

## Biblical Paradoxes Series

### To test God or not to test God?

There are different types of testing. We all know the phrase “to test someone’s patience”, which means to annoy them by pushing them to the limits of their tolerance before they start getting angry. Children often push their set boundaries to the limit, and sometimes beyond, to see whether their parents meant what they said when setting them. They might have been instructed not to turn the TV on and then they turn it on anyway. Testing, on the other hand, could be a trust to see if a promised reward would be given for a task done. The child might have been promised a chocolate for cleaning his bedroom. He cleans it believing that he’ll get the chocolate. He tests his parent’s faithfulness to their word that what they had said they would do.

Malachi 3:10 Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,” says the LORD Almighty, “and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it.

Matthew 4:5-7 Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. “If you are the Son of God,” he said, “throw yourself down. For it is written: “He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.”

Jesus answered him, “It is also written: ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’”

#### 1) The test of faithfulness

- The Hebrew word used in Malachi 3:10 where God says, “Test me in this” is bâchan
  - Bâchan means to investigate or scrutinize something and prove it to be true
  - It’s used in the same sense testing the purity of gold or other precious metals
  - It’s testing the genuineness of something
- This is a positive and not a negative testing
  - Joseph tested his brothers in Genesis 42:15ff when he kept one of them in Egypt while the rest of them returned home to bring Benjamin to him.
  - He was testing their faithfulness to their word regarding the wellbeing of Benjamin.
- What was happening at the time of Malachi was that the Israelites were being disobedient by not paying their tithes as God had commanded them to do
  - Disobedience is rooted in unbelief
  - In this case it was unbelief that God would provide for them and that they would have enough to live on if they gave their tithes
  - God was telling them to test Him that He could and would provide for them far more in abundance than the tithes that they would pay. Would they take Him at His word and test Him to see if it’s true?
- Every step that we take in obedience to God is a test of His faithfulness to us, and He always proves to be true to His Word
  - Everything we do in obedience to Him tests and proves every aspect of the character of God – His love, faithfulness, goodness, kindness
  - He is the same yesterday, today, and forever and always comes through for us

## 2) The test of rebellion

- The Hebrew word used in Deuteronomy 6:16 where He says “Do not put the LORD your God to the test as you did at Massah” is nâsâh
- The context of such a testing is more to test the patience of the Lord by their rebellion due to their lack of faith than to prove His character to be true.
- The issue at Massah wasn't whether they had water to drink or not, but their unbelief in the presence of God
  - Exodus 17:7 And he called the place Massah and Meribah because the Israelites quarreled and because they tested the LORD saying, “Is the LORD among us or not?”
  - How can God be with us if we are going through hardships and don't even have our basic needs met
- This test of rebellion can be both a resistance to do what God had said, as well as a manipulation to do what God hadn't said or commanded
  - This attitude of resistantly testing God was in the 10 spies who gave a negative report of the land causing the whole Israelite nation to rebel against God
  - We might resist God by not serving Him in ways that He has called us to serve Him
- The devil tempted Jesus to manipulate the Word of God to make it do what it wasn't purposed to do
  - He wanted Jesus to put on a show on how He could through Himself off the pinnacle of the temple and how the angels would protect Him
  - God uses the angels to serve and protect us in the course of life and in His service. That verse wasn't intended to make a show out of God and His angels
- We shouldn't use the Word of God to manipulate our situations for our benefit.

## 3) Should we or should we not test God?

- We should not test God by pushing the boundaries of sin, rebellion and unbelief
  - God has clearly set out the consequences of sin and has given us numerous examples of those who have tested God by exceeding the boundaries set out by Him
  - Psalms 78:40-41 How often they rebelled against him in the wilderness and grieved him in the wasteland! Again and again they put God to the test; they vexed the Holy One of Israel.
- Consequences of putting God to the test
  - God is grieved and when God was grieved over sin at the time of Noah, He sent the flood
  - God is vexed – extremely angry. When the Israelites tested God by making a golden calf, 3000 Israelites were put to death
  - We don't enter God's rest.
    - Hebrews 4:3 Now we who have believed enter that rest, just as God has said, “So I declared on oath in my anger, ‘They shall never enter my rest.’”
- We should test God in obedience to His Word in the sense that we will prove him to be faithful and true
  - God had promised the land to the Israelites and Joshua and Caleb were willing to put that promise to the test by taking the land believing what God had promised
  - We give what is due to God believing that He is able and willing to give back to us far in abundance what we can ever give to Him
  - We go into the world trusting that He is with us at all times as He had said He would be
- Such testing God proves Him to be true to His word and brings glory and honour to Him