

Testing/Tempting God Leader Guide

There is a very fine line between testing/tempting God that is forbidden by the Bible and that which is seemingly acceptable such as Gideon's requests from God.

In Matthew 4, Satan tempts Jesus to throw Himself off the highest part of the temple saying that surely God would send His angels to save Jesus if He truly was the Son of God (Matt. 4:5-6). Jesus responds by saying in Matthew 4:7, *"It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"* The King James Version reads, *"It is written again, 'Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.'"*

Jesus quotes this command from Deuteronomy 6:16 which says, *"Do not test the Lord your God as you did at Massah."* Now how was God tested at Massah? Well let's take a look at the Jewish history to find out what they did at Massah.

Read Exodus 17:1-7.

What had God done in the previous chapters for the Israelites?

1. God clearly evidenced His presence to the Israelites before they started complaining about water:
 - a. The 10 Plagues (Exodus 7-12)
 - b. God led them in a pillar of a cloud by day and by a pillar of fire to give light by night which never left them (Exodus 13:21-22)
 - c. God kept the Egyptian army from capturing Israel miraculously with a cloud of darkness (Exodus 14:19-20)
 - d. God parted the Red Sea so the Israelites could cross and sent it rushing down on the Egyptian army (Exodus 14:21-31)
 - e. God provided water for the Israelites to drink by purifying bitter water miraculously (Exodus 15:22-27)
 - f. God provides manna and quail (Exodus 16)

Even after all these signs and wonders, the Israelites still tested God. They easily lost faith in God to provide even though He had done so miraculously many times recently.

What did the Israelites do in Exodus 17:1-7? What was their attitude like to God and to Moses?

The Israelites grumbled and tested God by not trusting His provision.

Read Exodus 17:7 again.

What did Moses call the place this happened?

Massah

What does that word mean?

Testing

Let's look back at Jesus temptation in Matthew 4:1-11.

Why does Satan tempt Jesus? What does Satan want him to prove?

Satan attempts to get Jesus to prove that He truly is the Son of God by testing God. Satan tries to make Jesus test God even though Satan knows that Jesus is the Son of God already.

Does Jesus know that He is the Son of God?

Jesus knows He is the Son of God so He has no grounds to test God on that.

What happens in the previous chapters that reveal Jesus as the Son of God?

. In Matthew 3:13-17, God clearly displays through a miraculous event at Jesus baptism that He is the Son of God. God says, "*This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.*" In Luke 2, the miracles surrounding Jesus birth, such as a star leading wise men to Christ, angels appearing to shepherds, etc., all declared that Jesus was the Son of God.

Was Satan aware that Jesus was the Son of God?

There is no way he could not have known. Why would he be trying to test Him if he was not?

Did Satan have any legitimate reason to get Jesus to test God to prove that He was the Son of God?

No. There is no way that Satan did not know that some of this was going on. The signs and wonders surrounding Jesus up to that time were enough to testify to His being the Son of God.

What Scripture did Jesus quote?

For those reasons, Jesus quoted Deuteronomy 6:16.

What are the similarities between this situation and the one with the Israelites?

Satan wanted Jesus to test God as the Israelites did when they had already previously seen His miraculous provisions.

Now let's look at Giddeon and his testing of God.

Read Judges 6:11-24.

Did Giddeon know that the person he was talking to was the angel of the Lord at first?

The angel of the Lord has the appearance of an ordinary man to Giddeon here; Giddeon could not have known this was the Lord. Had God shown the Israelites signs and wonders as He had done in the days of Moses?

Had God recently evidenced Himself to the Israelites with signs and wonders?

God has not evidenced Himself to the Israelites for quite sometime through signs and wonders (v. 13).

What two words clue Giddeon that the person he is talking with might be the Lord?

In verse 14, the words "*Am I*" reveal to Giddeon that this man he is talking to might be the Lord.

What is the Lord calling Gideon to do?

The Lord is calling Gideon to be a leader and save Israel out of Midian's hand.

Does Gideon know for sure that this person talking to him is the Lord?

Gideon has no assurance that this is the Lord speaking to Him instead of just another man.

What does Gideon ask him to do? Why?

Gideon asked for confirmation that this was the Lord which is different from testing Him.

What was Gideon's reaction when he realized who this person was?

Notice Gideon's reaction in verse 22 and 24.

Now read Judges 6:36-40.

Who all is with Gideon right now?

Gideon now has several men camped with him.

What does Gideon ask of God?

He asks God for further confirmation of His promise to deliver Israel.

How does He approach God the third time?

Humbly with an apology.

Why do you think Gideon does this?

Matthew Henry suggests that these last two confirmations were not only for Gideon but also for the several men camped with him to assure them of God's promise and Gideon's words.

What is Giddeon really asking of God?

Giddeon does show a lack of faith, but he asks God to help his unbelief. Confirmation!

Did Giddeon complain, groan, or whine about what God was doing?

If you read on Giddeon never complains or groans as the Israelites did at Massah.

Giddeon vs. the Israelites

What difference do you see between Giddeon and the Israelites?

The Israelites had witnessed many miracles and seen God's provision, but still groaned and complained when it seemed as though God had not provided. But Giddeon asked for confirmation, He had no way of knowing who the man talking with him was. The people he was with needed confirmation of God's words and works as well. The Israelites already had this and still did not believe.

How did the Israelites approach God? And Giddeon?

The Israelites tested God with complaining and groaning (Exodus 17:2,3), but Giddeon responded in humility (Judges 6:22,24,39).

The key part of the command that is found in Deuteronomy 6:16 is "*as you did at Massah.*" That part of the verse shows the difference between the two approaches to God one demanding of God in a grumbling and complaining manner and the other humbly asking God for confirmation finding pleasure in God's sight.

Now how does this apply to our lives? Matthew Henry points out that before Pentecost, the Holy Spirit was not given to anyone on a permanent basis. Giddeon did not have the Holy Spirit residing in him as you and I do to confirm God's work and what He is saying. But now we do have the Holy Spirit who speaks to us and confirms God's work and words in our life.

Read John 16:5-16, Romans 8:16, 1 Corinthians 2:10-12, Ephesians 3:3-5, Romans 15:13, Galatians 5:22-23, 1 Corinthians 12:1-11.

What do these verses tell us about the Holy Spirit in our lives?

We as New Testament believers have the Holy Spirit on a permanent basis. This Spirit has given us more confirmation through the work that is being done in our lives that we should never demand, groan or complain about God not providing for us. We have been given so much that we must not neglect what God has done for us already as the Israelites did. If you have unbelief simply ask God to confirm Himself to you and help your unbelief.

God still works signs and wonders according to His will. We cannot demand that He prove Himself to us, when the Holy Spirit in us already testifies to God. Through the guidance of the Holy Spirit and increasing faith in God, God can use you as an instrument in working His signs and wonders to prove to others that He is God. If you ever have unbelief, simply ask God to help you with your unbelief and He will.

Check your attitude when you go before God. Are you acting like a Giddeon or an Israelite in the wilderness?