

PERTH BIBLE CLASS

TESTING OR TEMPTATION

It is interesting to note the dictionary meaning for each of our words and then consider the bible meaning.

Dictionary – To Tempt means try to persuade, entice, especially to something wrong or unwise. To Test means to prove, examine or to try.

In the King James Bible only the verb to tempt is found and the Strong's meaning is generally to test in both Old and New Testaments.

In the Old Testament most of the references are to how Israel treated God – see Psa 78 v 18, 41 and 56 “they tempted God”.

There are a number of synonymous terms e.g. to prove. A good example of this is in John 6 where the Lord Jesus asks Philip where they would obtain bread to feed the 5000 and scripture adds “this he said to prove him” v 6. Also the term trial as found in Heb 11 v 36 “others had trial of cruel mockings” with regard to some unnamed individuals in the great chapter of faith. Or in 1 Peter 1 v 7 “the trial of your faith”.

Practical implications for us today are that we will face both trials and temptations but we know from scripture that with regard to our dictionary definition of to tempt any such temptations would not come from God. James 1 v 13 in the amplified bible reads “ God is incapable of being tempted by what is evil and he himself tempts no one”. From where do temptations arise? Interestingly one of the names for Satan is the tempter. See Matt 4v 3 “when the tempter came to him” written of the temptations of the Lord Jesus in the wilderness also in 1 Thess 3 v 5 “lest by some means the tempter hath tempted you”. Undoubtedly this is the source of temptations.

Examples – Gen 3 in the garden of Eden when Adam and Eve are tempted by Satan and disobey God with such consequences for themselves and for all mankind.

Gen 39 – When Joseph is tempted by the wife of Potiphar. But he refused.

11 Sam 11 – When David is tempted seeing Bathsheba washing which led to one of the saddest episodes in his life.

Luke 4 – When Satan came to tempt the Lord Jesus in the wilderness. Good to note that there was nothing in the Lord Jesus that could respond to such. “The prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in me” John 14 v 30. The temptations covered the areas of weakness identified by John which might have been found in us. In 1 John 2 v 16 he speaks of the “lust of the flesh” - stoned to bread, “lust of the eyes” - showed him all the kingdoms, “pride of life” – cast himself down from the pinnacle of the temple.

When we face temptation we need to remember that this is both normal and proportionate – see 1 Cor 10 v 13 “There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man : but God is faithful who will not suffer you to be

tempted above that ye are able ; but will with the temptation also make a way of escape that ye may be able to bear it". Job is a great example of a man attacked by Satan but not above what he was able to bear as supported by his God.

We do also have resources – 1) Prayer. The Lord Jesus taught disciples to pray “lead us not into temptation” Matt 6 v 13 also “watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation” Matt 26 v 41. 2) A great High Priest in the person of the risen Lord Jesus Christ – “To be made like unto his brethren that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted he is able to succour those who are tempted” Heb 2 v 17 & 18.

Testing is seen in the lives of both old and new testament servants of God.

Gen 6 – Noah to build an ark to escape “things not seen as yet” Heb 11v 7.

Gen 22 –v 1 “God did tempt (test) Abraham” – to sacrifice his son.

Ruth 1 – A famine used to test Elimelech. Sad cost of leaving Bethlehem for Moab.

The nation of Israel are also tested collectively

Exo 15 – Bitter waters at Marah – they “murmured against Moses” v 24

Exo 16 – No bread – “murmured against Moses and Aaron” v 2

Exo 17 – Rephidim – no water “the people did chide with Moses” v 2

God met each need and no doubt the murmuring was in reality against God.

In new testament again individuals and groups are tested.

John 6 – The Lord Jesus to Philip “ whence shall we buy bread” v 5

Mark 4 & 6 – The disciples in the storms on the sea.

Acts 5 – Early Christians with the deception of Ananias and Sapphira

Acts 7 – The impact of persecution that saw Stephen martyred

Acts 8 – All that they faced from Saul of Tarsus

Acts 12 – James is executed and Peter imprisoned

Such tests might have led us to give up but we read they “went everywhere preaching the word” Acts 8 v 4. They passed with flying colours.

Some responses to temptation : “resist the devil” Jas 4 v 7 – “neither give place to the devil” Eph 4 v 27 “whom resist steadfast in the faith” 1 Peter 5 v 9 “flee youthful lusts” 1 Tim 2 v 22 : “put on the whole armour of God” Eph 6 v 11.

Some responses to testing : “count it all joy” Jas 1 v 2 : “rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name” Acts 5 v 41 : “wherein ye greatly rejoice “ 1 Peter 1 v 6 : “took joyfully the spoiling of your goods” Heb 10 v 34.

Promised reward : “blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried he shall receive the crown of life “ Jas 1 v 12.