

Testing God and Hardening Your Unbelief

Despite witnessing the spectacular miracles that led up to the Exodus, the nation of Israel tests God and harden their hearts.

For he is our God,
and we are the people of his pasture,
and the sheep of his hand.
**Today, if you hear his voice,
do not harden your hearts, as at Meribah,
as on the day at Massah in the wilderness,
When your fathers put me to the test
and put me to the proof, though they had seen my
work.**

For forty years I loathed that generation
and said, "They are a people who go astray in their heart,
and they have not known my ways."

Therefore I swore in my wrath,
"They shall not enter my rest." (Ps 95:7-11, ESV)

Therefore the people quarreled with Moses and said, "Give us water to drink." And Moses said to them, "Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the LORD?" But the people thirsted there for water, and the people grumbled against Moses and said, "Why did you bring us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?" (Ex 17:2-3, ESV)

And he called the name of the place Massah and Meribah, because of the quarreling of the people of Israel, and because they tested the Lord by saying, "Is the Lord among us or not?" (Ex 17:7, ESV)

1. What does the Psalmist reveal about testing / tempting God? What does it mean to test God?

2. What is the Psalmist saying, "do not harden your hearts... when your fathers put Me to the test?"

3. What is the consequence of a hard heart towards God?

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Teacher Notes

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Explain to the student: this account in Psalms is in reference to the event in Exodus 17. When the people complain about thirst and grumble against Moses, God provides water by instructing Moses to use his staff and strike a rock at Horeb. However, the fact that people complained and grumbled reveals something about their thoughts of God...

1. What does the Psalmist reveal about testing / tempting God? What does it mean to test God?

Ask the student: what do you observe of this statement, "when your fathers put me to the test and put me to the proof, though they had seen my work."

The nation of Israel was testing / tempting God of His desire of them. Did God love them? ("Why did you bring us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?") If you love us, prove it.

Did the nation of Israel accept God's proof that He loved them? No. Though they saw and experienced God's miracles leading up to the Exodus and the Exodus itself, the nation did not love and trust God's word. God loathed the first generation out of Egypt, because they would not place their faith in Him and trust that He would care for them despite all that He did.

"And the LORD said to Moses, "How long will this people despise me? And how long will they not believe in me, in spite of all the signs that I have done among them? (Num 14:11, ESV)

2. What is the Psalmist saying, "do not harden your hearts... when your fathers put Me to the test?"

Ask the student: who is the Psalmist speaking to? Who is he warning? Does this warning apply to you as well?

The Psalmist is speaking to the people of God many generations after the Exodus.

Ask the student: what observations do you make of the Psalmist warning, “today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts, as at Meribah,... when your fathers put me to the test”? Is God visible?

The psalmist’s figure of speech, “harden your heart,” refers to making strong your resistance in believing God.

Despite seeing repeated testing of God and his love for the nation of Israel, the nation would not place their trust in Him. They always complained to Moses and continued to doubt God about their provisions and blessings.

3. What is the consequence of a hard heart towards God?

Ask the student: is it possible that a hardhearted person could have faith in God?

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Look for an opportunity to share the gospel for any student who expresses a desire for salvation.