

In the Crucible with Christ

Seeing the Invisible

Lesson #8 for August 20, 2022

Scriptures: Romans 8:28-39; John 14:1-14; Ephesians 1:18-23; Isaiah 40:27-31; Hebrews 11:1,27.

1. Do you find it to be challenging to worship something you cannot see? That is one of the problems that the ancient Israelites had. **They wanted something they could see and handle and touch, and especially something that they could manipulate themselves!** But, **God is beyond our manipulation.**

Hebrews 11:1,27: ¹To have faith is to be sure of the things we hope for, to be certain of **the things we cannot see**....

²⁷It was faith that made Moses leave Egypt without being afraid of the king's anger. **As though he saw the invisible God**, he refused to turn back.—American Bible Society. (1992). *The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation** (2nd ed., Hebrews 11:1,27). New York: American Bible Society [abbreviated as *Good News Bible*].^{†‡}

[From the Bible study guide=BSG:] It is even more challenging to realize that we are called to see “him who is invisible” not simply when times are good but especially when everything is going wrong. For this we need faith, a Christlike faith that must be shaped by the truth about God and God's kingdom. The truth about our Father's goodness, the power in the name of Jesus, the power of the Resurrection, and the compassion of God are essential truths that will enable us to stand strong when we are in the crucible and may be tempted to doubt everything.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Sabbath Afternoon, August 13.[‡]

2. How would you define *faith*? A biblical definition of *faith* stated so well so many times by one of God's best modern friends, Dr. A. Graham Maxwell, is as follows:

Faith is [just] a word we use to denote a relationship with God as with a Person well known. The better we know Him, the better this relationship may be. [We cannot say *will be* because we know of the story of Lucifer.]

Faith implies an attitude toward God of love, trust, and deep admiration. It means having enough confidence in Him, based upon the more than adequate evidence revealed, to be willing to believe whatever He says [as soon as we are sure that He is the One who has said it], to accept whatever He offers [as soon as we are sure that He is the One who is offering it], and to do whatever He wishes [as soon as we are sure He is the One who wishes it]—without reservation—for the rest of eternity.

Anyone who has such faith is perfectly safe to save. This is why faith is the only requirement for heaven. [Acts 16:31]

[**Faith** also means that like Abraham, Job, and Moses, God's friends, we know God well enough to reverently ask Him, “Why?”]—A. Graham

Maxwell, *You Can Trust the Bible* 81.^{††} [Content in brackets is added based on frequent statements by Dr. Maxwell in his classes.][‡]

3. The truth about God in contrast to the truth about Satan is the basis of the great controversy. Our faith is based on knowing the truth about God.
4. Does God sometimes seem to be far away? How many times do you wish God would do something for you or for others and you know He is capable of doing it, but, it does not happen? It may be something that is good like healing someone's cancer, and we are certain that God would love to do that. Or, maybe something in our experience seems to be in contradiction to God's goodness.

[BSG:] If something looks good or feels good or sounds good or tastes good, then it must be good. And so we get angry with God when we can't have it.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Sunday, August 14.[‡]

5. So, how does faith come into play in such situations? Are we tempted to doubt God's goodness? Look at Romans 8:26-39 where we are told in unquestionable language that all three Members of the Godhead are on our side and working for us! Nothing can separate us from Them except our own choice.

Romans 8:26-39: Meanwhile, the moment we get tired in the waiting, God's Spirit is right alongside helping us along. If we don't know how or what to pray, it doesn't matter. He does our praying in and for us, making prayer out of our wordless sighs, our aching groans. He knows us far better than we know ourselves, knows our pregnant condition, and keeps us present before God. That's why we can be so sure that every detail in our lives of love for God is worked into something good.

²⁹⁻³⁰ God knew what he was doing from the very beginning. He decided from the outset to shape the lives of those who love him along the same lines as the life of his Son. The Son stands first in the line of humanity he restored. We see the original and intended shape of our lives there in him. After God made that decision of what his children should be like, he followed it up by calling people by name. After he called them by name, he set them on a solid basis with himself. And then, after getting them established, he stayed with them to the end, gloriously completing what he had begun.

³¹⁻³⁹ So, what do you think? With God on our side like this, how can we lose? If God didn't hesitate to put everything on the line for us, embracing our condition and exposing himself to the worst by sending his own Son, is there anything else he wouldn't gladly and freely do for us? And who would dare tangle with God by messing with one of God's chosen? Who would dare even to point a finger? The One who died for us—who was raised to life for us!—is in the presence of God at this very moment sticking up for us. Do you think anyone is going to be able to drive a wedge between us and Christ's love for us? There is no way! Not trouble, not hard times, not hatred, not hunger, not homelessness, not bullying threats, not backstabbing, not even the worst sins listed in Scripture:

They kill us in cold blood because they hate you.

We're sitting ducks; they pick us off one by one.

None of this fazes us because Jesus loves us. I'm absolutely convinced that nothing—nothing living or dead, angelic or demonic, today or tomorrow, high or low, thinkable or unthinkable—absolutely *nothing* can get between us and God's love because of the way that Jesus our Master has embraced us.—Peterson, E. H. (2005). *The Message: the Bible in Contemporary Language** (Romans 8:26-39). Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress.§

6. After God sent His Son at the risk of losing the great controversy and the trust of the entire universe to try to win us back, is it possible that He could ever be mean and stingy? What should we do when we are tempted to doubt God's trust and love and goodness? Of course, the first choice should be to think about what God has already done for us. But, more than that, we have certain promises from Jesus Himself.

John 14:14: [Jesus said:] ¹³ “And I will do whatever you ask for in my name, so that the Father's glory will be shown through the Son. ¹⁴**If you ask me for anything in my name, I will do it.**”—*Good News Bible*.*†‡

The key to understanding this verse are the words *in my name*. What Jesus was saying was that if we have come to know Him well enough to know what His ultimate will for us is—that is, what is, ultimately, best for us—and we ask for that, God will do it at the right time.

7. These words were spoken at a time when Jesus was preparing His disciples for His departure. They did not understand the words, and they had no idea what was implied. So, Jesus assured them. See **John 14:1-14**.

[From the writings of Ellen G. White=EGW:] **Nothing is apparently more helpless, yet really more invincible, than the soul that feels its nothingness and relies wholly on the merits of the Saviour. God would send every angel in heaven to the aid of such a one, rather than allow him to be overcome.**—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*,* vol. 7, 17.3.†‡

8. Jesus was dying in the garden of Gethsemane as God withdrew His Spirit from Him; and yet, He prayed faithfully. But, notice that God sent an angel to “strengthen” or “resuscitate” Jesus or He would have died right there in the garden because of the separation caused by sin. Satan had not succeeded in getting Jesus to sin; he wanted more time!

Luke 22:43: An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him.—*Good News Bible*.*

9. Imagine yourself in the upper room with the disciples on that Thursday night before the crucifixion. Then, read John 14:1-14. Try to imagine how you would have been involved, and how you have responded.
10. When considering God's power, we need to remember that He created the entire universe. He created every living being and everything else. We can absolutely trust Him to re-create us at the second coming. Satan had claimed that he was equal with Christ and should be treated as such. The life, death, and resurrection of Jesus answered the

questions and refuted the allegations of Satan in the great controversy. The fact that Christ rose from the grave in His own power was the ultimate proof that Christ was more than a creature; He was God, a Creator, and was not like Satan who is a mere creature! When He died and then rose on Sunday morning, the great controversy was won.

[EGW:] When the voice of the mighty angel was heard at Christ's tomb, saying, Thy Father calls Thee, **the Saviour came forth from the grave by the life that was in Himself**. Now was proved the truth of His words, "I lay down My life, that I might take it again.... I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." Now was fulfilled the prophecy He had spoken to the priests and rulers, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." John 10:17, 18; 2:19.—Ellen G. White, *Desire of Ages** 785.2.††
[Since he was/is a mere creature, Satan could never do that!][‡]

11. Salvation is not based on some legal arrangement. It is based on a personal relationship with God that transforms us into His image.

2 Corinthians 3:18: All of us, then, **reflect the glory of the Lord** with uncovered faces; and that same glory, coming from the Lord, who is **the Spirit, transforms us into his likeness in an ever greater degree of glory**.—*Good News Bible*.*†

12. Remember that God plans to use His power of resurrection on us unless we are still alive at His second coming!
13. In Ephesians 1:18-23, Paul talked about the power of God. What does this text teach us about the power of the resurrection? What hope and promises for yourself can you find in these verses?

Ephesians 1:18-23:¹⁸I ask that your minds may be opened to see his light, so that you will know what is the hope to which he has called you, how rich are the wonderful blessings he promises his people, ¹⁹and how very great is his power at work in us who believe. **This power working in us is the same as the mighty strength ²⁰which he used when he raised Christ from death and seated him at his right side in the heavenly world.** ²¹Christ rules there above all heavenly rulers, authorities, powers, and lords; he has a title superior to all titles of authority in this world and in the next. ²²God put all things under Christ's feet and gave him to the church as supreme Lord over all things. [This will happen at Jesus's third coming.] ²³The church is Christ's body, the completion of him who himself completes all things everywhere.—*Good News Bible*.*††

14. God has promised us that He will give us divine power if we will hold fast our faith in Him.

2 Peter 1:4: In this way he has given us the very great and precious gifts he promised, so that by means of these gifts you may escape from the destructive lust that is in the world, and **may come to share the divine nature**.—*Good News Bible*.*†

[EGW:] "The prince of this world cometh," said Jesus, "and hath nothing in Me." John 14:30. There was in Him nothing that responded to Satan's

sophistry. He did not consent to sin. Not even by a thought did He yield to temptation. **So it may be with us.** Christ's humanity was united with divinity; He was fitted for the conflict by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. **And He came to make us partakers of the divine nature.** So long as we are united to Him by faith, sin has no more dominion over us. God reaches for the hand of faith in us to direct it to lay fast hold upon the divinity of Christ, that we may attain to perfection of character.—Ellen G. White, *Desire of Ages** 123.3.†‡

15. To become *partakers of the divine nature* is a major theme in the writings of Ellen White. She uses that exact expression 875 times in her writings!
16. Paul was trying to encourage us to understand that even if we should die,—whether a martyr's death or not—that is not the end. We have the hope of the resurrection, and we know that God has the power to raise us to life.
17. And that power, **the power of creation and re-creation**, will continue to rule the universe for all eternity. So, why do we worry?

[BSG:] There is a plaque that some people have in their homes that reads "Why pray when you can worry?" It makes us laugh because we know how often we worry rather than come to God and give Him our concerns.

Someone once said that when our life becomes all tied up, we should give it to God and let Him untie the knots. How God must long to do this for us. Yet, amazingly, we manage to hang on to our problems until we are about to snap. Why do we wait until we are desperate before we go to the Lord?—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Wednesday, August 17.‡

18. So, what should we do when we are faced with anxieties, worries, doubts, and other such problems?

Psalms 55:22: Leave your troubles with the LORD,
and he will defend you;
he never lets honest people be defeated.—*Good News Bible*.*

See also **Matthew 6:25-34**.

19. How are we supposed to understand Peter's words as below? How can we teach our young people to trust in God and allow Him to help them through all their troubles?

1 Peter 5:7: Leave all your worries with him, because he cares for you.—*Good News Bible*.*

This is a very simple text. There is no secret hidden in it; it means exactly what it says. *To cast* means to do just that, to throw, to give away, so that what is causing the aching and the concern no longer has any connection to you. But, of course, our burdens are not thrown just anywhere. Our worries do not disappear into a void. They are given to our Father in heaven who has promised to sort them out. That is what Jesus is telling us in the verses in Matthew. The problem in doing this is not that it is hard; rather, it is that it just seems too easy, too good to be true.

20. So, why don't we just make these claims upon God every day and live a trouble-free life?

21. First of all, that is exactly what the Devil is trying to prevent in our lives! So, why do we hang onto our troubles and our anxieties? Do we actually feel that we can sort them out better than anyone else can? Even God?

[BSG:] What are things that cause you worry now? However legitimate they are, however troublesome they are, is there anything too hard for the Lord? **Maybe our biggest problem is that even though we believe that God knows about it and can fix it, we don't believe that He will resolve it the way we would like it resolved.** Dwell on that last point and ask yourself how true it is in your own life.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Wednesday, August 17.[†]

22. Try to imagine the emotions and challenges to the thinking of the Jewish people in Babylonian captivity. Many years earlier, Isaiah had written for their benefit—and for ours:

Isaiah 40:11: He will take care of his flock like a shepherd;
he will gather the lambs together
and carry them in his arms;
he will gently lead their mothers.—*Good News Bible.**

23. Isaiah understood the superiority of Israel's God, *YAHWEH*, over all false gods.

Isaiah 40:27-31: ²⁷Israel, why then do you complain
that the LORD doesn't know your troubles
or care if you suffer injustice?
²⁸Don't you know? Haven't you heard?
The LORD is the everlasting God;
he created all the world.
He never grows tired or weary.
No one understands his thoughts.
²⁹He strengthens those who are weak and tired.
³⁰Even those who are young grow weak;
young people can fall exhausted.
³¹But those who trust in the LORD for help
will find their strength renewed.
They will rise on wings like eagles;
they will run and not get weary;
they will walk and not grow weak.—*Good News Bible.**

24. Think about the experience of the children of Israel in the days of **Esther**. It is interesting to notice that the book of Esther does not mention the name of God even once. Why do you think that is? And yet, by how the story worked out, we know that God was working. Esther finally approached the king, having told her cousin that "if I perish, I perish."

25. The same God who saved His chosen ones in the story of Esther will save them again in the final crisis.

Revelation 13:15: The second beast was allowed to breathe life into the image of the first beast, so that the image could talk and **put to death all those who would not worship it.**—*Good News Bible.*†*

[EGW:] Has not God said He would give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him? And is not this Spirit a real, true actual guide? Some men seem afraid to take God at His word as though it would be presumption in them. They pray for the Lord to teach us and yet are afraid to credit the pledged word of God and believe we have been taught of Him. So long as we come to our heavenly Father humbly and with a spirit to be taught, willing and anxious to learn, why should we doubt God's fulfillment of His own promise. You must not for a moment doubt Him and dishonor Him thereby. When you have sought to know His will, your part in the operation with God is to believe that you will be led and guided and blessed in the doing of His will. We may mistrust ourselves lest we misinterpret His teachings, but make even this a subject of prayer, and trust Him, still trust Him to the uttermost, that His Holy Spirit will lead you to interpret aright His plans and the working of His providence.—Ellen G. White, Letter 35, 1893 [To Brother and Sister Kellogg, February 19, 1893.] in *Manuscript Releases*,* vol. 6, 225.1 [Manuscript Release Number 385].[‡] *SDA Bible Commentary*,* vol. 3, 1155.7[€]; *You Shall Receive Power** 114.3-4.[¶]

[EGW:] **Faith grows strong by coming in conflict with doubts and opposing influences. The experience gained in these trials is of more value than the most costly jewels.**—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*,* vol. 3, 555.2.[‡]

26. How many things do you believe in that you cannot see? What about all the events in history which you were not there to see? Think of the billions of things that are “visible” under various kinds of microscopes which we could never see with our own eyes. Think about the galaxies and stars that are way beyond our human vision but we believe they exist after seeing them through the Hubble or Webb or some other such telescope.
27. Does faith actually grow stronger as it is challenged and we trust in God?
28. How much evidence do we have for the truthfulness of the Bible? For the character of God? For the power of God?

[BSG:] Our faith grows out of the evidence of God's promises and fulfilled prophecies; evidence of God's Creation; evidence of God's providence and care for us in our personal or collective histories; evidence of His love for us in the incarnation of the Son when God became flesh and walked with us and died in our place (*John 1:1–3, 14; John 3:16, 36*); and evidence that, in the resurrection of Christ, He has power over evil, sin, suffering, and death (*Eph. 1:18–21*). By this evidence the biblical believer “sees” the invisible by faith.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 106.^{‡§}

1 Corinthians 13:13: Meanwhile these three remain: faith, hope, and love; and the greatest of these is love.—*Good News Bible*.*

Hebrews 11:6: No one can please God without faith, for whoever comes to God must have faith that God exists and rewards those who seek him.—*Good News Bible*.*

John 3:16: [Jesus said:] “For God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not die but have eternal life.”—Good News Bible.*†

Ephesians 1:18-21: [See #13 above.]‡

29. This lesson has focused on two major themes:

1. Doubt arises when we do not trust God for the best solution to our problems.
2. The greatest foundation for our faith is Christ, His incarnation, sacrifice for us, and resurrection. Jesus is God’s evidence that He can carry our sin, suffering, and death upon Himself so that we may overcome our crucibles.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 106.

30. Jacob had two visions of God that we know about. The first was on his way to Haran, while running from Esau, when he slept in the wilderness with a rock for a pillow and saw the ladder reaching between earth and heaven.

31. His second vision occurred when he actually struggled with Jesus Christ Himself. See the story in Genesis 32. After that struggle, “Jacob said, ‘**I have seen God face to face.**’” (Genesis 32:30, *GNB**) Was that a very physical struggle?

32. The other person in the Bible who is described as having seen God “face to face” was Moses. Look at the following passages.

Exodus 33:11: **The LORD would speak with Moses face to face, just as someone speaks with a friend.**—*Good News Bible.*†*

Numbers 12:8: [The LORD said:] “**So I speak to him face to face, clearly and not in riddles; he has even seen my form!**”—*Good News Bible.*††*

Deuteronomy 34:10: **There has never been a prophet in Israel like Moses; the LORD spoke with him face to face.**—*Good News Bible.*†*

33. **Would you call the Sinai experience a face-to-face encounter with God?**

Deuteronomy 5:4: [Moses said to Israel:] “**There on the mountain the LORD spoke to you [Israel] face-to-face from the fire.**”—*Good News Bible.*††*

Exodus 33:18-23: Then Moses requested, “Please, let me see the dazzling light of your presence.”

¹⁹ The LORD answered, “I will make all my splendour pass before you and in your presence I will pronounce my sacred name. I am the LORD, and I show compassion and pity on those I choose. ²⁰**I will not let you see my face, because no one can see me and stay alive,** ²¹but here is a place beside me where you can stand on a rock. ²²When the dazzling light of my presence passes by, I will put you in an opening in the rock and cover you with my hand until I have passed by. ²³Then I will take my hand away, and you will see my back but not my face.”—*Good News Bible.*†*

34. We do not know exactly how these “face-to-face” encounters actually took place. Did Jesus Christ appear in Human form? He certainly did that during His life on this earth. Or, did He appear only in vision? He certainly did that on numerous occasions to the prophets and apostles down through the generations. Could God appear to us in our day?

[BSG:] We cannot see God as He is in His divine nature. We are in the universe; God is with us, but He also is transcendent, or beyond our reality. We are finite; God is infinite. Moreover, we are sinful; God is holy. That is why we simply cannot see God as He is in Himself. But we can see what and how He chooses to reveal Himself to us. What He reveals to us is His glory in the universe, which is His creation and the domain of His kingdom. He reveals His love and care for us through His revelations and providence. For this reason, in Hebrews 11:1 and 6, the apostle Paul concludes that in the context of sin, faith is “seeing” the evidence and prophetic revelations of God’s existence and presence with us. Love, for instance, is materially “unseen,” but it is evident in the manifestation of the person who loves us.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 107.‡

35. The apostle John reassured us about the reality of the incarnation in the first chapter of 1 John. He said, Jesus was here; we saw Him; we heard Him; we touched Him.

36. And back in the Old Testament, David said in Psalm 34:7-8:

Psalm 34:7-8: ⁷ His angel guards those who honour the LORD and rescues them from danger.

⁸ Find out for yourself how good the LORD is.

Happy are those who find safety with him.—*Good News Bible*.*

37. Jesus Himself promised us that He would send the Holy Spirit to be with us.

John 14:16-18: ¹⁶“I will ask the Father, and **he will give you another Helper**, who will stay with you for ever. [sic] ¹⁷He is the Spirit who reveals the truth about God. The world cannot receive him, because it cannot see him or know him. But you know him, because he remains with you and is in you.

¹⁸ “When I go, you will not be left all alone; I will come back to you.”—*Good News Bible*.*††

John 16:14: “He will give me glory, because he will take what I say and tell it to you.”—*Good News Bible*.*

38. What is the role of the resurrection in our understanding of salvation? If Jesus had not risen from the grave, how will we be changed?

1 Corinthians 15:12-17: ¹² Now, since our message is that Christ has been raised from death, how can some of you say that the dead will not be raised to life? ¹³If that is true, it means that Christ was not raised; ¹⁴and if Christ has not been raised from death, then we have nothing to preach and you have nothing to believe. ¹⁵More than that, we are shown to be lying about God, because we said that he raised Christ from death—but if it is true that the dead are not raised to life, then he did not raise Christ. ¹⁶For if the dead are not raised, neither has Christ been raised. ¹⁷And **if Christ has not been raised, then your faith is a delusion and you are still lost in your sins.**—*Good News Bible*.*†

39. We sometimes wonder why God allows such terrible things to happen to some of us, even allowing some to die. But, God can allow that because He also has the power to resurrect

them. In fact, He will resurrect everyone who has ever lived, either at the second coming or the third coming; and prior to that, each one will be judged faithfully according to what s/he believed and thought and practiced in his/her life. **We will all be judged fairly.**

40. **It is hard for us to see the big picture.** That is why it is so important for us to remind ourselves of the great controversy as depicted in Revelation 12:7-12 from its beginning in the courts of heaven before this world was created and not limit our understanding to our present time, or even the history of humanity on this earth. God sees our very brief lives on this earth as a very short interlude in His plan for us to live forever. If He allows us to die, that is just a temporary sleep until He resurrects us again. Notice these words:

[BSG:] **However, this argument applies to God only because He alone holds the power of resurrection.** As no one in the universe, apart from God, possesses the power of creation and resurrection, no other being in the world can allow people to die or kill them and be justified in the allowance of such horrific acts. Hence, the prohibition of the sixth commandment for the human race (*Exod. 20:13*). For a good synthesis on the importance of resurrection for the Christian faith, see Josh McDowell, "Support of Deity: The Resurrection—Hoax or History," *The New Evidence That Demands a Verdict* (Nashville, TN: Nelson, 1999), chap. 9, pp. 203-284.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 109.^{†‡§}

41. How have you seen God actively working in your life? As you review those events, do they strengthen your faith? How do you think you will survive in the time of trouble when Satan is absolutely determined to destroy every one of God's followers? He will even finally manage to guide the passage of a worldwide law demanding that all who are on God's side be killed. (Revelation 13:15)
42. Do you look forward to living in those times?

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