

The Refiners Fire Lesson 13 4Q 2007

Christ in the Crucible

Read first paragraph Sabbath's lesson – thoughts?

Was God surprised by the entrance of sin? Did God go into creation with a sense of uncertainty, “Son, we could create these intelligent beings free but if we do we risk rebellion, are you willing to risk it?” And does the Son say, “Well Father, I think it's worth the risk, let's give it a chance and see”? Is God's knowing what will happen the same as causing what will happen?

If God knew this would happen, then why did He create intelligent free beings? Is it that this is the only path that leads to a universe of genuine real freedom and love? What does it say about God, that in the beginning, He knew that to give us genuine freedom, that it would cost Him His Son, yet He and Christ chose to do it anyway? How important must freedom be to God? How loving must He be?

SUNDAY

Luke 2:7, 22-24 tells us Jesus was born and wrapped in swaddling clothes and placed in a manger and then on day 8 was circumcised according to the law. – thoughts?

Jesus was poor in earthly terms – what does this say about the health wellness gospel? What about the reverse, poor are cursed of God?

Jesus was circumcised – what does this tell us? He took humanity upon Himself, not just the humanity of Adam before the fall, but our condition, our position, our terminal condition. He took a humanity that was weakened by 4000 years of degradation.

Matthew 2:1-18 tells us the story of Herod's attempt to kill the baby Jesus – Thoughts?

Why did God not let Herod kill Jesus? If the problem with sin is that we are in trouble with God and in order for justice to be served God's innocent Son needed to come to the earth, as a human without sin and die as our substitute to make a payment of blood in order for justice to be served – then why not let Herod kill Him as an infant? Would not the blood of the perfect Son of God have been shed? Or would it, as we read last week, work for our salvation only if God kills the innocent?

If Jesus would have been killed as an infant what would not have occurred? The two things necessary for Christ to actually complete His mission and defeat sin and Satan, save the race and secure the universe – what were those two things?

Finish the work that Adam failed to complete – reveal the truth about God (John 17) but He had more to reveal and accomplish than Adam, because of Adam's failure, Christ had more to reveal by His life and death. He had to reveal the nature and character of sin, reveal He Himself was safe with all power, reveal His Father's character and how God deals with sinners and expose Satan for the liar and fraud He is. This is the revelatory side of His mission, but this wasn't all:

Christ had to actually restore God's law of love back into the human species as the perfect operating system and this He accomplished throughout His entire life and culminated in His victorious death.

Hebrews 5:8, 9 - Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him.

And how difficult this must have been for Him – read the bottom paragraph – at every turn He was suffering, yet at

every turn He chose to love and give of Himself. He never acted in self interested.

Satan had put forth the strongest efforts against Christ from the time when he appeared as a babe in Bethlehem. He had sought in every possible manner to prevent him from developing an unblemished childhood, a true manhood, a holy ministry, and a perfect sacrifice in yielding up his life, without a murmur, for the sins of men. But Satan had been unable to discourage him, or to drive him from the work which he had come on earth to do. The storm of Satan's wrath beat upon him from the desert to Calvary; but the more mercilessly it fell, the more firmly did the Son of God cling to the hand of his Father, and press on in the blood-stained path before him. All the efforts of this mighty foe to oppress and overwhelm him, only brought out in a purer light the spotless character of Christ. {The Present Truth February 18, 1886 par. 2}

The law requires righteousness,--a righteous life, a perfect character; and this man has not to give. He cannot meet the claims of God's holy law. But Christ, coming to the earth as man, lived a holy life, and developed a perfect character. These He offers as a free gift to all who will receive them. His life stands for the life of men. Thus they have remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God. More than this, Christ imbues men with the attributes of God. He builds up the human character after the similitude of the divine character, a goodly fabric of spiritual strength and beauty. Thus the very righteousness of the law is fulfilled in the believer in Christ. God can "be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." Rom. 3:26. {DA 762.2}

Said the Saviour: "This is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent." And God declared by the prophet: "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the

mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth Me, that I am the Lord which exercise loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the Lord." {5T 737.1}

No man, without divine aid, can attain to this knowledge of God. The apostle says that "the world by wisdom knew not God." Christ "was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not." Jesus declared to His disciples: "No man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him." In that last prayer for His followers, before entering the shadows of Gethsemane, the Saviour lifted His eyes to heaven, and in pity for the ignorance of fallen men He said: "O righteous Father, the world hath not known Thee: but I have known Thee." "I have manifested Thy name unto the men which Thou gavest Me out of the world." {5T 737.2}

From the beginning it has been Satan's studied plan to cause men to forget God, that he might secure them to himself. Hence he has sought to misrepresent the character of God, to lead men to cherish a false conception of Him. The Creator has been presented to their minds as clothed with the attributes of the prince of evil himself,--as arbitrary, severe, and unforgiving,--that He might be feared, shunned, and even hated by men. Satan hoped to so confuse the minds of those whom he had deceived that they would put God out of their knowledge. Then he would obliterate the divine image in man and impress his own likeness upon the soul; he would imbue men with his own spirit and make them captives according to his will. {5T 738.1}

It was by falsifying the character of God and exciting distrust of Him that Satan tempted Eve to transgress. By sin the minds of our first parents were darkened, their natures were degraded, and **their**

conceptions of God were molded by their own narrowness and selfishness. And as men became bolder in sin, the knowledge and the love of God faded from their minds and hearts. "Because that, when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God," they "became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened." {5T 738.2}

At times Satan's contest for the control of the human family appeared to be crowned with success. During the ages preceding the first advent of Christ the world seemed almost wholly under the sway of the prince of darkness, and he ruled with a terrible power as though through the sin of our first parents the kingdoms of the world had become his by right. Even the covenant people, whom God had chosen to preserve in the world the knowledge of Himself, had so **far departed from Him that they had lost all true conception of His character.** {5T 738.3}

Christ came to reveal God to the world as a God of love, full of mercy, tenderness, and compassion. The thick darkness with which Satan had endeavored to enshroud the throne of Deity was swept away by the world's Redeemer, and the Father was again manifest to men as the light of life. {5T 738.4}

When Philip came to Jesus with the request, "Show us the Father, and it sufficeth us," the Saviour answered him: "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip? he that hath seen Me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father?" **Christ declares Himself to be sent into the world as a representative of the Father. In His nobility of character, in His mercy and tender pity, in His love and goodness, He stands before us as the embodiment of divine perfection, the image of the invisible God.** {5T 739.1}

All sin is selfishness. Satan's first sin was a manifestation of selfishness. He sought to grasp power, to exalt self. A species of insanity led him to

seek to supersede God. And the temptation that led Adam to sin was Satan's declaration that it was possible for man to attain to something more than he already enjoyed, possible for him to be as God Himself. **The sowing of seeds of selfishness in the human heart was the first result of the entrance of sin into the world.**

God desires every one to understand the evil of selfishness, and to co operate with Him in guarding the human family against its terrible, deceptive powers. **The design of the gospel is to confront this evil by means of remedial missionary work, and to destroy its destructive power by establishing enterprises of benevolence.** {WB, September 9, 1902 par. 3} (The Worker's Bulletin)

As a remedy for the terrible consequences into which selfishness led the human race, God gave His only begotten Son to die for mankind. How could He have given more? In this gift He gave Himself. "I and My Father are one," said Christ. By the gift of His Son, God has made it possible for man to be redeemed and restored to oneness with Him. "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." **Love is the great principle that actuates unfallen beings.** With amazement the angels behold the indifference that those who have light and knowledge manifest toward a world unsaved. The heavenly host are filled with an intense desire to work through human agencies to restore in man the image of God. They are ready and waiting to do this work. The combined power of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost is pledged to uplift man from his fallen state. Every attribute, every power of divinity has been placed at the command of those who unite with the Saviour in winning men to God. O, that all would appreciate the truth as it is in Jesus. O, that all would love God in return for the love wherewith He has loved them. {WB, September 9, 1902 par. 4}

Sin has extinguished the love that God placed in man's heart. The work of the church is to rekindle

this love. The church is to co-operate with God by uprooting selfishness from the human heart, placing in its stead the benevolence that was in man's heart in his original state of perfection. {WB, September 9, 1902 par. 5}

The atonement of Christ is not a mere skillful way to have our sins pardoned; it is a divine remedy for the cure of transgression and the restoration of spiritual health. It is the Heaven-ordained means by which the righteousness of Christ may be not only upon us but in our hearts and characters (Letter 406, 1906). {6BC 1074.2}

Why did Christ have to come and die? To deliver us, to heal us, to save us, to recreate us to win us back to trust so we would accept the perfect character of love developed by Him and be reconciled back into oneness with God.

MONDAY

Read top dark section – was Christ's death for the "sins of the whole world" only?

Col 1:19,20 For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

Through the plan of salvation, a larger purpose is to be wrought out even than the salvation of man and the redemption of the earth. Through the revelation of the character of God in Christ, the beneficence of the divine government would be manifested before the universe, the charge of Satan refuted, the nature and result of sin made plain, and the perpetuity of the law fully demonstrated. {ST, December 22, 1914 par. 4}

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. 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. {PP 68.2}

By coming to dwell with us, Jesus was to reveal God both to men and to angels. He was the Word of God,--God's thought made audible. In His prayer for His disciples He says, "I have declared unto them Thy name,"--"merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth,"--"that the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them, and I in them." But not alone for His earthborn children was this revelation given. Our little world is the lesson book of the universe. God's wonderful purpose of grace, the mystery of redeeming love, is the theme into which "angels desire to look," and it will be their study throughout endless ages. Both the redeemed and the unfallen beings will find in the cross of Christ their science and their song. It will be seen that the glory shining in the face of Jesus is the glory of self-sacrificing love. In the light from Calvary it will be seen that the law of self-renouncing love is the law of life for earth and heaven; that the love which "seeketh not her own" has its source in the heart of God; and that in the meek and lowly One is manifested the character of Him who

dwelleth in the light which no man can approach unto.
DA 19, 20

To the angels and the unfallen worlds the cry, "It is finished," had a deep significance. It was for them as well as for us that the great work of redemption had been accomplished. They with us share the fruits of Christ's victory.

Not until the death of Christ was the character of Satan clearly revealed to the angels or to the unfallen worlds. The archapostate had so clothed himself with deception that even holy beings had not understood his principles. They had not clearly seen the nature of his rebellion. {DA 758}

Read Matthew 23:37

"O 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, but you were not willing.

How did Jesus handle rejection? Did He become self focused, "Why are they treating me this way Father...?" Or did His heart break for them because He recognized what they were doing to themselves?

When you experience rejection – how do you handle it? What can we learn from Christ?

TUESDAY

Read bottom two paragraphs – thoughts?

What was separating Him from His Father? Was the Father doing this to Him? Was the Father inflicting something upon Him? Did Christ have divine power to stop it if He wanted?

What does this tell us about God and Christ and their use of power? They will never, never use their abilities and power for selfish purposes!!!

What is Divine Justice? Is it the infliction of a penalty upon an innocent person so a guilty person can go free? NO!

Before we can determine what is just, we must first determine the governing law that is the basis for justice to be applied. What is the law of God? What is the law of the universe?

Matthew 22:37-40 Jesus replied: " `Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: `Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

Romans 13:10 Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.

1John 4:16 God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him.

Christ came to the world with the accumulated love of eternity. Sweeping away the exactions which had encumbered the law of God, He showed that the law is a law of love, an expression of the Divine Goodness. He showed that in obedience to its principles is involved the happiness of mankind, and with it the stability, the very foundation and framework, of human society. {Ed 76.3}

The law of love being the foundation of the government of God, the happiness of all created beings depended upon their perfect accord with its great principles of righteousness. God desires from all his creatures the service of love,-- homage that springs from an intelligent appreciation of his character. He takes no pleasure in a forced allegiance, and to all he grants

freedom of will, that they may render him voluntary service. {GC88 493.2}

In Isaiah's day the spiritual understanding of mankind was dark through misapprehension of God. Long had Satan sought to lead men to look upon their Creator as the author of sin and suffering and death. Those whom he had thus deceived, imagined that God was hard and exacting. They regarded Him as watching to denounce and condemn, unwilling to receive the sinner so long as there was a legal excuse for not helping him. The law of love by which heaven is ruled had been misrepresented by the archdeceiver as a restriction upon men's happiness, a burdensome yoke from which they should be glad to escape. He declared that its precepts could not be obeyed and that the penalties of transgression were bestowed arbitrarily. {PK 311.1}

What is the law that we have to gauge justice by? The law of love, and what does this law look like?

1 Cor 13:4-8 Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.

Understanding the law of love as described here, how would you now describe God's justice?

How does love act? What does love do? When someone you love mistreats you how does love respond – look to Jesus – how did He act when He was mistreated – Father forgive them- is this justice?

If a wife wants to leave her husband and the husband is a loving human being, and after all attempts to win her back she still insists on leaving, what is the only loving action he can

take? What is the only just action he can take? And when the husband is God – the source of all life – what happens when He lets go? We die, the wages of sin is death- is this just or unjust?

Does God have to inflict a penalty on the wicked in order to be just? Or does justice require each person receive exactly what they themselves have chosen?

WEDNESDAY

Read first paragraph – thoughts? I thought the quarterly rightly pointed out that crucifying the innocent Jesus was “unfair”, isn’t it interesting that it is unfair for the innocent Jesus to be crucified by evil men, but when some claim God killed His innocent Son they call it justice? Is it just for God to kill the innocent?

In the opening of the great controversy, Satan had declared that the law of God could not be obeyed, that justice was inconsistent with mercy, and that, should the law be broken, it would be impossible for the sinner to be pardoned. Every sin must meet its punishment, urged Satan; and if God should remit the punishment of sin, He would not be a God of truth and justice. When men broke the law of God, and defied His will, Satan exulted. It was proved, he declared, that the law could not be obeyed; man could not be forgiven. Because he, after his rebellion, had been banished from heaven, Satan claimed that the human race must be forever shut out from God's favor. God could not be just, he urged, and yet show mercy to the sinner. {DA 761.4}

But even as a sinner, man was in a different position from that of Satan. Lucifer in heaven had sinned in the light of God's glory. To him as to no other created being was given a revelation of God's love. Understanding the character of God, knowing His goodness, Satan chose to follow his own selfish, independent will. This choice was final. There was no more that God could do to save him.

But man was deceived; his mind was darkened by Satan's sophistry. The height and depth of the love of God he did not know. For him there was hope in a knowledge of God's love. By beholding His character he might be drawn back to God. {DA 761.5}

Through Jesus, God's mercy was manifested to men; but mercy does not set aside justice. The law reveals the attributes of God's character, and not a jot or tittle of it could be changed to meet man in his fallen condition. God did not change His law, but He sacrificed Himself, in Christ, for man's redemption. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself." 2 Cor. 5:19. {DA 762.1}

The law requires righteousness,--a righteous life, a perfect character; and this man has not to give. He cannot meet the claims of God's holy law. But Christ, coming to the earth as man, lived a holy life, and developed a perfect character. These He offers as a free gift to all who will receive them. His life stands for the life of men. Thus they have remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God. More than this, Christ imbues men with the attributes of God. He builds up the human character after the similitude of the divine character, a goodly fabric of spiritual strength and beauty. Thus the very righteousness of the law is fulfilled in the believer in Christ. God can "be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." Rom. 3:26. {DA 762.2}

Thoughts? Questions about this passage?

Read last paragraph – thoughts? Does God have something in Him, called His wrath, that is deeper, darker and more painful than any evil in any human heart?

What is God's wrath? Read Romans 1:18-28 and notice God's wrath is giving people up to reap what they have freely chosen! And what did God do to His Son? He gave Him up and in Romans 4:25, Paul uses the exact same Greek he did in

chapter 1:24,26,28 in describing God giving up Christ for our salvation.

And notice in this passage the wrath of God comes because they reject the knowledge of God- what did the war in heaven start over? Satan told lies about God and in Eden he told lies about God and what is life eternal “knowing God” what is the new covenant having God’s character reproduced within such that no one has to say to their neighbor “know the Lord” for all will know me. And spiritual warfare is warring against everything that is against the knowledge of God.

THURSDAY

Read middle paragraph – “First, Christ, our Lord...” – thoughts? Any questions about this? Any questions about the Bible references here?

Look up Isaiah 53:4

- Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted.

Do you think this applies to the crucifixion? Or could this be a prophecy that He would take up our sorrows and sickness to heal them and we would misunderstand and consider God punished and afflicted Him?

Look up Matthew 8:16,17

- When evening came, many who were demon-possessed were brought to him, and he drove out the spirits with a word and healed all the sick. ¹⁷ This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah: "He took up our infirmities and carried our diseases."

What text in Isaiah is this referring to – check your references in your Bible – Isaiah 53:4. What do you think this means?

Did Matthew get confused? Or do we believe Matthew was inspired by the Holy Spirit and got it right?

If Matthew got it right, the right application of this verse – what does it tell us about Christ taking up our infirmities and carrying our sorrows? What is it not? It is not the idea of Christ being punished by God in our stead! It is Christ being the conduit of God’s love to bring healing and restoration. Yet we would misconstrue, misunderstand and accuse God of killing His Son.

FRIDAY

Read top paragraph – thoughts?

Why must the transgressors of the law if left to themselves perish? Notice the language – “if left to themselves”. As soon as Adam and Eve sinned, God began interceding with the destructiveness of sin – if God would have left Adam and Eve to themselves, what would have happened? They would have died. And, is inflicting an external penalty of death on someone the same as leaving them to themselves?

Why is man helpless? Helpless to do what? Cure our condition, restore love into the mind/heart, overcome fear and selfishness.

What does it mean to become a propitiation? To propitiate something means to make it compatible. So what do you think the meaning of the sentence is, He will appease God and make God compatible to man or He will heal mankind back into compatibility with God?