

# Glad Tidings

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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## Testing God

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**T**he inspired writer of Hebrews draws the Hebrew Christians back to what their fathers did to God in Israel's early existence in the wilderness as they left Egyptian bondage for the promised land. “Where your fathers tried me by proving me...” (Hebrews 3:9). No one is to “make trial” or “tempt” the Lord our God (Deuteronomy 6:16, Matthew 4:6). The word “trial” denotes the idea of “tempting” God to “prove” Him according to their standard.

It is not that God cannot be proven. For example, Peter encourages those who have “tasted that the Lord is gracious” to continue to grow in the word (1 Peter 2:2-3). By conforming to God's revelation and wisdom we “may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God” (Romans 12:2). We can prove to ourselves and others by following God's way and tasting of God's blessings that God is gracious and one worthy of our total commitment.

“Trying” God or proving God that is condemned is when one demands God to act in a certain way determined by oneself, often when the person is ungrateful for the blessings and provisions already given to him or her by God.

For example, Paul reminds the Christian to not be like the

Israelites who made “*trial of the Lord and perished by the serpents*” (1 Corinthians 10:9). This event, recorded in Numbers 21:4-6, is when people journeyed from mount Hor and were “discouraged” (Numbers 21:4). They complained, “there is no bread, and there is no water...” (Numbers 21:5b). The people were “speaking against” God. They were questioning His plan for bringing them out of Egypt, accusing Him that such a plan was leading to their death in the barren wilderness (Numbers 21:5a). They were not only manifesting a lack of confidence in the Way of God but were putting down the provisions He was giving them, like the unique manna. Notice their complaint: “our soul loathes this light bread (Numbers 21:5).

God was feeding them with manna from heaven, but they wanted bread after their own “desire” (Psalm 78:18). If they did not get what they wanted and in the way they wanted it, God's faithfulness was questioned.

Why did Jesus respond with the demand to not make trial of God when tempted of the Devil (Matthew 4:7)? It was not that the Devil was failing to refer to Scripture, but he was determining the circumstance in order for the passage to be fulfilled. He was demanding that Jesus cast Himself to the ground

from the high pinnacle of the temple (Matthew 4:5). Psalm 91:11-12 is the promise of God's faithfulness for protecting the Israelites from harm as they followed the ways of Jehovah, not by defying the laws of gravity, such a demand is the sin of tempting or making trial of God.

When the contagious Covid-19 virus made its invisible way through our country, leaving sickness and death in its wake, the charge of “tempting God” was heard. Some, manifesting loving concern for the physical health of others, pivoted to “on-line” worship services. Sadly, some of this number levied the charge of “tempting God” upon those who kept their doors open for in-person assembly.

Why accuse brethren of tempting God in defying natural law while demanding God keep them safe? Could it be faithful brethren are determined to follow God's pattern for taking the Lord's supper, and provide the pattern for those who are willing and able to assemble in one place every first day of the week? Putting oneself in harm's way in fulfilling God's purpose is what Esther and Paul did, even if it meant possible death (Esther 4:16, 2 Corinthians 11:26). Risk-taking in the Lord is not necessarily the sinful testing of God. Know the difference!