

In the Crucible with Christ

Extreme Heat

Lesson #5 for July 30, 2022

Scriptures: Genesis 22; Hosea 2:1-12; Job 1:6-2:10; 2 Corinthians 11:23-29; Isaiah 43:1-7; 53:10.

1. As we continue our series, consider this:

[From the Bible study guide=BSG:] As the wife of the famous Christian writer C. S. Lewis was dying, Lewis wrote, “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—[as quoted in *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Sabbath Afternoon, July 23].^{†‡§} [Our picture or understanding of God is crucial!][‡]

2. What is our picture of God? How should we respond when things get very difficult? Discouraged? Or, even desperate? What kind of crucibles would God place us in? What kind of trouble will we face when the time of trouble comes?

[BSG:] When things become really painful, some of us reject God completely. For others, like Lewis, there is the temptation to change our view of God and imagine all sorts of bad things about Him. The question is, Just how hot can it get [in the crucible]? 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” (*Rom. 8:29, NIV*)?—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Sabbath Afternoon, July 23.^{‡§}

3. God has created each one of us as His child. He regards even Satan as His child, His creature. He loves each one of us. So, why is it necessary for us to go through hard times on this earth to prepare us for a universe without sin or hardship?
4. The prime example in this lesson is the story of Abraham, as recorded in Genesis 22, taking his son to Mount Moriah and preparing to offer him as a sacrifice to God.

Genesis 22:1-8: ¹Some time later **God tested Abraham**; he called to him, “Abraham!” And Abraham answered, “Yes, here I am!”

² **“Take your son,” God said, “your only son, Isaac, whom you love so much, and go to the land of Moriah. There on a mountain that I will show you, offer him as a sacrifice to me.”**

³ Early the next morning Abraham cut some wood for the sacrifice, loaded his donkey, and took Isaac and two servants with him. They started out for the place that God had told him about. ⁴**On the third day Abraham saw the place in the distance.** [How did he know it was “the place”?] ⁵Then he said to the servants, “Stay here with the donkey. The boy and I will go over there and worship, and then **we** will come back to you.”

⁶ Abraham made Isaac carry the wood for the sacrifice, and he himself carried a knife and live coals for starting the fire. As they walked along together, ⁷Isaac said, “Father!”

He answered, “Yes, my son?”

Isaac asked, “**I see that you have the coals and the wood, but where is the lamb for the sacrifice?**”

⁸ Abraham answered, “**God himself will provide one.**” And the two of them walked on together.—American Bible Society. (1992). *The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation** (2nd ed., Genesis 22:1-8). New York: American Bible Society [abbreviated as *Good News Bible*].^{†‡}

5. Didn't anyone ask about the lamb before they left home? It is hard for us with our morals as Christians to even imagine God asking Abraham to make such a sacrifice. In Abraham's day, this sacrifice—a whole burnt offering—would have been called a *holocaust*.
6. As for the whole experience of Abraham, God needed to demonstrate some important principles to the onlooking universe in answer to some of Satan's accusations and questions that the Devil had raised about God and also questions about Abraham.
7. It is clear that God knew exactly what was going to happen all the way through to the end of this experience. So, why was it necessary? Did the angels know? There are several aspects we need to look at very carefully: (1) How did this experience impact Abraham and his faith? (2) How did Isaac respond? And how did it impact his faith? (3) What were/are all the people of Israel as well as all the Christians in our day supposed to learn from this story? and (4) What was the entire onlooking universe supposed to learn? Let us look at an extensive explanation of this experience given by Ellen G. White.

[From the writings of Ellen G. White=EGW:] **The agony which he [Abraham] endured during the dark days of that fearful trial was permitted that he might understand from his own experience something of the greatness of the sacrifice made by the infinite God for man's redemption.** No other test could have caused Abraham such torture of soul as did the offering of his son. God gave His Son to a death of agony and shame. The angels who witnessed the humiliation and soul anguish of the Son of God were not permitted to interpose, as in the case of Isaac. There was no voice to cry, “It is enough.” To save the fallen race, the King of glory yielded up His life. What stronger proof can be given of the infinite compassion and love of God? “He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?” Romans 8:32.

The sacrifice required of Abraham was not alone for his own good, nor solely for the benefit of succeeding generations; but it was also for the instruction of the sinless intelligences of heaven and of other worlds. The field of the controversy between Christ and Satan—the field on which the plan of redemption is wrought out—is the lesson book of the universe. **Because Abraham had shown a lack of faith in God's promises, Satan had accused him before the angels and before God of having failed to comply with the conditions of the covenant, and as unworthy of its blessings.** God desired to prove the loyalty of His servant before all

heaven, to demonstrate that nothing less than perfect obedience can be accepted, and to open more fully before them the plan of salvation....

It had been difficult even for the angels to grasp the mystery of redemption—to comprehend that the Commander of heaven, the Son of God, must die for guilty man. **When the command was given to Abraham to offer up his son, the interest of all heavenly beings was enlisted.** With intense earnestness they watched each step in the fulfillment of this command. When to Isaac's question, "Where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" Abraham made answer, "**God will provide Himself a lamb,**" and when the father's hand was stayed as he was about to slay his son, and the ram which God had provided was offered in the place of Isaac—then light was shed upon the mystery of redemption, and **even the angels understood more clearly the wonderful provision that God had made for man's salvation.** 1 Peter 1:12.—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets** 154.2-155.2.†‡

8. Was God being honest with Abraham when He told him to take his son to Mount Moriah and sacrifice him? **Does God ever ask us to do things that He does not really intend for us to do?** Does He ask us to go to a place to which He never intends for us to go? Is it the actual action that is important? Or, the lesson that God wants to teach us?
9. **Based on what we read from Ellen White, the most important part of this whole story was the education of the onlooking universe.** There are many aspects of the scriptural story that follow this theme.

[EGW:] **But the plan of redemption had a yet broader and deeper purpose than the salvation of man. It was not for this alone that Christ came to the earth; it was not merely that the inhabitants of this little world might regard the law of God as it should be regarded; but it was to vindicate the character of God before the universe.** To this result of His great sacrifice—its influence upon the intelligences of other worlds, as well as upon man—the Saviour looked forward when just before His crucifixion He said: "Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, **will draw all unto Me.**" John 12:31, 32. [Notice that Ellen White wrote, "... Will draw all unto Me" rather than "... Will draw all *men* unto me" as in the *KJV*, thus including the entire onlooking universe by leaving out the added word, *men*.] The act of Christ in dying for the salvation of man would not only make heaven accessible to men, but before all the universe it would justify God and His Son in their dealing with the rebellion of Satan. It would establish the perpetuity of the law of God and would reveal the nature and the results of sin.—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets** 68.2-69.0. [1890]†§

10. One of the questions that should come to our minds almost immediately is: **How did Abraham know that it was God speaking to him and not just a bad dream?** Of course, we should ask how are we to know if God is speaking to us? Abraham had no prophet to guide him, no pastor, no Sabbath school class, no church, no fellow Christians to help him. When we think God may be talking to us, are there ways to be sure?

11. Another very interesting story in Scripture on the topic of “extreme heat” is the story of Hosea. What does God want us to learn from that story?

Hosea 1:2-8: ² When the LORD first spoke to Israel through Hosea, he said to Hosea, “Go and get married; **your wife will be unfaithful, and your children will be just like her. In the same way, my people have left me and become unfaithful.**”

³ So Hosea married a woman named Gomer, the daughter of Diblaim. After the birth of their first child, a son, ⁴the LORD said to Hosea, “**Name him ‘Jezreel’**, [*sic*] because it will not be long before I punish the king of Israel for the murders that his ancestor Jehu committed at Jezreel. I am going to put an end to Jehu’s dynasty. ⁵And in the Valley of Jezreel I will at that time destroy Israel’s military power.”

⁶ Gomer had a second child—this time it was a daughter. The LORD said to Hosea, “**Name her ‘Unloved’**, [*sic*] because I will no longer show love to the people of Israel or forgive them. ⁷But to the people of Judah I will show love. I, the LORD their God, will save them, but I will not do it by war—with swords or bows and arrows or with horses and horsemen.”

⁸ After Gomer had weaned her daughter, she became pregnant again and had another son. ⁹The LORD said to Hosea, “**Name him ‘Not-my-People’**, [*sic*] **because the people of Israel are not my people, and I am not their God.**”—*Good News Bible*. *††

12. **Would God really ask one of His faithful prophets to marry a known prostitute? Or, a woman God knew would become a prostitute?**
13. In light of this story, what was about to happen to the ten northern tribes of Israel? Why did God keep working with the descendants of Abraham? Weren’t they just as guilty as a prostitute? They were involved in fertility-cult religions and were ignoring the true God.

Hosea 2:1-13: ¹ So call your fellow-Israelites “God’s People” and “Loved-by-the-Lord”. [*sic*]

² My children, plead with your mother—though she is no longer a wife to me, and I am no longer her husband. **Plead with her to stop her adultery and prostitution.** ³If she does not, I will strip her as naked as she was on the day she was born. I will make her like a dry and barren land, and she will die of thirst. ⁴⁻⁵I will not show mercy to her children; they are the children of a shameless prostitute. She herself said, “I will go to my lovers—they give me food and water, wool and linen, olive oil and wine.”

⁶ So I am going to fence her in with thorn bushes and build a wall to block her way. ⁷She will run after her lovers but will not catch them. She will look for them but will not find them. **Then she will say, “I am going back to my first husband—I was better off then than I am now.”**

⁸ She would never acknowledge that I am the one who gave her the corn, the wine, the olive oil, and all the silver and gold that she used in the worship of Baal. ⁹So at harvest time I will take back my gifts of corn and wine, and will take away the wool and the linen I gave her for clothing. ¹⁰I will strip her naked in front of her lovers, and no one will be able to save her from my

power. ¹¹I will put an end to all her festivities—her annual and monthly festivals and her Sabbath celebrations—all her religious meetings. ¹²I will destroy her grapevines and her fig trees, which she said her lovers gave her for serving them. I will turn her vineyards and orchards into a wilderness; wild animals will destroy them. ¹³I will punish her for the times that she forgot me when she burnt incense to Baal and put on her jewellery [*sic*] to go chasing after her lovers. The LORD has spoken.—*Good News Bible*.*††

14. And what about us? Is God working with us because we are such promising candidates? Do we always recognize God's hand as He works in our day? When apparently impossible blockades are in our way or big difficulties obstruct our plans, do we assume that God has nothing to do with them? How should we respond when we think maybe God is involved, but we do not like what He is doing?

15. God continued to speak about Hosea and the people among whom he was living.

Hosea 2:15-23: ¹⁵ **She will respond to me there as she did when she was young, when she came from Egypt. ¹⁶Then once again she will call me her husband—she will no longer call me her Baal. ¹⁷I will never let her speak the name of Baal again....**

¹⁹ **Israel, I will make you my wife;**

I will be true and faithful;...

²³ **I will establish my people in the land and make them prosper.**

I will show love to those who were called “Unloved”, [*sic*]

and to those who were called “Not-my-People”

I will say, “You are my people,”

and they will answer, “You are our God.”—*Good News Bible*.*††

16. A short time later, the people of Israel were scattered throughout Assyria. Could that be our experience?

17. Another example that we need to consider when talking about people who went through difficult times in the Bible is, of course, the story of Job. What was the cause of Job's suffering? Was it God? Was it chance? Was it Satan?

Job 1:6-2:10: ⁶ **When the day came for the heavenly beings to appear before the LORD, [How often do they meet?] Satan was there among them. ⁷The LORD asked him, “What have you been doing?”**

Satan answered, “I have been walking here and there, roaming round the earth.”

⁸ **“Did you notice my servant Job?”** the LORD asked. “There is no one on earth as faithful and good as he is. He worships me and is careful not to do anything evil.” [Do you think Satan wanted to talk about Job? No!]

⁹ Satan replied, **“Would Job worship you if he got nothing out of it?**

¹⁰You have always protected him and his family and everything he owns. You bless everything he does, and you have given him enough cattle to fill the whole country. ¹¹But now suppose you take away everything he has—he will curse you to your face!”

¹² “All right,” the LORD said to Satan, “**everything he has is in your power, but you must not hurt Job himself.**” So Satan left....

[All of Job’s wealth including all his animals, all his workers, and all his children were destroyed by the Devil—with God’s permission!]

²⁰ **Then Job stood up and tore his clothes in grief.** He shaved his head and threw himself face downwards on the ground. ²¹He said, “I was born with nothing, and I will die with nothing. The LORD gave, and now he has taken away. May his name be praised!”

²² **In spite of everything that had happened, Job did not sin by blaming God.**

^{2:1} **When the day came for the heavenly beings to appear before the LORD again, Satan was there among them.** ²The LORD asked him, “Where have you been?”

Satan answered, “I have been walking here and there, roaming round the earth.”

³ **“Did you notice my servant Job?”** the LORD asked. “There is no one on earth as faithful and good as he is. He worships me and is careful not to do anything evil. You persuaded me to let you attack him for no reason at all, but Job is still as faithful as ever.”

⁴ Satan replied, “A person will give up everything in order to stay alive.

⁵ But now suppose you hurt his body—he will curse you to your face!”

⁶ So the LORD said to Satan, “All right, he is in your power, but you are not to kill him.” [Satan was in trouble before all of his former associates!]

⁷Then Satan left the LORD’s presence and **made sores break out all over Job’s body.** ⁸Job went and sat by the rubbish heap and took a piece of broken pottery to scrape his sores. ⁹His wife said to him, “You are still as faithful as ever, aren’t you? Why don’t you curse God and die?”

¹⁰ Job answered, “**You are talking nonsense! When God sends us something good, we welcome it. How can we complain when he sends us trouble?**” In spite of everything he suffered, Job said nothing against God.—*Good News Bible*.*††

18. This story should pose major and shocking questions to your mind. **Why was God addressing Satan before the leaders of the onlooking universe and challenging Satan about His servant Job?** Satan probably did not want to talk about Job! Job was one of very few people on this earth who were actually resisting Satan’s attacks!
19. There are two very important questions in this story that need to be considered: **(1) Who was responsible for all of Job’s suffering?** And **(2) Was God in any way responsible since He gave permission for Satan to trouble Job?** Does that make God responsible even if Satan was personally inflicting the suffering? Given an experience like that of Job, how many people would turn against God? On what basis did Job remain faithful to God? How did he get to know God so well? **We have no records of God speaking to Job until after this experience.** However, in light of what we know about Abraham, we recognize that **it is likely that God had spoken to Job on more than one occasion.**

20. Read **Job 1:20-21** again.

[BSG:] In Job 1:20, 21, we see three aspects of worship that may help when in anguish. **First**, Job accepts his helplessness and recognizes that he has no claim to anything: “ ‘Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked I will depart’ ” (*Job 1:21, NIV*). **Second**, Job acknowledges that God is still in total control: “ ‘The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away’ ” (*Job 1:21, NIV*). **Third**, Job concludes by reasserting his belief in the righteousness of God. “ ‘May the name of the LORD be praised’ ” (*Job 1:21, NIV*).—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Tuesday, July 26.^{†§}

21. If one is going through a difficult experience, does it help to read the story of Job?

22. **Paul also went through an incredible succession of troubles**, few of which we know details about; Paul mentioned those experiences in passing in 2 Corinthians 1 and 11.

2 Corinthians 1:8-9: ⁸We want to remind you, brothers and sisters, of the trouble we had in the province of Asia. The burdens laid upon us were so great and so heavy that we gave up all hope of staying alive. ⁹We felt that the death sentence had been passed on us. But this happened so that we should rely, not on ourselves, but only on God, who raises the dead.—*Good News Bible.** [If one is killed, no one can help after that except God!][‡]

23. And how did Paul respond to all those troubles?

2 Corinthians 11:23-29: ²³Are they Christ’s servants? I sound like a madman—but I am a better servant than they are! I have worked much harder, I have been in prison more times, I have been whipped much more, and I have been near death more often. ²⁴Five times I was given the 39 lashes by the Jews; ²⁵three times I was whipped by the Romans; and once I was stoned. I have been in three shipwrecks, and once I spent 24 hours in the water. ²⁶In my many travels I have been in danger from floods and from robbers, in danger from fellow-Jews and from Gentiles; there have been dangers in the cities, dangers in the wilds, dangers on the high seas, and dangers from false friends. ²⁷There has been work and toil; often I have gone without sleep; I have been hungry and thirsty; I have often been without enough food, shelter, or clothing. ²⁸And not to mention other things, every day I am under the pressure of my concern for all the churches. ²⁹When someone is weak, then I feel weak too; when someone is led into sin, I am filled with distress.—*Good News Bible.**

24. If you feel like you have been through a lot of difficulties and really extreme crucibles, does that make you more sympathetic and more helpful to others who are struggling? Do the examples of Abraham, Job, Hosea, and Paul help us?

25. After considering these four people’s experiences, might you develop the idea that God is a severe, demanding taskmaster? Does God sometimes seem like a bully?

26. Paul recognized this possibility and his words were:

1 Corinthians 4:5: So you should not pass judgement on anyone before the right time comes. **Final judgement must wait until the Lord comes; he will bring to light the dark secrets and expose the hidden purposes of people’s minds.** And then all will receive from God the praise they

deserve.—*Good News Bible*.*† [That will be the panorama of the great controversy.]‡

1 Corinthians 13:12: What we see now is like a dim image in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. What I know now is only partial; then it will be complete—as complete as God’s knowledge of me.—*Good News Bible*.*

27. What do these words from Isaiah suggest about how we should respond to the crucibles in which God places us?

Isaiah 43:1-3: ¹ Israel, the LORD who created you says,

“Do not be afraid—I will save you.

I have called you by name—you are mine.

² When you pass through deep waters, I will be with you;
your troubles will not overwhelm you.

When you pass through fire, you will not be burnt;
the hard trials that come will not hurt you.

³ For I am the LORD your God,
the holy God of Israel, who saves you.”—*Good News Bible*.*

28. Are you comfortable with the different ways God has promised help to those who are going through crucible experiences? Wouldn’t you rather be protected from such things?

29. It is only fair to consider some other verses that talk to us about how God feels about us and our lives.

Psalms 103:13-14: ¹³ As a father is kind to his children,
so the LORD is kind to those who honour him.

He knows what we are made of;

he remembers that we are dust.—*Good News Bible*.*

Matthew 28:20: “And teach them to obey everything I have commanded you. And I will be with you always, to the end of the age.”—*Good News Bible*.*

1 Corinthians 10:13: Every test that you have experienced is the kind that normally comes to people. But God keeps his promise, and he will not allow you to be tested beyond your power to remain firm; at the time you are put to the test, he will give you the strength to endure it, and so provide you with a way out.—*Good News Bible*.* [What do “crucibles” accomplish?][‡]

1 Peter 1:7: Their purpose [that is, the purpose of trials] is to prove that your faith is genuine. Even gold, which can be destroyed, is tested by fire; and so your faith, which is much more precious than gold, must also be tested, so that it may endure. Then you will receive praise and glory and honour on the Day when Jesus Christ is revealed.—*Good News Bible*.*†

[EGW:] **God has always tried His people in the furnace of affliction. It is in the heat of the furnace that the dross is separated from the true 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 love. It is by close, testing trials that God disciplines His servants. **He sees that some have powers which may be used in the advancement of His work, and He puts these persons upon trial; in His providence He brings them into positions that test their character....** He shows them

their own weakness, and teaches them to lean upon Him.... Thus His object is attained. **They are educated, trained, and disciplined, prepared to fulfill the grand purpose for which their powers were given them.**—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets** 129.3-130.0.†‡

[EGW:] If in the providence of God we are called upon to endure trials, let us accept the cross and drink the bitter cup, remembering that **it is a Father's hand that holds it to our lips.** Let us trust Him in the darkness as well as in the day. Can we not believe that He will give us everything that is for our good?... Even in the night of affliction how can we refuse to lift heart and voice in grateful praise, when we remember the love to us expressed by the cross of Calvary?—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*,* vol. 5, 315.3-316.0.†‡ [How were the disciples affected by it?][‡]

30. Have you had some severe crucible experiences in your life that you could share with others, showing how God led you through them? We have no need to fear even death!
31. No one else in the history of our world has gone through what Jesus Christ went through. Think of the final few days of His experience, including from Calvary to the grave.

[EGW:] Upon Christ as our substitute and surety was laid the iniquity of us all. He was counted a transgressor, that He might redeem us from the condemnation of the law. The guilt of every descendant of Adam was pressing upon His heart. **The wrath of God against sin, the terrible manifestation of His displeasure because of iniquity, filled the soul of His Son with consternation. All His life Christ had been publishing to a fallen world the good news of the Father's mercy and pardoning love. Salvation for the chief of sinners was His theme. But now with the terrible weight of guilt He bears, He cannot see the Father's reconciling face. The withdrawal of the divine countenance from the Saviour in this hour of supreme anguish pierced His heart with a sorrow that can never be fully understood by man. So great was this agony that His physical pain was hardly felt.**

Satan with his fierce temptations wrung the heart of Jesus. **The Saviour could not see through the portals of the tomb. Hope did not present to Him His coming forth from the grave a conqueror, or tell Him of the Father's acceptance of the sacrifice. He feared that sin was so offensive to God that Their separation was to be eternal. Christ felt the anguish which the sinner will feel when mercy shall no longer plead for the guilty race. It was the sense of sin, bringing the Father's wrath upon Him as man's substitute, that made the cup He drank so bitter, and broke the heart of the Son of God [as the universe watched]....**

In that thick darkness God's presence was hidden. He makes darkness His pavilion, and conceals His glory from human eyes. God and His holy angels were beside the cross. The Father was with His Son. Yet His presence was not revealed. Had His glory flashed forth from the cloud, every human beholder would have been destroyed. And in that

dreadful hour Christ was not to be comforted with the Father's presence. He trod the wine press alone, and of the people there was none with Him.

In the thick darkness, God veiled the last human agony of His Son. All who had seen Christ in His suffering had been convicted of His divinity. That face, once beheld by humanity, was never forgotten. As the face of Cain expressed his guilt as a murderer, so the face of Christ revealed innocence, serenity, benevolence,—the image of God. But His accusers would not give heed to the signet of heaven. Through long hours of agony Christ had been gazed upon by the jeering multitude. Now He was mercifully hidden by the mantle of God.—Ellen G. White, *Desire of Ages** 753.1-754.1.†‡

32. The best preparation for suffering is looking to the final week of Christ's life on this earth. Think of what He suffered for our sake. If Jesus Christ is to be our Example, what should we expect as we come closer and closer to Satan's final times of temptation and trouble?
33. This lesson has focused on the lives and experiences of five great examples from the Old and New Testaments—Abraham, Hosea, Job, Paul, and Jesus Christ. What do you think God has intended that we should learn from those experiences? How much of the education that God intended for us from those experiences was for the benefit of the onlooking universe even more than for us?
34. Our Bible study guide focuses on what we on this earth are supposed to learn from these experiences. **However, Ellen White seemed to suggest that the most important point should be what God is trying to teach the onlooking universe.**
35. Nowhere else in the history of our world has anyone been asked by God to go through the kind of experience that Abraham went through. What are we supposed to learn from that singular, unique, prophetic event in the history of this world?
36. What have we learned from this lesson? Are these experiences so incredible that there will never be another like them? Are we prepared for whatever Satan may throw at us as the end of the world approaches?

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