

18.3 This is Only a Test

Every so often the Emergency Broadcast System will interrupt TV or radio to perform a test so that if there is a national emergency the system can function properly. Those in charge of the system would tell us what to do based on the type of emergency.

Do you feel tested today? Tests come in many forms. They either come directly by the hand of God or at least by His approval.

After Jesus was baptized in **Matthew 3** we read in the opening verse of the next chapter (**Matthew 4:1**, ESV):

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

The Holy Spirit led Jesus to the adversary. He confronted Jesus with three temptations or tests. In each of the tests, Jesus was victorious. Perhaps the strongest reason for His successes was because He was so educated with the word of God that He could see the traps. Even when Satan quoted scripture, Jesus saw his incompetence with the text and countered him.

This is impressive. I feel like I often stumble over the smallest of things, but Jesus handled the face to face battle with the enemy. What is even more impressive is that He did so as a man, not as God. He didn't pull the "God card" and put the devil in his place, He withstood as you and I are encouraged to do.

Paul reminds us that Jesus did not hold to His deity as we might in His place. Rather, He lived as a man. **Philippians 2:5-8** (ESV) reads:

⁵ Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

The great mystery is how He lived as a man and was still God. Some refer to Him as the "God-Man" who was 100% God and at the same time, 100% man.

The oral law of the Jews called, the Mishnah, describes Jewish boys' education. In the tractate, **Pirkei Avot 5.21** we see certain stages of life.

- At age 5 years, one is ready for the study of scripture;
- At age 10 – study of Mishnah;
- At age 13 – fulfillment of Commandments (Bar Mitzvah);
- At age 15 – Study of the Talmud;
- At age 18 – Marriage (Rabbis often delayed marriage in order to devote themselves to their itinerant teaching);
- At age 20 – One's vocation;
- At age 30 – The full vigor of an occupation (literally *move out in power* in Hebrew). Which is why Jesus waited until 30 to begin His public ministry in power; the full vigor of which climaxed at His death, burial, and resurrection.

The point of this is that Jesus lived like other Jews. He had the same training that other Jewish boys had. He was able to handle the tests and temptations because He was equipped through the process of fully incorporating God and the word of God into His life, and then living it out.

Temptations, trials, or tests are common to all of us. **1 Corinthians 10:13** (ESV) reminds us of this reality.

No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

The truth is, we are living in a time of trial or test right now. How are we holding up? Jesus withstood His trials because He was fully committed to God. That is the only way we can stand in our trials. Even in Gethsemane Jesus asked for the trial of the cross to be removed but humbly submitted to it when there was no other way (**Matthew 26:39-44**).

Small tests lead to bigger ones because our tests produce greater faith in us. Abram dealt with the smaller tests of famine and fear long before the test to sacrifice his son. Jesus dealt with the tests in the wilderness after which the devil left Him “**for a more opportune time**” (**Luke 4:13**). The events leading up to and including the cross were an opportunity for the devil and for Jesus. Certainly no one wants to die a horrific death like that of the cross. Jesus had the authority to call legions of angels to rescue Him, yet He endured the test and won in the end.

American Christians understand our unalienable rights are from God. We understand that those rights are under fire by unscrupulous people who want to take charge of our lives. Only God has that right. How will we deal with our test? Our choices determine many outcomes. As Paul states in **Ephesians 6:10** (ESV):

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might.

Keep The Light of Determination Burning!