

What Saith the Scripture?

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Does GOD Test People Like That? Or, Biblical Examples of Failed Prophecy, Testing, and Refinement

"That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ"

(1 Peter 1:7).

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Preface

Would God actually promote to us a date primarily to test and refine us? I think so. Though Abraham was probably extremely glad that he was not allowed to actually plunge the knife into Isaac, the LORD promoted the necessity to sacrifice Isaac, primarily to test and refine Abraham. "By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the Promises **offered up his only begotten son**, Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure" (Hebrews 11:17-19).

The Failed Prophecy of Jonah

In another example of a test, the prophet Jonah was actually disappointed at Nineveh's repentance. "And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that He had said that He would do unto them; and He did it not. But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry" (Jonah 3:10-4:1). God promoted the certainty of the destruction of Nineveh in 40 days as a demonstration of His holy hatred of sin, but also as a test of Jonah. "And Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey, and he cried, and said, **Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown. So the people of Nineveh believed God**, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them" (3:4-5).

What was Jonah's test? Jonah was tested about the **mercy** of God, as demonstrated by Jonah's love-- or, lack of it-- for his neighbors, the people of the city of Nineveh. "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the LORD" (Leviticus 19:18). God was compassionate about not wanting to destroy the more than 120,000 babies and children of Nineveh, who could not "discern between their right hand and their left hand" (Jonah 4:11). The mercy of God toward those who would repent was the occasion for the LORD to demonstrate true compassion and love.

Of course, Jonah was to obey God by delivering the message to Nineveh, i.e., "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown" (3:4). However, Jonah's deficiency in his love of his neighbor, i.e., Nineveh, **was brought out in this test**. Would God actually be so merciful as to forgive and spare Nineveh, if they repented? Intellectually, Jonah knew God to be merciful. "I the LORD thy God am a

jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Me; And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love Me, and keep My Commandments" (Exodus 20:5-6).

But, in his heart, Jonah distrusted God's application of that mercy. Jonah could not see why God would forgive and spare the very enemy-- the Assyrian Empire-- that was in the process of exterminating Jonah's nation. Jonah was inasmuch accusing God of being misguidedly merciful to Nineveh-- demonstrating a graciousness and love, which was lacking in Jonah. "And he prayed unto the LORD, and said, I pray Thee, O LORD, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew that Thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest Thee of the evil" (Jonah 4:2). Instead of rejoicing over Nineveh's repentance, Jonah bitterly complained that he would rather be dead than to continue to witness God sparing Nineveh. "Therefore now, O LORD, take, I beseech Thee, my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live" (4:3).

For 40 days, the LORD probed and tested Jonah to see if Jonah would show the same mercy that God would show to Nineveh. Would Jonah be merciful like God? It is evident that Jonah showed more concern for a gourd that gave him shade than for the people of Nineveh. "Then said the LORD, Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for the which thou hast not laboured, neither madest it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night: And should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?" (4:10-11).

The Old Testament Book of Jonah ends without any mention of Jonah passing his test, or repenting of his bitter attitude against God's merciful sparing of penitent Nineveh. "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy" (Matthew 5:7). Although Jonah appears to have failed his test, we need not fail ours. His failure is a warning to us to avail ourselves of the grace of God to pass our test. "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:16). Remember, our test is our **willingness to continue patiently "watching"** (Luke 12:37) for the LORD until He Raptures us Home. "Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled" (Hebrews 12:15).

The Testing and Refinement of Job

We, who are willing to seek and discover a date for the timing of the Pre-Tribulational Rapture (as well as other End Time events), need to consider the testing of Job as an example of our testing and refinement as we wait for our soon Rapture. "And the LORD direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ" (2Thessalonians 3:5). The problem of the suffering of the Righteous is the main theme of the Book of Job. "And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered My servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? and still he holdeth fast his integrity, although thou movedst Me against him, to destroy him **without cause**" (Job 2:3).

Notice that the LORD claims to be the One who is destroying Job "without cause" (2:3). Why? Job's friends believe that Job is being punished for sin that Job had committed and concealed. "Who ever perished, being innocent? or where were the righteous cut off?" (4:7). Even Job was at a loss as to why would God punish himself, when he thought he was doing it right. "For the arrows of the Almighty are within me, the poison whereof drinketh up my spirit: the terrors of God do set themselves in array against me" (6:4). While blame is being pointed at Job and back to his friends-- "miserable comforters are ye all" (16:2)-- the Almighty suffers Job's accusation of unfair treatment. "As God liveth, who hath taken away my judgment; and the Almighty, who hath vexed my soul" (27:2).

Job had finally succumbed and sinned earlier in the Book of Job-- "After this opened Job his mouth, and cursed his day" (3:1). After his discourse with "Eliphaz the Temanite, and Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite" (2:11), Job still felt himself "righteous in his own eyes" (32:1). A younger man, "Elihu the son of Barachel the Buzite" (32:2), became angry with Job because Job "justified himself rather than God" (32:2). "Also against his three friends was his wrath kindled, because they had found no answer, and yet had condemned Job" (32:3). Elihu attempted to "speak on God's behalf" (36:2). Concluding his defense of God, Elihu reminds us that "with God is terrible majesty" (37:22). But, he did not answer the question: **Why** was Job suffering this?

The Almighty then responds to Job. "Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said, Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?" (38:1-2). The LORD then proceeds to give Job-- and us-- an amazing glimpse at the magnificence of His power and wisdom. "There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, who rideth upon the heaven in thy help, and in His excellency on the sky" (Deuteronomy 33:26). Our Sovereign chooses to test us in the fashion that pleases Himself, and who "can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest Thou?" (Daniel 4:35).

To object to the test is simply to object to God. "Shall he that contendeth with the Almighty instruct him? he that reproveth God, let him answer it" (Job 40:2). Job was left without any sense of self righteousness. "Then Job answered the LORD, and said, Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer Thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth. Once have I spoken; but I will not answer: yea, twice; but I will proceed no further" (40:3-5).

Job acquitted himself as a Saint. "I know that Thou canst do every thing, and that no thought can be withholden from Thee. Who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge? therefore have I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not. Hear, I beseech Thee, and I will speak: I will demand of Thee, and declare Thou unto me. I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth Thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (42:2-6).

Job was tested because God **sovereignly deemed it wise** to do so. The Creator "knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are dust" (Psalm 103:14). If the Almighty chooses our test, then it must be best for us. "And we know that all things work together **for good** to them that love God, **to them who are the called according to His purpose**" (Romans 8:28). If none but God understands our character and the occasion for the test... so be it. We can rest in assurance that the LORD does "all things well" (Mark 7:37).

Conclusion

God always has a purpose and plan for our benefit, because He "so loved the world" (John 3:16)-- which means you and me. The Holy Spirit has given us His prophecies so that we will not be "comfortless" (14:18) about our future in these troublesome times. Even the trying of a "failed prophecy" may be used to make us "come forth as gold" (Job 23:10). In the end, if it causes us to "judge ourselves, [then] we should not be judged" (1Corinthians 11:31). May our testing make known the "manifold wisdom of God" (Ephesians 3:10).

Amen, and Amen.