

# God Tempts Men

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God tempts men (Gen. 22:1; 2Sam. 24:1; Jer. 20:7; Mt. 6:13).

God tempts no man (Jas. 1:13).

When the word “tempt” is used in scripture, the context has to be examined closely to determine whether it is speaking about maliciously enticing someone to sin, or testing someone in a situation where they can learn to trust Almighty God and, as a result, strengthen their relationship with Him,

My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, <sup>3</sup>knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience (endurance or perseverance). <sup>4</sup>But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect (spiritually mature) and complete, lacking nothing (Jas. 1:2-4; NKJV throughout unless otherwise noted; Ed. notes in parentheses).

The following scripture dealing with temptation involved Satan who attempted to take advantage of Jesus Christ while he was in a weakened state after forty days of fasting (cf. Mt. 4:2). In Satan’s mind, if his temptation led to Christ committing sin, God’s plan of salvation would be temporarily thwarted because Christ could not offer himself up as a sinless sacrifice,

Then Jesus was led up into the wilderness by the spirit to be tempted by the Devil (Mt. 4:1ff; RNT).

What Satan did in his temptation of Christ was similar to what he did with Eve. His goal was to present a scenario that could lead individuals to break God’s commands. He is very cunning and determined to achieve his goal, even lying when necessary (cf. Jn. 8:44),

**Now the serpent** (a symbol of Satan) **was more cunning than any beast** (living creature) which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, “Has God indeed said, ‘You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?’” (Gen. 3:1; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).

Eve explained the command that God had given her through Adam, but Satan dismissed it by inferring that God had misrepresented the truth. Part of his tactic was to create doubt in the reliability of God’s word. In other words, if God’s command is not completely truthful or accurate, then Eve was free to do whatever seemed right to her (Gen. 3:6; cf. Prov. 16:25). Satan’s cunning manipulation created a lack of faith, on Eve’s part, toward God’s word. At the point she had no faith or trust in God’s word, she broke the command that was originally given to Adam (Gen. 2:16-17). Now she was guilty of sin and death followed later, which is exactly what God had warned (cf. Eze. 18:4, 20; Rom. 6:23). Because Satan purposely enticed Eve to break God’s command,

regarding her fellowship with a tree that symbolized Satan and his way of living, he was guilty of murdering her (cf. Jn. 8:44),

And the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil" (Gen. 3:4-5).

Whenever Satan has an opportunity, he will work to entice people to break God's law and commandments. He has been so effective in his temptations throughout history that very few have managed to overcome his deceptions,

So the great dragon (another symbol of Satan) was cast out (of Almighty God's presence), that serpent of old, called the devil and **Satan, who deceives the whole world**; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him (Rev. 12:9; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).

With this background, the various scriptures misused to accuse God of contradicting Himself can be examined,

Now it came to pass after these things that God tested Abraham, and said to him, 'Abraham!' And he said, 'Here I am' (Gen. 22:1).

In a previous study: God Accepts Human Sacrifice, it was explained that because Almighty God is all-knowing He knew that Abraham would pass the test of faith that he was given, and as a result he would become known as the "father of the faithful" (cf. Jn. 8:39). However, if Almighty God knew ahead of time that Abraham would not obey His command, regarding the sacrifice of Isaac, then God would be guilty of tempting him if He directed Abraham to do this. As this did not happen, the test was not a malicious enticement with the goal of leading Abraham to sin. Instead, this extremely difficult trial ended up strengthening Abraham's faith in God (cf. Jas. 1:2-4).

With this principle in mind, the context of the following scripture can be understood correctly,

Again the anger of the Lord was aroused against Israel, and he (Satan; cf. 1Chr. 21:1) moved David against them to say, 'Go, number (take a census of) Israel and Judah' (2Sam. 24:1; Ed. notes in parentheses).

Because Almighty God already knew that David would commit the sin described in 2 Samuel 24:1, He did not influence David to take a census of the nation (Ex. 30:12-16; cf. 2Sam. 24:10). Instead, David had been entertaining the thought that he could win battles based on the size of his army, rather than relying on God for victory over his enemies. No doubt this momentary lack of faith was an opportunity for Satan to influence David, but David should have recognized this and rejected it sooner (Gen. 3:7; cf. Jas. 4:7). Any census of Israel was to be conducted according to God's directions and with specific objectives.

Since Almighty God allows freedom of choice in heaven and on earth, everyone is able to think and reason for themselves. However, "the prince of the power of the air" is capable of influencing the thoughts and attitudes of both human-beings and those in the

spirit realm. Although Satan cannot force anyone to sin, he can “broadcast” his “lies” in a convincing manner (cf. Jn. 8:44). His attitudes appeal to the majority of mankind and they were also effective with spirit-beings because a third of God’s angels rebelled (Rom. 8:7; cf. Rev. 12:4, 9),

And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which **you once walked according to the course** ( 165 Gk. *aion*, an age, a space in time, a duration) **of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air**, the (evil) spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience (Eph. 2:1-2; cf. 6:12; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).

The reasoning process that led to David numbering Israel and Judah is described in the following section of scripture,

Let no one say when he is tempted (to sin), ‘I am tempted by God,’ for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But (instead) **each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin**; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death (cf. Rom. 6:23) (Jas. 1:13-15; Ed. note in parenthesis; emphasis added).

Whenever someone entertains a thought or action that is contrary to God’s word, they are open to the influence of the Adversary. When this occurs, he is more than capable of reinforcing and supporting any rebellious thoughts or actions. Figuratively speaking, Satan doesn’t “pull the trigger.” Instead, he supports sinful reasoning until the human-being, or spirit-being, convinces themselves they are making the right choice. If action follows, it becomes a sin (cf. 1Jn. 2:4). This is the same process that led to Christ’s death. The religious leaders during Christ’s ministry saw him as a threat to their power and position. When Christ exposed their many sins, they did not repent. Instead, they became angry at him and decided that he needed to be eliminated. Finally, they managed to get enough support to have Christ killed even though he was innocent of any crime.

The context of the next scripture used to accuse God of contradicting Himself has to do with one of His prophets,

O Lord, You induced (persuaded) me (Jeremiah), and I was persuaded; You are stronger than I, and have prevailed. I am in derision daily (laughing stock all the day); everyone mocks me (Jer. 20:7; Ed. notes in parentheses).

Jeremiah’s confession to God has absolutely nothing to do with God tempting him to sin. Instead, Jeremiah expressed how hard it is to do God’s work in this present evil world (cf. Gal. 1:4). God’s servants have been mocked, ignored, and often killed while performing the tasks they were given (cf. Heb. 11:35-38). Despite all these trials, the majority of those called to do God’s work have continued faithfully until it was accomplished. As Jeremiah pointed out, he could not resist doing what he knew was right no matter how hard it was at times. It is in this sense only that he felt “induced,”

... But His (God’s) word was in my heart like a burning fire shut up in my bones; I was weary of holding it back (no matter how bad the circumstances appeared), and I could not (Jer. 20:9b; Ed. notes in parentheses).

The final scripture used to discredit God is Matthew 6:13. This is part of the prayer outline that Jesus Christ gave. Although it is often repeated verbatim, it was never Christ's intention for this to happen (cf. Mt. 6:7),

**And bring us not into trials, but rescue us from evil** (Mt. 6:13; RNT).

As God does not lead anyone to sin, this scripture has to be understood from the previous examples of those who went through trials in order to develop a closer and more faithful relationship with God. Therefore, in this summary prayer outline, Christ is explaining that God's people need to examine themselves regularly to make sure they are not walking contrary to God's word. If they are drifting toward the ways of this present evil world, God will allow them to go into some trial or trials to get their attention and help them see the error of their ways. So this scripture should be viewed as saying that we need to ask God to help us deal with problems in our lives as quickly as possible. Otherwise we will end up learning the hard way, which can be a very painful alternative. In the city of Corinth, during Paul's ministry, there was a church member who had drifted into a sinful life, and as a result he was delivered to the evil one in order to come to his senses, which eventually he did,

It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you (God's church in Corinth), and such sexual immorality as is not even named among the Gentiles – that a man has his father's wife (step-mother; cf. Dt. 22:30) (1Cor. 5:1; Ed. notes in parentheses).

Deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh (if necessary; cf. Prov. 15:10), that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord (1Cor. 5:5; Ed. note in parenthesis).

So God does not tempt anyone to sin. Instead, if they are heading in that direction once He has called them, He will allow them to experience certain trials in order to get their attention and lead them to repentance,

... the goodness of God leads you to repentance (Rom. 2:4b).

As mentioned previously, Jesus himself was tempted by Satan but overcame this difficult trial through the correct understanding and use of God's word. Therefore, Christ set the example for others who are tempted,

For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted (Heb. 2:18).

In conclusion, what loving human parent wants to tempt their child to harm themselves? Even in this present evil age, the idea of loving parents tempting their children is absurd. Therefore, why would it be acceptable to claim that Almighty God would do such a thing? Apollyon the destroyer (Satan; Rev. 9:11), and his followers, are the only ones who want to cause harm and lead all of God's creation into sin and certain death that follows (Rom. 6:23).

This document is the collaborative work of individuals who believe God's truth should be given freely (Mt. 10:8; 1Cor. 2:12; 2Cor.11:7; Rom. 10:14-21) and the message of the one true God should be made available to all nations (Mt. 24:14) as a prerequisite to the return of Jesus Christ as King of kings (Mt. 17:10; 19:17; Mk. 9:11; Lk. 1:17; Rev. 19:11-16).

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