

Tribulation, Testing or Temptation?

9-29-14 AM

The Bible Says:

James 1:13 – God does not tempt us

Exodus 20:20 – God does test us

Hebrews 12:5-11 – God does chastise us

Is this a contradiction? That God does not tempt us but He tests us? Often these words are used synonymously (trial = test = temptation = tribulation). An example is James 1:2 vs. James 1:13, which in fact are the same Greek word used for trial and temptation. However, they have different implied meanings based on the context.

TEMPTATION

James 1:13-15 tells us that temptation is rooted in our desires; it is totally under our control. It also tells us that temptation's purpose is to cause us to sin. Therefore, we are to flee from temptation. Satan tempts us with our desires (I Corinthians 7:5, I Thessalonians 3:5), for which reason he is called the Tempter. Finally, God's desire is to end temptation or provide a way to flee it (I Corinthians 10:13, 2 Peter 2:9). Simply put, He does not want us to sin.

TESTS/TRIALS

While He does not tempt us, God puts us to the test (Job 1:1-9, Genesis 22:1-2,12). He may use Satan to accomplish this as seen in Job and in Matthew 4:1. The purpose of a test is to verify our integrity (Deuteronomy 8:2). Thus, it is necessary to confirm our commitment to God by being put to the test.

TRIBULATIONS

Tribulation refers to an experience of suffering or difficulty. God allows us to experience tribulations (Revelation 2:8-11) and expects us to endure them. The purpose is to grow our faith (James 1:2-4, I Peter 1:6-7). Scripture is clear that when we are chastised by God (tribulation) we become stronger in faith for it.

CONSEQUENCES OF SIN

Sometimes difficult times are simply the consequences of sin. In other words, there is no external cause at all to our difficulties; they are the results of decisions we made to sin. Sadly, consequences have no real value to us. We are meant to observe them and determine not to sin.

Application: When we struggle, we need to be asking the right questions in order to ascertain which of these things we might be experiencing. We need to know because some things we are commanded to flee (temptation), some things we are permitted to leave (trials and tests), and some things we must endure (tribulation). Am I struggling because:

- I am doing what is right before God?
- I am allowing my desires to control me?
- Experiences that are out of my control?
- These are the consequences of sin

By asking these questions and giving honest answer to them, we can determine what is happening in our lives and what the proper response is to these events.