



## 2022 Q3 In The Crucible With Christ: Lesson 5 Extreme Heat

by Lori Atkins

### INTRODUCTION

---

We are studying Lesson 5 in our quarterly, *In the Crucible With Christ*. The title of this week's lesson is "Extreme Heat" and the memory text is from Isaiah 53:10...I want to read verses 10 and 11 from several Bible versions so we can unpack this passage a bit and determine not only what the verses say, but what they mean.

- NIV: **Yet it was the Lord's will to crush him and cause him to suffer**, and though the Lord makes his life a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the Lord will prosper in his hand. **After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light of life and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities.**  
[This is the NIV and you can see the translators have a certain lens through which they interpret. It has to do with preconceived ideas of God's law and sovereignty—God is causal and inflicting. But this is not in the Hebrew, it is artifact of the translators.]
- GNT: The Lord says, **"It was my will that he should suffer;** his death was a sacrifice to bring forgiveness. And so he will see his descendants; he will live a long life, and through him my purpose will succeed. After a life of suffering, he will again have joy; he will know that he did not suffer in vain. My devoted servant, with whom I am pleased, will bear the punishment of many and for his sake I will forgive them. [This is the GNT and it shifts the focus slightly that it was God's will he should suffer, but it is not God causing the suffering. This is much closer to the truth as it was God's will for Jesus to rescue humankind!]
- NKJV: **Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief.** When You make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see *His* seed, He shall prolong *His* days, And the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand. **He shall see the labor of His soul, and be satisfied. By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many,** For He shall bear their iniquities. [This is the NKJV and again the translators bring in a certain view of God's law and God acting as the causal agent.]
- The SDA Bible commentary on this passage states: "The Lord was not delighted that His Servant (see on ch. 52:13), Messiah, should suffer, but rather, in view of the eternal welfare of men and the security of the universe, it was best for Him to suffer. "It pleased the Lord" in the sense that "it was the will of the Lord." Only thus could the plan of salvation succeed. The sufferings of Christ were part of the eternal plan. (Vol. 4, p.291). The Bible commentary is correct—it pleased God that Jesus in perfect accord with Himself and perfectly revealed the Father and perfectly fulfilled



His mission to heal humankind...God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself (2 Corinthians 5:19). How one understands this passage depends entirely upon the law lens one uses. If we use the false law lens, the lie that God's law works like human law, rules made up and enforced with punishment then what conclusion do we draw from these texts? That God was pleased to inflict punishment on Jesus in order for Jesus to pay the penalty so God could resolve His anger and wrath and save mankind. If we use the true view of God's law as design law, then we realize humankind was in a terminal state, "dead in trespass and sin" and would die eternally unless God intervened through Christ to fix the situation. Thus, while God did not enjoy His Son's suffering, He was pleased for His Son to carry out His purpose to save humankind and the only way to do this was to partake of our human nature, confront the carnal nature and destroy it restoring the species human back to God's original ideal. It would be like a parent whose child was dying of leukemia having another child who was a bone marrow match, they would be pleased the healthy child donated bone marrow to save their sibling, and doing so would cause suffering to the donor and while the parents wouldn't enjoy the healthy child suffering, they would be pleased with it because of what it accomplished.

## SABBATH

---

- lesson contains a quote by one of my favorite authors, C.S. Lewis, and he writes this concerning his grief over the tragic loss of his wife: "Not that I am (I think) in much danger of ceasing to believe in God. The real danger is of coming to believe such dreadful things about Him. The conclusion I dread is not 'So there's no God after all,' but 'So this is what God's really like.'"—*A Grief Observed* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, Inc., 1961), pp. 6, 7.
- This week's teachers notes indicate one of the major themes or purposes of this week's lessons is to engage us in a profound study of relevant examples of suffering that will help us understand why God allows suffering in our experiences. Then it says, "The question is, just how hot can it get? How much heat is God willing to risk putting His people through in order to bring about His ultimate purpose of shaping us into the "image of His Son"? So, does God allow suffering in our lives? Does God cause us to suffer – does he bring the heat? Why would a loving God...a God who claims to be the very definition of love...allow his precious children to suffer? How do we understand why bad things happen and why suffering occurs – and why do some suffer and not others?"
- A drunk driver runs across the line hits an 18 y/o and the teen dies, the drunk is not harmed. Why? Did God kill the teen? What does it mean that God didn't use divine power to save the teen?
- Two people have cancer, one survives the other doesn't, what does it mean? Did God love one more than the other? Did one have more faith than the other? Have you ever had the critic, the skeptic of God, bring this up as evidence that there is no God? Perhaps the classic argument was presented by Epicurus (341-270 BCE):



- Is God willing to prevent evil but unable to do so? In that case God is not omnipotent.
- Is God able to prevent evil but unwilling to do so? If so, God must be malevolent
- Is God both willing and able to prevent evil? Then why is there evil in the world? Epicurus goes on to say: “God is either willing to remove evil and cannot, or he can and is unwilling; or he is neither willing nor able to do so; or else he is both willing and able. If he is willing and not able, he must be weak, which cannot be affirmed of God. If he is able and not willing, he must be envious, which is also contrary to the nature of God. If he is neither willing nor able, he must be both envious and weak, and consequently not be God. If he is both willing and able—the only possibility that agrees with the nature of God—then where does evil come from? Or why does he not eliminate it?” How do you answer these questions? How would Martin Luther answer such a question? “This is the highest degree of faith, to believe him [God] merciful when he saves so few and damns so many, and to believe him righteous when by his own will he makes us necessarily damnable, so that he seems, according to Erasmus, to delight in the torments of the wretched and to be worthy of hatred rather than love. If, then, I could by any means comprehend how this God can be merciful and just who displays so much wrath and iniquity, there would be no need of faith.” (Luther, Bondage of the Will p. 62)
- Do you hear Luther’s position? God is not understandable, in fact we shouldn’t even try. Faith is believing God is good when all the evidence says He is not good. Sadly, this distorted view of God and this distorted view of faith continues to infect Christianity to this day and many people live with their minds darkened with such beliefs.
- What are the elements that Epicurus and Luther are missing? First and foremost—they have a flawed understanding about God’s law and how it functions—God’s laws are the design parameters upon which reality is constructed to operate. They are viewing the entire question through the lens of human law, imposed law, imperialism. Thus, for both of them, it is merely a question of power—for Epicurus if God is good then He uses power to impose His will to eradicate evil. And for Luther, God is assumed to be good and to be powerful and we are to accept that on faith and not ask questions—God is sovereign, so who are we to question it.
- So, how do you answer the critics...what key truths are foundational to understanding the question of suffering and evil in the world? First, we must understand God’s design, His laws, His original intent for life and humanity; then we must understand the nature and character of sin, what it actually is, and finally the solution for it. All of those who struggle with this do so because on some level they don’t see and understand what is actually happening, and are most often trying to understand through the false imposed law lens.
- What are God’s design laws? (Here are a few)
  - Law of love—principle of giving (Air, water, food etc.)
  - Law of liberty—love can only exist in atmosphere of freedom
  - Law of worship—by beholding we become changed
  - Law of exertion—strength requires exertion



With these in mind what was God's original design for humankind?

- Was it not an existence of love and perfection?
- Can computers love? No, what is required to love?
- Free sentient beings
- Can love grow and exist without freedom?
- Did God create humankind in His image? Would that include the ability to love? Would that mean genuine freedom? Would genuine freedom mean freedom to disobey—to deviate from God's design?
- All suffering has its roots in the fact that this planet is out of harmony with God's design and His life-giving presence. The specific reasons why suffering and death occur are as follows:
  - Entropy, the slow gradual decay of order that occurs because we are disconnected from God's constant full presence and care. "in the day you eat of the Tree of Knowledge, dying you will die." (Gen 2:17) Aging and the sleep death occur because of this slow decay.
  - Genetic defects, mutations, and disease because of entropy and the slow decay of our original design.
  - Toxins and poisons because of mutations and alterations to God's design—the changes in nature and the manufacture of chemicals and products not original to God's creation.
  - Evil/selfish actions originating in people who are selfish—Cain killing Abel.
  - Evil/selfish actions inspired by Satan upon people to hurt others—Judas betraying Christ.
  - Satan and his agencies affecting nature and causing problems—first chapter of Job.
  - Good people acting to defend and protect—Abraham rescuing Lot.
  - Good people acting selfishly and doing bad things—David murdering Uriah—which occurs because of sin in the heart not yet removed.
  - People, whether good or evil, making mistakes with no intent to help or harm, slipping and falling, auto accident because of ice etc.
  - Humans acting on God's orders—kill all the people, women, children, cattle, etc. Why would God give such orders? Remember it was God's original plan to have the hornet and pestilence go before Israel and as the inhabitants abandoned the land the Israelites would have slowly occupied it with no killing. But the people chose to do it their way and so God gave the instructions, if you are going to kill then in order to minimize suffering, death, and traumatize the least number of people and bring peace in a world, wipe them all out and get it over with. Instead, we have had 4000+ years of continual fighting, violence and war scaring every generation living in that part of the world.
  - God acting to protect, lance, cauterize, keep open the avenue for Messiah—putting people in the grave/asleep, but they will arise again: Flood, first born of Egypt, platoons that came to arrest Elijah, etc.
- Saturday's lesson also asks this important question, "Why do you think God is willing to risk being misunderstood by those he wants to know Him and love Him? How much do you think God is



willing to be misunderstood in order to mold you into the image of Christ?” Remember the example of a parent whose child ignores their warnings and continues to play out in the street...so the parent “brings the [extreme] heat”...is that parent willing to risk being misunderstood by their child – who now thinks that the problem/danger with playing in traffic is mommy. How much is that parent willing to be misunderstood...to be the bad guy...if doing so keeps their child safe and alive and healthy until they’re able to understand the laws of health and physics?

- So we’re supposed to rejoice in suffering...be grateful for trials and tribulation and not be surprised when they happen...bless those who persecute us...and if this extreme heat indeed purifies our hearts and refines our characters as we have been learning every week this quarter, then rather than passively waiting...shouldn’t we actually seek it out? Actively go looking for it? Did Christ, for the joy set before Him, seek out “extreme heat” in the form of persecution, suffering, and the agonizing physical/mental/spiritual ordeal before Him. Ms. White wrote these comments about Jesus’ reaction to Peter when he tried to obstruct Christ’s mission: “Peter loved his Lord; but Jesus did not commend him for thus manifesting the desire to shield Him from suffering. Peter’s words were not such as would be a help and solace to Jesus in the great trial before Him. **They were not in harmony with God’s purpose of grace toward a lost world, nor with the lesson of self-sacrifice that Jesus had come to teach by His own example.** Peter did not desire to see the cross in the work of Christ. The impression which his words would make was **directly opposed to that which Christ desired to make on the minds of His followers**, and the Saviour was moved to utter one of the sternest rebukes that ever fell from His lips...Satan was trying to discourage Jesus, and turn Him from His mission; and Peter, in his blind love, was giving voice to the temptation. The prince of evil was the author of the thought. His instigation was behind that impulsive appeal. In the wilderness, Satan had offered Christ the dominion of the world on condition of forsaking the path of humiliation and sacrifice. Now he was presenting the same temptation to the disciple of Christ. He was seeking to fix Peter’s gaze upon the earthly glory, that he might not behold the cross to which Jesus desired to turn his eyes. And through Peter, Satan was again pressing the temptation upon Jesus. But the Savior heeded it not; His thought was for His disciple. Satan had interposed between Peter and his Master, **that the heart of the disciple might not be touched at the vision of Christ’s humiliation for him. The words of Christ were spoken, not to Peter, but to the one who was trying to separate him from his Redeemer.** “Get thee behind Me, Satan.” No longer interpose between Me and My erring servant. Let Me come face to face with Peter, that I may reveal to him the mystery of My love. It was to Peter a bitter lesson, and one which he learned but slowly [how many here are slow learners?], that the path of Christ on earth lay through agony and humiliation. The disciple shrank from fellowship with his Lord in suffering. **But in the heat of the furnace fire he was to learn its blessing.** Long afterward, when his active form was bowed with the burden of years and labors, he wrote, “Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings;





that, when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.” 1 Peter 4:12, 13.  
{DA 415-6}

## SUNDAY

### Abraham in the Crucible

---

- Just last quarter – Lesson 8, we had a lesson that focused on Abraham’s promised son and the unfathomable call to sacrifice his beloved son on Mount Moriah – a sacrifice that perhaps only God himself could understand. In terms of “heat”, this certainly seems rather...well, extreme! Why did God issue such a difficult command?? Was it a test for God’s understanding or for Abraham’s?? Or perhaps for the onlooking universe?? Remember, Abraham had already tried to “fix” the infertility issue by fathering Ishmael, and thereby demonstrated a lack of faith in God’s ability to fulfil His promise. Was this God’s way of further purifying Abraham’s character...removing the last vestiges of selfishness and self-reliance?? One of the founders of our church had this to say about Abraham’s experience:

“Again the Lord saw fit to test the faith of Abraham by a most fearful trial. If he had endured the first test, and had patiently waited for the promise to be fulfilled in Sarah, and had not taken Hagar as his wife, **he would not have been subjected to the closest test that was ever required of man.**” – Spiritual Gifts, vol 3, pg 106

“**God has always tried His people in the furnace of affliction** in order to prove them firm and true, and purge them from all unrighteousness. After Abraham and his son had borne **the severest test that could be imposed upon them**, God spoke through His angel unto Abraham: “Now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from Me.” This great act of faith causes the character of Abraham to shine forth with remarkable luster. It forcibly illustrates his perfect confidence in the Lord, from whom he withheld nothing, not even his son by promise.” -- Testimonies to the Church, vol 4, pg 19

- [OPTIONAL] “The wood was laid upon Isaac, the one to be offered, the father took the knife and the fire, and together they ascended toward the mountain summit, the young man silently wondering whence, so far from folds and flocks, the offering was to come. At last he spoke, “My father,” “behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?” **Oh, what a test was this!** How the endearing words, “my father,” pierced Abraham's heart! Not yet—he could not tell him now. “My son,” he said, “God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt offering.” At the appointed place they built the altar and laid the wood upon it. Then, with trembling voice, Abraham unfolded to his son the divine message. It was with terror and amazement that Isaac learned his fate, but he offered no resistance. He could have escaped his doom, had he chosen to do so; the grief-stricken old man, exhausted with the struggle of those three terrible days, could not



have opposed the will of the vigorous youth. But Isaac had been trained from childhood to ready, trusting obedience, and **as the purpose of God was opened before him, he yielded a willing submission.** He was a sharer in Abraham's faith, and he felt that he was honored in being called to give his life as an offering to God. He tenderly seeks to lighten the father's grief, and encourages his nerveless hands to bind the cords that confine him to the altar. And now the last words of love are spoken, the last tears are shed, the last embrace is given. The father lifts the knife to slay his son, when suddenly his arm is stayed. An angel of God calls to the patriarch out of heaven, "Abraham, Abraham!" He quickly answers, "Here am I," And again the voice is heard, "Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from Me." -- Patriarchs and Prophets, pg 152

## MONDAY

---

### Wayward Israel

- The story of Hosea has some powerful lessons to teach us. Hosea's situation is remarkable. His wife, Gomer, runs away and has children with other men. Though she is sexually unfaithful, God calls Hosea to take his wife back and fully show his love to her again. This story is meant as a parable about God and Israel. The Israelites had left God and were prostituting themselves spiritually to other gods, but God still loved them and wanted to show His love to them. **But just look at God's methods!**
- First, we risk not recognizing that God is at work. When Israel went through such hard and painful experiences, it might have been hard for them to recognize that their God was working for their salvation.
- Second, we risk misunderstanding God when He is at work. We may recognize that God is at work, but we don't like what He's doing. While we are feeling hurt and embarrassed, it is easy to blame God for being cruel, for not intervening, or for not caring. But God is always working to renew us through His covenant of love.

## TUESDAY

---

### Surviving Through Worship

- If God is giving permission for Job to suffer, what difference does it make whether God or Satan is personally inflicting the suffering? How can God be righteous and holy when He actively allows Satan to cause Job such pain? Is this situation a special case, or is it characteristic of the way God still deals with us today?



- It is possible to respond to such suffering in two ways. We can become bitter and angry, turning our backs on a God we believe to be cruel or nonexistent, or we can hang on to God more tightly. Job deals with his catastrophe by staying in God's presence and worshipping Him.

## THURSDAY

---

### Extreme Heat

- The bottom line? We live in a broken, sinful world in which we were \*promised\* that we would have trouble, guaranteed that we would have trials and tribulations, be "hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed" (1 Cor 4:8-9)...but also promised the \*ALL\* these things would work together for good – like a refiner's fire and a launderer's soap to purify us Levites. I'll close with a quote from Ms. White's *Testimonies to the Church, Volume 4*:
- Our heavenly Father sees the hearts of men, and **He knows their characters better than they themselves know them.** He sees that some have susceptibilities and powers, which, directed in the right channel, might be used to His glory to aid in the advancement of His work. **He puts these persons on trial and in His wise providence brings them into different positions and under a variety of circumstances, testing them that they may reveal what is in their hearts and the weak points in their characters which have been concealed from their own knowledge.** He gives them opportunities to correct these weaknesses, to polish off the rough corners of their natures, and to fit themselves for His service, that when He calls them to action they will be ready, and that angels of heaven may unite their labor with human effort in the work that must be done upon the earth. To men whom God designs shall fill responsible positions, **He in mercy reveals their hidden defects, that they may look within and examine critically the complicated emotions and exercises of their own hearts, and detect that which is wrong;** thus they may **modify their dispositions and refine their manners.** The Lord in His providence brings men where He can **test their moral powers and reveal their motives of action, that they may improve what is right in themselves and put away that which is wrong.** God would have His servants **become acquainted with the moral machinery of their own hearts.** In order to bring this about, He often **permits the fire of affliction to assail them that they may become purified...** {4T 84.4}

**The purification of the people of God cannot be accomplished without their suffering.** God permits the fires of affliction to consume the dross, to separate the worthless from the valuable, that the pure metal may shine forth. He passes us from one fire to another, testing our true worth. If we cannot bear these trials, **what will we do in the time of trouble?** If prosperity or adversity discover falseness, pride, or selfishness in our hearts, what shall we do when God tries every man's work as by fire, and lays bare the secrets of all hearts? {4T 85.1}

**True grace is willing to be tried;** if we are loath to be searched by the Lord, our condition is





serious indeed. God is the refiner and purifier of souls; in the heat of the furnace the dross is separated forever from the true silver and gold of the Christian character. Jesus watches the test. **He knows what is needed to purify the precious metal that it may reflect the radiance of His divine love.** God brings His people near Him by close, testing trials, by showing them their own weakness and inability, and by teaching them to lean upon Him as their only help and safeguard. **Then His object is accomplished.** They are prepared to be used in every emergency, to fill important positions of trust, and to accomplish the grand purposes for which their powers were given them. God takes men upon trial; He proves them on the right hand and on the left, and thus they are educated, trained, disciplined. **Jesus, our Redeemer, man's representative and head, endured this testing process.** He suffered more than we can be called upon to suffer... **God's work of refining and purifying must go on until His servants are so humbled, so dead to self, that, when called into active service, their eye will be single to His glory.** He will then accept their efforts; they will not move rashly, from impulse; they will not rush on and imperil the Lord's cause, being slaves to temptations and passions and followers of their own carnal minds set on fire by Satan. Oh, how fearfully is the cause of God marred by man's perverse will and unsubdued temper! How much suffering he brings upon himself by following his own headstrong passions! **God brings men over the ground again and again, increasing the pressure until perfect humility and a transformation of character bring them into harmony with Christ and the spirit of heaven, and they are victors over themselves.** {4T 86.2}

- [OPTIONAL] "Those who are finally victorious will have seasons of terrible perplexity and trial in their religious life; but they must not cast away their confidence, for this is a part of their discipline in the school of Christ, and it is essential in order that all dross may be purged away. The servant of God must endure with fortitude the attacks of the enemy, his grievous taunts, and must overcome the obstacles which Satan will place in his way...But if you keep looking up, not down at your difficulties, you will not faint in the way, **you will soon see Jesus reaching His hand to help you, and you will only have to give Him your hand in simple confidence, and let Him lead you.** As you become trustful, you will become hopeful... You will find help in Christ to **form a strong, symmetrical, beautiful character.** Satan cannot make of none effect the light shining forth from such a character... God has given us His best gift, even His only-begotten Son, to uplift, ennoble, and fit us, by putting on us His own perfection of character, for a home in His kingdom." (MYP 63-64)