closely matches Level Six thinking, which is summarized as follows: Christ's life, death, and resurrection is understood to be the only means to fix what sin had done to God's creation. When mankind sinned, the condition of humankind was changed, placing it out of harmony with God and his design for life. Humankind was now held in bondage by their own condition of sinfulness (carnal nature), their terminal state (death), and the lies about God told by Satan. Christ came to break these three powers and fix what sin has done to this creation. Thus "he who knew no sin became sin for us, so that we might become the righteousness of God." 2Cor 5:21.

LEVEL 7: Understanding Friend of God

Those at this level not only have love for God and others (Level 5), not only understand God's design protocols for life (Level 6), but also understand God's purposes and intelligently choose to cooperate in fulfilling their role in His purposes.

Jesus said to His disciples in John 15:15, "I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you."

People at this level understand the truth about God's character of love, His nature and design for life, the origin of evil, the nature of sin, the weapons of Satan, the original purpose for the creation of humanity, the fall of humanity into sin, God's working through human history, the purpose of the Cross, and the ultimate cleansing of the universe from sin. Jesus operated at this level, as will all those who are ready for translation when Jesus comes again.

Healing Substitution Reality most closely matches Level Seven thinking, which is summarized as follows: The plan of salvation is understood to have a deeper and broader intent than just the redemption of the human species. Both level five and six are true: God's character of love has been misrepresented, His methods of truth, love, and freedom have not been fully understood, so God had a larger purpose than just the salvation of humankind; He was also solidifying the unfallen beings in loyalty to His design methods and character of love.



ANNOUNCEMENTS:

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/>

Materials in Australia: Simon and Maani Harrison have a Facebook group in Australia and have the following Come and Reason resources available in Australia:

- CIBTS
- God is Love Children's book
- The Heavenly Sanctuary for the Modern World
- The Final Message of Mercy
- The Remedy NT
- The Remedy of the Lord in Song
- First set of tracts

You can email Simon at australia@comeandreason.com

Materials in South Africa: Jacques van den Heever has materials available in South Africa you can email him at comeandreason.sa@gmail.com

New Release: The Final Message of Mercy to the World—The Three Angels, magazine.

You can read a digital version online at our website. Here is a link to the flip version <https://comeandreason.com/files/flipbooks/3Angels/>

New Member's Section is now open: This is FREE but will require a sign in and will contain member's only content:

- Live Q&A section
- A Discussion Forum is now available to members.
- *The Remedy* Audio
- *Could It Be This Simple?* Audio are both available in the members section to stream or download and listen.



- **New Music** Brad & Donna Horne, online members in Australia, created an album that they have graciously donated to our ministry to share with those who love this message.
- Member locator for those who choose to post their information to other members
- If you have ideas to add to the member's section let us know