



2022 Q3 In the Crucible with Christ - Lesson 13: Christ in the Crucible

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NOTE: The actual Sabbath School lesson is in yellow, which is included for those who don't have this quarterly lesson.

SABBATH

Overview of the Week

Memory Text: "And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46).

This week's study is all about God suffering with us in the trenches....military band of brothers style...forever bonded by our shared experience of suffering under the consequences of sin.

Whenever we look at the issue of suffering, the question comes: How did sin and suffering first arise? Through divine revelation we have good answers: They arose because free beings abused the freedom God had given them. This leads to another question: Did God know beforehand that these beings would fall? Yes, but obviously He thought it was, as C. S. Lewis wrote, "worth the risk."

Worth the risk? For whom? For us, while God sits in heaven on His throne? Not exactly. The freedom of all His intelligent creatures was so sacred that, rather than deny us freedom, God chose to bear in Himself the brunt of the suffering caused by our abuse of that freedom. And we see this suffering in the life and death of Jesus, who, through suffering in our flesh, has created bonds between heaven and earth that will last throughout eternity.

Sometimes I think of us compared with ants. We so easily step on them, poison them, etc. But what type of exchange would it be for us to BECOME an ant, live like one, die like one in excruciating pain, then spend eternity as an ant?

And what do we imagine is the difference between God and us? SO much more!

SUNDAY

The Early Days

Scripture gives us little information about the early years of Jesus. A few verses, however, tell us something about those conditions and the kind of world the Savior entered.

Read Luke 2:7, 22-24 (see also Lev. 12:6-8) and Matthew 2:1-18. What do we see in these verses that gives us an indication of the kind of life Jesus faced from the start?



Poverty - Born in a stable, 2 doves or pigeons (the gift of the poor);

Herod's attempt to kill him, but instead killed all the other boys age 2 and under, since Jesus' parents raced to follow the angel's direction and left for Egypt by night..

Of course, Jesus was not the first person to live in poverty or to face those who wanted to kill Him, even from an early age. There is, however, another element that helps us understand the uniqueness of what Christ suffered from the earliest times.

Read John 1:46. What element does this add to help us understand what sufferings the young Jesus had faced?

Nazareth had a terrible reputation, causing people to think nothing good could come from there.

With the exception of Adam and Eve before the Fall, Jesus was the only sinless person who ever lived on the earth. In His purity, in His sinlessness, He was immersed in a world of sin. What a torture it must have been, even as a child, for His pure soul constantly to be in contact with sin. Even in our hardness because of sin, we ourselves often shrink away from exposure to sins and evil that we find repulsive. Imagine what it must have been like for Christ, whose soul was pure, who wasn't the least bit tainted by sin. Think of the sharp contrast between Himself and others around Him in that regard. It must have been exceedingly painful for Him.

Jesus was purity personified. Goodness is the exception in our world. According to today's media, 'if it bleeds, it leads.'

MONDAY

Despised and Rejected of Men

How do we enjoy being around "perfect" people? With Jealousy, undermining, gossiping, undermining, lying about them? "She's SO Purrfect!" You can probably hear the catty Purring!

Would we really have treated Jesus any differently than the people of his day did?

We hear his frustration in Scripture:

Why is my language not clear to you? Because you are unable to hear what I say. You belong to your father the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies. Yet because I tell the truth, you do not believe me! John 8:43-45

You unbelieving and perverse generation, "Jesus replied," how long shall I stay with you?
How long shall I put up with you? Matthew 17:17



“Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and **you were not willing.**” Matthew 23:37

Can we relate to that? What do we need?

Spiritual Binoculars: Each individual has to focus on what they want to see clearly.

“Jesus replied, ‘Very truly I tell you, no one can SEE the kingdom of God unless they are born again’.....Jesus answered, ‘Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but⁶ the Spirit gives birth to spirit.’ John 3:3, 5

As a nurse, I find that much of my advice is not taken, though it would surely make the person I am advising feel better. Now I am to the point that, as one slogan says, “Yes, I’m a nurse....no, I don’t want to look at it.”

But God gave us spiritual freedom, and freedom means allowing people to have their own beliefs and decisions, even if we disagree with them, even if we know they are going to suffer and maybe even die because of those beliefs and decisions.

James Webb Space Telescope is finding galaxies 9.5 billion light years away, and that is only in one direction from Earth. It’s impossible for me to imagine how far light can travel in 9.5 BILLION years!

<https://apod.nasa.gov/apod/ap220713.html>

Christ came to our tiny bit of the Milky Way Galaxy and offered himself to create the cure for our fatal spiritual illness.

Read the following verses, all the while keeping in mind the fact that Jesus was divine, the Creator of heaven and earth, and that He came to offer Himself as a sacrifice for the sins of the whole world (Matt. 12:22-24; Luke 4:21-30; John 8:58, 59). How do these verses help us understand the sufferings that Jesus faced here on earth?

Matt. 12:22-24 Jesus healed a demon-possessed man who was both blind and mute

Luke 4:21-30 The crowd wanted to kill him by throwing him off of a hill, but he walked right through them and left

John 8:58, 59 Jesus hid himself and walked away from the temple grounds from people trying to stone him.

Whether by leaders, or even by the common people, Jesus’ life, acts, and teachings were constantly misunderstood, leading to rejection and hatred by people He came to save. In a certain sense it must be like a parent who sees a wayward child in need of help, and though the parent is willing to give everything for that child, the child spurns the parent, heaping scorn and rejection upon perhaps the



only person who can spare that child from utter ruin. That's what Jesus faced while here on earth. How painful it must have been for Him.

Read Matthew 23:37. What does it tell us about how Christ felt about the rejection? As you read, ask yourself, too, "Was He feeling bad for Himself (as we often do when facing rejection), or was it for another reason?" If for another reason, what was it?

Jesus longed to gather, shelter and protect all of his Jewish children, but they weren't willing. In verse 38 Jesus told them that their house is left desolate.

We've all felt the sting of rejection, and maybe our pain was similar to Christ's in that it was unselfish: We were pained, not because we were rejected, but because of what the rejection would mean for the one who was rejecting us (perhaps someone we care about who refuses to accept salvation in Christ). Imagine, though, how it must have felt to Jesus, who was fully aware of what He was to face in order to save them, and at the same time fully aware of what the consequences of their rejection would be. "It was because of His innocence that He [Christ] felt so keenly the assaults of Satan." — Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages, book 3, p. 129.*

TUESDAY

Jesus in Gethsemane

Did God's foreknowledge include "forefeeling"? With us, we start feeling the pain when something bad happens. To God, did He feel this pain forever, since He knew about this event forever?

"And saith unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death: tarry ye here, and watch" (*Mark 14:34*).

Whatever Jesus suffered throughout His 33 years here on earth, nothing compared to what He started to face in the last hours before the cross. From the eternal ages (*Eph. 1:1-4; 2 Tim. 1:8, 9; Titus 1:1, 2*) the sacrifice of Jesus as the offering for the world's sin was planned, and now it was all coming to pass.

What do the following verses tell us about Christ's suffering in Gethsemane? *Matt. 26:39, Mark 14:33-36, Luke 22:41-44.*

Matt. 26:39 Jesus asking not to have to go through this, but he would do the Father's will

Mark 14:33-36 Jesus began to be deeply distressed and troubled and he told his disciples he was "overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death"

Luke 22:41-44 An angel had to come and strengthen him, as he was sweating drops of blood.



“He went a little distance from them — not so far but that they could both see and hear Him — and fell prostrate upon the ground. He felt that by sin He was being separated from His Father. The gulf was so broad, so black, so deep, that His spirit shuddered before it. This agony He must not exert His divine power to escape. As man He must suffer the consequences of man’s sin. As man He must endure the wrath of God against transgression.

Christ was now standing in a different attitude from that in which He had ever stood before. His suffering can best be described in the words of the prophet, ‘Awake, O sword, against My shepherd, and against the man that is My fellow, saith the Lord of hosts.’ Zech. 13:7. As the substitute and surety for sinful man, Christ was suffering under divine justice. He saw what justice meant. Hitherto He had been as an intercessor for others; now He longed to have an intercessor for Himself.” — Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 686.

Is there a difference between God’s anger and God’s wrath in the Bible?

Examples from old and new testament:

1. **“The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven** against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that **people are without excuse**. For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like a mortal human being and birds and animals and reptiles. **Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts** to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. They exchanged the truth about God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen. Because of this, **God gave them over to shameful lusts**. Even their women exchanged natural sexual relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed shameful acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their error. Furthermore, **just as they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, so God gave them over to a depraved mind**, so that they do what ought not to be done. They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; **they have no understanding**, no fidelity, no love, no mercy. Although they know God’s righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them.” Romans 1:18-32
2. **“It was because of the Lord’s anger that all this happened to Jerusalem and Judah, and in the end he thrust them from his presence.”** 2 Kings 24:20



3. “Who handed Jacob over to become loot, and Israel to the plunderers? Was it not the Lord, against whom we have sinned? For they would not follow his ways; they did not obey his law. So he poured out on them his burning anger, the violence of war. It enveloped them in flames, yet they did not understand; it consumed them, but they did not take it to heart.” Isaiah 42: 24,25

4. **“The Lord has given full vent to his wrath; he has poured out his fierce anger.** He kindled a fire in Zion that consumed her foundations. The kings of the earth did not believe, nor did any of the peoples of the world, that enemies and foes could enter the gates of Jerusalem. **But it happened because of the sins of her prophets and the iniquities of her priests, who shed within her the blood of the righteous.** Now they grope through the streets as if they were blind. They are so defiled with blood that no one dares to touch their garments. “Go away! You are unclean!” people cry to them. “Away! Away! Don’t touch us!” When they flee and wander about, people among the nations say, “They can stay here no longer.” **The Lord himself has scattered them; he no longer watches over them.** The priests are shown no honor, the elders no favor.” Lamentations 4:11-16

5. “When God heard them, he was furious; **he rejected Israel completely. He abandoned the tabernacle of Shiloh, the tent he had set up among humans. He sent the ark of his might into captivity, his splendor into the hands of the enemy.** He gave his people over to the sword; he was furious with his inheritance.” Psalm 78:59-61

6. **“The Lord has opened his arsenal and brought out the weapons of his wrath,** for the Sovereign Lord Almighty has work to do in the land of the Babylonians.... Listen to the fugitives and refugees from Babylon declaring in Zion how **the Lord our God has taken vengeance, vengeance for his temple.** “Summon archers against Babylon, all those who draw the bow. Encamp all around her; let no one escape. Repay her for her deeds; do to her as she has done. **For she has defied the Lord, the Holy One of Israel....** “See, I am against you, you arrogant one,” declares the Lord, the Lord Almighty, “for your day has come, **the time for you to be punished....** This is what the Lord Almighty says: “The people of Israel are oppressed, and the people of Judah as well. **All their captors hold them fast, refusing to let them go.** **Yet their Redeemer is strong; the Lord Almighty is his name. He will vigorously defend their cause so that he may bring rest to their land, but unrest to those who live in Babylon.”** Jeremiah 50:25, 28-29, 31, 33-34



7. “Neither their silver nor their gold will be able to save them on the day of the Lord’s wrath.’ In the fire of his jealousy the whole earth will be consumed, for he will make a sudden end of all who live on the earth.” Zephaniah 1:18

God’s Anger and Wrath seem to be used somewhat interchangeably, but let’s review the sample of texts listed above.

- 1) **Wrath** - Gave them over to their own destructive thoughts and actions
- 2) **Anger** - Thrust them from His presence
- 3) **Anger** – Handed over Judah and Israel handed over to be plundered, to war, but
 - a. they still didn’t learn
- 4) **Anger and Wrath** - enemies and foes could enter the gates of Jerusalem. The Lord himself scattered them; he no longer watches over them
- 5) **Furious** - he rejected Israel completely. He abandoned the tabernacle of Shiloh, the tent he had set up among humans. He sent the ark of his might into captivity, his splendor into the hands of the enemy. He gave his people over to the sword; he was furious with his inheritance
- 6) **Wrath** - the weapons of his wrath, the time for you [Babylon] to be punished, All their captors hold them fast, refusing to let them go. Yet their Redeemer is strong; the Lord Almighty is his name. He will vigorously defend their cause
- 7) **Wrath** - In the fire of his jealousy the whole earth will be consumed, for he will make a sudden end of all who live on the earth

WEDNESDAY

The Crucified God

Imagine an America with crucifixion – public, naked death – for anything the government deemed wrong, or “inappropriate! We are so used to hearing about the crucifixion, but perhaps don’t realize all that occurred to Jesus. So, I looked up an article called

‘A Physician’s View of the Crucifixion of Jesus Christ’ by Dr. C. Truman Davis for a description of crucifixion:

“... the upright post, or stipes, was generally fixed permanently in the ground at the site of execution and the condemned man was forced to carry the patibulum [the cross piece], weighing about 110 pounds, from the prison to the place of execution.

Many of the painters and most of the sculptors of crucifixion, also show the nails through the palms. Historical Roman accounts and experimental work have established that the nails were



driven between the small bones of the wrists (radial and ulna) and not through the palms. Nails driven through the palms will strip out between the fingers when made to support the weight of the human body. The misconception may have come about through a misunderstanding of Jesus' words to Thomas, "Observe my hands." Anatomists, both modern and ancient, have always considered the wrist as part of the hand.

A titulus, or small sign, stating the victim's crime was usually placed on a staff, carried at the front of the procession from the prison, and later nailed to the cross so that it extended above the head. This sign with its staff nailed to the top of the cross would have given it somewhat the characteristic form of the Latin cross.

But, of course, the physical passion of the Christ began in Gethsemane. Of the many aspects of this initial suffering, the one of greatest physiological interest is the bloody sweat. It is interesting that St. Luke, the physician, is the only one to mention this. He says, "And being in agony, He prayed the longer. And His sweat became as drops of blood, trickling down upon the ground." Every ruse (trick) imaginable has been used by modern scholars to explain away this description, apparently under the mistaken impression that this just doesn't happen. A great deal of effort could have been saved had the doubters consulted the medical literature. Though very rare, the phenomenon of Hematidrosis, or bloody sweat, is well documented. Under great emotional stress of the kind our Lord suffered, tiny capillaries in the sweat glands can break, thus mixing blood with sweat. This process might well have produced marked weakness and possible shock.

After the arrest in the middle of the night, Jesus was next brought before the Sanhedrin and Caiphus, the High Priest; it is here that the first physical trauma was inflicted. A soldier struck Jesus across the face for remaining silent when questioned by Caiphus. The palace guards then blind-folded Him and mockingly taunted Him to identify them as they each passed by, spat upon Him, and struck Him in the face.

In the early morning, battered and bruised, dehydrated, and exhausted from a sleepless night, Jesus is taken across the Praetorium of the Fortress Antonia, the seat of government of the Procurator of Judea, Pontius Pilate. You are, of course, familiar with Pilate's action in attempting to pass responsibility to Herod Antipas, the Tetrarch of Judea. Jesus apparently suffered no physical mistreatment at the hands of Herod and was returned to Pilate.

It was then, in response to the cries of the mob, that Pilate ordered Bar-Abbas released and condemned Jesus to scourging and crucifixion. There is much disagreement among authorities about the unusual scourging as a prelude to crucifixion. Most Roman writers from this period do not associate the two. Many scholars believe that Pilate originally ordered Jesus scourged as his full punishment and that the death sentence by crucifixion came only in response to the taunt by the mob that the Procurator was not properly defending Caesar against this pretender who allegedly claimed to be the King of the Jews. Preparations for the scourging were carried



out when the Prisoner was stripped of His clothing and His hands tied to a post above His head. It is doubtful the Romans would have made any attempt to follow the Jewish law in this matter, but the Jews had an ancient law prohibiting more than forty lashes. The Roman legionnaire steps forward with the flagrum (or flagellum) in his hand. This is a short whip consisting of several heavy, leather thongs with two small balls of lead attached near the ends of each. The heavy whip is brought down with full force again and again across Jesus' shoulders, back, and legs.

At first the thongs cut through the skin only. Then, as the blows continue, they cut deeper into the subcutaneous tissues, producing first an oozing of blood from the capillaries and veins of the skin, and finally spurting arterial bleeding from vessels in the underlying muscles. The small balls of lead first produce large, deep bruises which are broken open by subsequent blows. Finally the skin of the back is hanging in long ribbons and the entire area is an unrecognizable mass of torn, bleeding tissue. When it is determined by the centurion in charge that the prisoner is near death, the beating is finally stopped. The half-fainting Jesus is then untied and allowed to slump to the stone pavement, wet with His own blood.

The Roman soldiers see a great joke in this provincial Jew claiming to be king. They throw a robe across His shoulders and place a stick in His hand for a scepter. They still need a crown to make their travesty complete. Flexible branches covered with long thorns (commonly used in bundles for firewood) are plaited into the shape of a crown and this is pressed into His scalp. Again there is copious bleeding, the scalp being one of the most vascular areas of the body.

After mocking Him and striking Him across the face, the soldiers take the stick from His hand and strike Him across the head, driving the thorns deeper into His scalp. Finally, they tire of their sadistic sport and the robe is torn from His back. Already having adhered to the clots of blood and serum in the wounds, its removal causes excruciating pain just as in the careless removal of a surgical bandage, and almost as though He were again being whipped the wounds once more begin to bleed. In deference to Jewish custom, the Romans return His garments. The heavy patibulum of the cross is tied across His shoulders, and the procession of the condemned Christ, two thieves, and the execution detail of Roman soldiers headed by a centurion begins its slow journey along the Via Dolorosa.

In spite of His efforts to walk erect, the weight of the heavy wooden beam, together with the shock produced by copious blood loss, is too much. He stumbles and falls. The rough wood of the beam gouges into the lacerated skin and muscles of the shoulders. He tries to rise, but human muscles have been pushed beyond their endurance. The centurion, anxious to get on with the crucifixion, selects a stalwart North African onlooker, Simon of Cyrene, to carry the cross. Jesus follows, still bleeding and sweating the cold, clammy sweat of shock, until the 650 yard journey from the fortress Antonia to Golgotha is finally completed. Jesus is offered wine mixed with myrrh, a mild analgesic mixture. He refuses to drink. Simon is ordered to place the patibulum on the ground and Jesus quickly thrown backward with His shoulders against the wood. The legionnaire feels for the depression at the front of the wrist. He drives a heavy,



square, wrought-iron nail through the wrist and deep into the wood. Quickly, he moves to the other side and repeats the action, being careful not to pull the arms too tightly, but to allow some flexion and movement. The patibulum is then lifted in place at the top of the stipes and the titulus reading, “Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews,” is nailed in place.

The left foot is now pressed backward against the right foot, and with both feet extended, toes down, a nail is driven through the arch of each, leaving the knees moderately flexed. The Victim is now crucified. As He slowly sags down with more weight on the nails in the wrists, excruciating pain shoots along the fingers and up the arms to explode in the brain — the nails in the wrists are putting pressure on the median nerves.

As He pushes Himself upward to avoid this stretching torment, He places His full weight on the nail through His feet. Again there is the searing agony of the nail tearing through the nerves between the metatarsal bones of the feet. At this point, as the arms fatigue, great waves of cramps sweep over the muscles, knotting them in deep, relentless, throbbing pain. With these cramps comes the inability to push Himself upward. Hanging by his arms, the pectoral muscles are paralyzed and the intercostal muscles are unable to act. Air can be drawn into the lungs, but cannot be exhaled. Jesus fights to raise Himself in order to get even one short breath. Finally, carbon dioxide builds up in the lungs and in the blood stream and the cramps partially subside. Spasmodically, he is able to push Himself upward to exhale and bring in the life-giving oxygen.

It was undoubtedly during these periods that He uttered the seven short sentences recorded:

The first, looking down at the Roman soldiers throwing dice for His seamless garment, “Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.”

The second, to the penitent thief, “[I add, for clarity, as there was no punctuation in the original scripture, “Truly I tell you] Today thou shalt be with me in Paradise.”

The third, looking down at the terrified, grief-stricken adolescent John — the beloved Apostle — he said, “Behold thy mother.” Then, looking to His mother Mary, “Woman behold thy son.”

The fourth cry is from the beginning of the 22nd Psalm, “My God, my God, why has thou forsaken me?”

Jesus experienced hours of limitless pain, cycles of twisting, joint-rending cramps, intermittent partial asphyxiation, searing pain where tissue is torn from His lacerated back as He moves up and down against the rough timber. Then another agony begins -- a terrible crushing pain deep in the chest as the pericardium slowly fills with serum and begins to compress the heart. One



remembers again the 22nd Psalm, the 14th verse: “I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels.”

It is now almost over. The loss of tissue fluids has reached a critical level; the compressed heart is struggling to pump heavy, thick, sluggish blood into the tissue; the tortured lungs are making a frantic effort to gasp in small gulps of air. The markedly dehydrated tissues send their flood of stimuli to the brain. Jesus gasps His fifth cry, “I thirst.” One remembers another verse from the prophetic 22nd Psalm: “My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou has brought me into the dust of death.” A sponge soaked in posca, the cheap, sour wine which is the staple drink of the Roman legionaries, is lifted to His lips. He apparently doesn’t take any of the liquid.

The body of Jesus is now in extremes, and He can feel the chill of death creeping through His tissues. This realization brings out His sixth words, possibly little more than a tortured whisper, “It is finished.” His mission of atonement has completed. Finally He can allow his body to die.

With one last surge of strength, he once again presses His torn feet against the nail, straightens His legs, takes a deeper breath, and utters His seventh and last cry, “Father! Into thy hands I commit my spirit.”

The rest you know. In order that the Sabbath not be profaned, the Jews asked that the condemned men be dispatched and removed from the crosses. The common method of ending a crucifixion was by crurifracture, the breaking of the bones of the legs. This prevented the victim from pushing himself upward; thus the tension could not be relieved from the muscles of the chest and rapid suffocation occurred. The legs of the two thieves were broken, but when the soldiers came to Jesus they saw that this was unnecessary.

Apparently, to make doubly sure of death, the legionnaire drove his lance through the fifth interspace between the ribs, upward through the pericardium and into the heart. The 34th verse of the 19th chapter of the Gospel according to St. John reports: “And immediately there came out blood and water.” That is, there was an escape of water fluid from the sac surrounding the heart, giving postmortem evidence that Our Lord died not the usual crucifixion death by suffocation, but of heart failure (a broken heart) due to shock and constriction of the heart by fluid in the pericardium.

Death by crucifixion was one of the harshest punishments the Romans meted out to anyone. It was considered the worst way to die. Thus, how horrific for anyone to be killed that way, in particular the Son of God! Jesus, we must always remember, came in human flesh like ours. Between the beatings, the scourgings, the nails hammered into His hands and feet, the harrowing weight of His own body tearing at the wounds, the physical pain must have been unbearable. This was harsh, even for the worst of criminals; how unfair, then, that Jesus, innocent of everything, should face such a fate.



Yet, as we know, Christ's physical sufferings were mild in contrast to what was really happening. This was more than just the killing of an innocent man.

What events surrounding the death of Jesus showed that more was going on than most people there understood at the time? What significance can we find in each of these events that can help reveal what happened there?

Matt. 27:45 "From noon until three in the afternoon darkness came over all the land."

Matt. 27:51, 52 "At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook, the rocks split and the tombs broke open. Then bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life. 53 They came out of the tombs after Jesus' resurrection and went into the holy city and appeared to many people"

Mark 15:38 "The curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom."

Clearly, something much more was happening here than just the death, however unfair, of an innocent man. According to Scripture, God's wrath against sin, our sin, was poured out upon Jesus. **Jesus on the cross suffered a righteous God's righteous indignation against sin, the sins of the whole world.** As such, Jesus suffered something deeper, darker, and more painful than any human being could ever know or experience.

I'd like us to consider the above underlined statement. The real punishment for sin is the consequence it brings...."**The wages of sin is death.**" *Romans 6:23*. God was withdrawing. Was God doing this to Jesus? No...As the source of life, God had to withdraw from Jesus to enable him to die, and Jesus had to be separated from his Father for the first time in all eternity. Jesus was receiving the worst Satan could dish out, and the effects of total separation from God with the weight of sin that causes total heartbreak and loss. The Bible even prophecies that we would say God did this to Jesus.

Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, **YET WE CONSIDERED HIM STRICKEN BY GOD, SMITTEN BY HIM, AND AFFLICTED. BUT** he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and **by his wounds we are healed.** We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and **the Lord has laid on him the iniquity [the sin condition] of us all.** Isaiah 53 4-6

THURSDAY

The Suffering God

We are so used to it that it's hard to imagine life any other way. Jesus knew the other way of life. What He left behind to rescue us is beyond our comprehension. What does a minnow know about our life, for a limited example?



Imagine life in heaven, without sin. Consider this partial list:

- A life without any fear or anxiety. Forever safe!
- A pain-free, upgraded body; the ability to see long distances, see microscopically, fly, travel the universe.
- Meet and talk with Jesus and beings from antiquity, listen their stories and what they have learned throughout the ages
- Sing and play music with angels and with Jesus.
- Spend eternity with those we lost here on earth
- The freshness, the views of creative art and the unspoiled beauty of a vast universe

We might as well get used to it: as long as we are here, in this world, we are going to suffer. As fallen creatures, it is our fate. Nothing in the Bible promises us anything different. On the contrary ...

What do the following verses have to tell us about the topic at hand?

Acts 14:22 “We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God”

Phil. 1:29 “It has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him.

2 Tim. 3:12 “In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.”

Yet, in the midst of our suffering, two things we should keep in mind.

First, Christ, our Lord, has suffered worse than any of us ever could. At the cross, He “has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows” (*Isa. 53:4, NKJV*); what we know only as individuals, He suffered corporately, for us all. He who was sinless became “sin for us” (*2 Cor. 5:21*), suffering in a way that we, as sinful creatures, couldn’t begin to imagine.

But second, as we suffer, we should remember the results of Christ’s suffering, that is, what we have been promised through what Christ has done for us.

Read ... What are we promised?

John 10:28 “I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand.”

Romans 6:23 “The gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”



Titus 1:2 “A faith and knowledge resting on the hope of eternal life, which God who does not life, promised before the beginning of time..”

1 John 2:25 “And this is what he promised us – eternal life.”

Whatever our sufferings here, thanks to Jesus, thanks to His bearing in Himself the punishment of our sin, thanks to the great provision of the gospel — that through faith we can stand perfect in Jesus right now — we have the promise of eternal life. We have the promise that because of what Christ has done, because of the fullness and completeness of His perfect life and perfect sacrifice, our existence here, full of pain, disappointment, and loss, is no more than an instant, a flash, here and gone, in contrast to the eternity that awaits us, an eternity in a new heaven and a new earth, one without sin, suffering, and death. And all this is promised to us and made certain for us only because of Christ and the crucible He went into so that one day, coming soon, He would see “the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied” (*Isa. 53:11*).

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Further Thought

Read Ellen G. White, “Gethsemane,” pp. 685-697, and “Calvary,” pp. 741-757, in *The Desire of Ages*.

“Three times has He uttered that prayer. Three times has humanity shrunk from the last, crowning sacrifice. But now the history of the human race comes up before the world’s Redeemer. He sees that the transgressors of the law, if left to themselves, must perish. He sees the helplessness of man. He sees the power of sin. The woes and lamentations of a doomed world rise before Him. He beholds its impending fate, and **His decision is made. He will save man at any cost to Himself.** He accepts His baptism of blood, that through Him perishing millions may gain everlasting life. He has left the courts of heaven, where all is purity, happiness, and glory, to save the one lost sheep, the one world that has fallen by transgression. And **He will not turn from His mission.** He will become the propitiation of a race that has willed to sin. His prayer now breathes only submission: ‘If this cup may not pass away from Me, except I drink it, Thy will be done.’ — Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 690, 693.

Will we turn from our mission? What does Satan use to turn us from our mission?

Too involved/busy with sports, politics, work, entertainment, travel, etc.

The good can become the enemy of the best!

How does it help us in our own sufferings, this knowledge that God Himself, in the person of Christ, suffered more than any of us ever could? What should the sufferings of Christ in our behalf mean to us? What comfort can we draw from this amazing truth? As you think about your answer, keep in mind the following statement from Ellen G. White: “All the suffering which is the result of sin was poured into the bosom of the sinless Son of God.” — *Selected Messages*, book 3, p. 129.



Remember 1 Peter 5:8, “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour” (NKJV).

Satan sought to devour God and take His place, by killing Jesus, now he is after each of US, but with 2,000 more years of practice and experience. If he can't go, he certainly doesn't want you to!

When I have been in very low places in my life, the stories of Job and Joseph, Moses and Jesus are such an encouragement. What do you do when you are at a low point?

Don't waste Christ's sacrifice to create your cure.

- It's not enough to believe God is good.
- It's not enough to believe Christ created the cure.
- If Satan can just separate you from God and keep you from taking the cure...he wins and you lose eternal life in a vast, sinless universe.

Remain watchful by praying and reading the Bible every day, but read it to:

- find the puzzle pieces that God put in there for you
- get to know your maker and savior. Can you imagine that the smartest, most powerful and most loving being in the universe wants to be your person friend and for you to communicate with each other?
- find your mission and purpose
- be disciplined and corrected.

“Search the scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life.” You will have a conflict to be right. I Don't command you to read the Bible—I never shall. I want you to read the Bible because you love it, not because you are driven to it, for then it will be an unpleasant task. But if you neglect the reading of the Bible, you will lose your love for it. Those who love the word of God are those who read it most. By reading and searching out scripture references, you will see the chain of truth, and will see new beauties in the word of God. While you make the Scriptures more your study, and become more familiar with them, you will be better fortified against the temptations of Satan. When inclined to speak, or act, wrong, some scripture will come to arrest you, and turn you right. It is not natural for the heart to love the Bible; but when it is renewed by grace, then the mind will feast upon the rich truths and promises contained in the word of God.

An Appeal to the Youth, pg 79.2