

## Session 3

April 30, 2023

### THE TEMPTATION TO TEST GOD

**Deuteronomy 6:16-25; Matthew 4:5-7**

A few weeks ago, I quoted Adrian Rogers: “The devil *tempts* us that we might stumble, but God *tests* us that we might stand.” So what happens when we turn the tables? Is it really possible to “test” God? And if so, to what end? In this week’s lesson, the conflict between the devil and Jesus sheds some light on the subject.

**Perverting God’s faithfulness (Matt. 4:5-7).** In this second temptation, Jesus is transported to Jerusalem where He stood on the *pinnacle* of the temple. Scholars debate whether this refers to one of the spires, or simply to one of the rooves or railings. The former would make sense since *the* pinnacle necessarily refers to the highest point. If this indeed was the case, that pinnacle may have been that of the portico of Herod, which, according to some, rose nearly 600 feet from the floor of the Valley of Jezreel it overlooked. This temptation is more complicated than the first. Here, rather than being tempted to *bypass* God’s provision (by turning stones into bread), Christ is asked to *presume* upon it. In the first temptation, *Jesus* quoted Scripture to rebuke the devil. Here, *the devil* quotes Scripture to entice the Lord. Simply put, if you are God’s Son, then prove it! After all, doesn’t God promise to protect you? And everyone will see that you really are who you say you are.” The text the devil uses (Psalm 91:11-12) is only slightly misquoted but grossly misapplied. The context is God’s promise of divine protection to those who trust Him as a refuge and a fortress (ps. 91:2), not a safety net for those who might throw themselves off the roof of the temple on a dare! For reflection: *When I think of testing God, the story of Gideon comes to mind. Read Judges 6:33-40. Do you think was Gideon right or wrong to ask God for a sign? Why?*

**Proving God’s faithfulness (Deut. 6:16-19).** As Moses prepared the people to enter the Promised Land, he reminded them that God’s covenant was a true agreement: it had two sides. God would provide them with a wonderful and prosperous land. His people, however, had to keep their side of the bargain: devotion to the Lord God alone. And that included both faith and obedience. Verse 16 refers to Exodus 17, when the children of Israel ran out of water and complained to Moses. Somewhere along the way, they must have had serious doubts about God’s provision and began to question Moses, “Is the Lord among us, or not?” If such unbelief after such a miraculous delivery was so upsetting to Moses, imagine how God might have reacted. In that case, early on in their journey, God provided water from the stone and nothing more was said. But the bitterness of that exchange stayed with Moses for the entire wilderness wandering. And here, he warns them again. Rather than test God’s faithfulness, they were to claim God’s promises! If they would *observe* His commands and *do* what was right, God would see to it that they *entered* the land, took *possession* of it from their enemies, and *prospered* in it. For reflection: *We are not under the Old Testament covenant. But what principles do you see that might still apply to the church today?*

**Preserving God’s faithfulness (Deut. 6:20-25).** Just as in the day of the original Passover (Ex. 12:24 ff), Moses reminded the people that following the one true God was not something that came naturally. It had to be taught. While it was important to share the *history* of their

deliverance, it was even more important to share the *requirements* of the covenant with the generations to come. This pattern of remembrance by the older generation and reminders to the new would ensure God's covenant with His people would endure. Notice the final outcome was not simply a life of joy and prosperity, but one of *righteousness* (v. 25). For reflection: *How do we pass our lessons of righteousness to our children? Do you think the oral method of informal "storying" was more effective than our modern means of teaching? Why?*