

Testing/Tempting God

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.

Notes Concerning Exodus 17:1-7

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)

2. 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.

Read Exodus 17:7 again.

This place where God once again proved Himself and His provision to the Israelites who grumbled and tested God was called Massah. Deuteronomy 6:16 refers to this place Moses called Massah which means testing.

Let's look back at Jesus temptation in Matthew 4:1-11. 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. Jesus knows He is the Son of God so He has no grounds to test God on that. 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.*" There is no way that Satan did not know this. 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. Once again there is no way that Satan did not know that some of this was going on. For those reasons, Jesus quoted Deuteronomy 6:16 because Satan wanted Jesus to test God as the Israelites did when they had already previously seen His miraculous provisions.

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

Read Judges 6:11-24.

Notes on Judges 6:11-24.

1. The angel of the Lord has the appearance of an ordinary man to Gideon here; Gideon could not have known this was the Lord.
2. God has not evidenced Himself to the Israelites for quite sometime through signs and wonders (v. 13).
3. In verse 14, the words "*Am I*" reveal to Gideon that this man he is talking to might be the Lord.

4. The Lord is calling Giddeon to be a leader and save Israel out of Midian's hand.
5. Giddeon has no assurance that this is the Lord speaking to Him instead of just another man.
6. Giddeon asked for confirmation that this was the Lord which is different from testing Him.
7. God confirmed that this was Him talking with Giddeon.
8. Notice Giddeon's reaction in verse 22 and 24.

Now read Judges 6:36-40.

Notes on Judges 6:36-40

1. Giddeon now has several men camped with him.
2. He asks God for further confirmation of His promise to deliver Israel.
3. Notice Giddeon's attitude when He approaches God for a third confirmation.
4. Matthew Henry suggests that these last two confirmations were not only for Giddeon but also for the several men camped with him to assure them of God's promise and Giddeon's words.
5. Giddeon does show a lack of faith, but he asks God to help his unbelief.
6. If you read on Giddeon never complains or groans as the Israelites did at Massah.

The difference between Giddeon and the Israelites is:

1. 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.

2. The Israelites tested God with complaining and groaning (Exodus 17:2,3), but Gideon 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. Gideon 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. 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.

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