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Introduction

The Crucified¹ Creator

“All things were made through him [Jesus]. Nothing that has been made was made without him” (John 1:3, NlrV).

“All things” were made by Jesus. But the Bible also says, “Jesus wept [cried]” (John 11:35). The Creator (Jesus) wept? Even more so, men “did not accept him [Jesus]. He knew all about sorrow and suffering” (Isaiah 53:3, NlrV). The Creator, a man of sorrows, was not accepted? And He once cried out, “My God, my God, why have you deserted [left] me?” (Matthew 27:46, NlrV).

How could these things be? It is because Jesus, our Creator, was also our Redeemer (Savior). He was the crucified God—the Creator who became a human and died for us. In human form Jesus lived a life of suffering and hardship that ended with His death on a Roman cross.

So, our Creator was the One in whom “we live, and move, and have our being [reason for life]” (Acts 17:28). He suffered in human form in ways that none of us ever could. We can experience only our own griefs, our own sorrows. At the cross Jesus accepted “our griefs, and carried our sorrows” (Isaiah 53:4)—all of them. It is the most surprising act in the whole history of God and man. For the next few months we will try to understand better the things we do not understand—our own suffering and the suffering of Christians who have given their lives to Christ. We are making no promises that we have all the answers or even many answers. We believe that “God is love” (1 John 4:8). We also believe that bad things do happen, but we can trust God when they do. We also can grow in grace² through our sufferings, no matter how much we suffer.

This quarter we will study the Word of God to learn how other people showed their faith and yet faced hurt, depression (sadness), disappointment, loss, unfairness, and abuse. How did they solve their problems? What did they learn? What can their examples teach us?

We read about these people, their experiences, their struggles, and their trials of faith, which might be the same as ours. We must always think of them with the Cross in mind. We must always remember that Jesus Christ, our Creator and Savior, went through worse experiences and suffered even more.

Our God is a suffering God. Even Albert Camus, a doubter, understood some of the sufferings of God on the cross: “The night on Golgotha is so important in

1. crucified—having been put to death.

2. grace—God’s gift of forgiveness that He freely gives us to take away our sins.

the history of man only because the Son of God drank to the last drop the great suffering of death.”—Adapted from Albert Camus, *The Rebel* (New York, Vintage International, 1991), p. 33. Ellen G. White explained it better when she wrote, “To our dull senses, the Cross is a perfect example of the pain that sin, from its very beginning, has brought to the heart of God.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Education*, p. 263.

Our lessons are not a theodicy.³ Instead, these lessons help us work through the suffering we all have here in this world. We will try to show that pain, suffering, and loss do not mean that God has forgotten us. They mean to show that, as believers, we share now in the suffering as a result of our fall into sin. The big difference is that through Jesus we can find meaning and purpose in life that seems to be meaningless on earth. These lessons also help us learn that we can trust the promise that “God works for the good of those [people] who love him [God]” (Romans 8:28, NIV). He is the God who made all things but also permitted them all to happen too. (And that is why we love Him.)

This quarter’s author, Gavin Anthony, grew up in Sri Lanka as a missionary kid. He worked as a pastor in England. He also was conference president in Iceland when he wrote these lessons.

3. theodicy—a defense of God’s goodness and His power in view of the existence of evil.