

Temptation week 2

Religion



Temptation and Testing in the Holy Scripture: Contrast and Comparison

Introduction There are a few terms, which have been used in the Holy Scripture to denote testing and temptation, whose meaning, however, varies widely (Deasley, 1997). Thus, in the Old Testament, such Hebrew terms are ' bahan' (! xB)) and ' nasah' (aXn), with the respective meanings varying from testing of materials, such as metal, for their purity to testing of persons (see Job 23: 10; Zech 13: 9 New Revised Standard Version). In the New Testament, it is the Greek term ' dokimazo' (dokimazw), along with its cognates, that generally corresponds to the Hebrew ' bahan' and is used to denote either ' testing of buildings and precious metals' (see 1 Cor 3: 13; 1 Peter 1: 7 New Revised Standard Version) or testing of the Christian character (Rom 5: 4 New Revised Standard Version, cited in Deasley, 1997). Another Greek term in the New Testament for ' testing of persons' is (peirazw) peirazo.

Testing and Temptation - A Comparison and Contrast

The theme of testing runs through most of the Bible, including the Old and New Testaments (see Gen 22: 1, 42: 15; Deut 4: 34; also 1 Peter 1: 7; 2 Cor 13: 5; Rom 5: 4; James 1: 2-3; Gal 6: 1; Heb 11: 17 New Revised Standard Version). Thus, not only Christians are encouraged to test their belief, strength of will and fortitude, but also people are tested for their honesty, knowledge, etc. Even Jesus has been tested, though with intent to be discredited, by the Pharisees (see Matt 16: 1; Mark 10: 2 New Revised Standard Version); while people have been put to the test by God in order to reveal their qualities, thoughts and obedience (see Jer 12: 13; 1 Chron 29: 17 New Revised Standard Version). This is especially the case of those who exercised an all-important role in God's purposes, such as Abraham, as well

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as the prophets and the people of Israel (see Gen 22: 1; Exod 15: 25; Deut 8: 2 New Revised Standard Version).

Another theme that appears noticeable in the Holy Scripture is the one of temptation (Gen 3: 4-6; Matt 4: 3; Mark 1: 13; Acts 5: 3 New Revised Standard Version); the theme is especially prominent at the critical points in Jesus's ministry and redemptive mission, most notably His baptism and death on the cross (Deasley, 1997). Being tempted by the devil in the wilderness, Jesus rejected protection, provision and power over the world, though fake one, which were offered to Him in exchange for deviation from His divinely appointed mission, and thus succeeded where Israel had failed (Matt 4: 1-11; Luke 4: 1-12 New Revised Standard Version). The second major test had been in the garden of Gethsemane, where, according to the Synoptic Gospels, Jesus was tempted to avoid death on the cross (Deasley, 1997). Additionally, the term 'flesh' is understood to mean temptation - in the broad sense - although its use in the New Testament bears on apocalyptic and eschatological conceptions rather than anthropological one (Deasley, 1997).

Thus, having existence in God's world, testing and temptation apparently differ in their origin, insofar as temptation is thought to embody evil instigation, which could not be God's work; on the other hand, temptation do not necessarily leads to, or constitutes a sin (Deasley, 1997). Moreover, Christ's triumph over the powers of evil indicates that succumbing to temptation is neither inevitable nor unforgivable; both, however, are only possible through Christ and His divine grace (Heb 2: 18; 4: 14; 1 John 2: 1 New Revised Standard Version).

Conclusion

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Testing and temptation are considered instrumental in bringing about God's redemptive purpose. As such, both testing and temptation serve the divine purpose, with the important stipulation that God " sustains His people during testing" and " delivers them from temptation" (Rom 5: 3; Rev 3: 10; 1 Cor 10: 13; 2 Peter 2: 9 New Revised Standard Version, cited in Deasley, 1997). Thus, through the testing of Abraham, the people of Israel, and Christ, God furthered His redemptive purpose (Deasley, 1997).

References

Deasley, Alex R. G. (1997). Temptation, Test. In W. A. Elwell (Ed.), Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology. Retrieved from <http://www.biblestudytools.com/dictionaries/bakers-evangelical-dictionary/temptation-test.html>