



## INTRODUCTION

As we continue with our look into perceived errors in the Bible, the one for this week can affect the course of lives, depending on how you see it. **Scripture states God tempts people, and yet, just as emphatically, it tells us God does not tempt.**

Genesis 22:1 says "that **God did tempt Abraham...**"

Deut 8:2 and Judges 2:21 talk about God tempting Moses, and the nation of Israel.

In the New Testament, 1 Cor 10 12-14 tells us God allows temptation up to a certain limit. And yet James 1:13,14 clearly states- God tempts no one.

This is a serious conflict that hits close to home. There's no denying it; **a large part of the human experience involves temptation.** We all have been tempted; we all will be tempted again. We suffer by it, fail by it, and sometimes overcome it. It would be more than helpful to know God's part in it. ...Let's start by considering this...

### 1. IS THE BIBLICAL CONCEPT OF "TEMPTATION" THE SAME AS OUR MODERN CONCEPT?

Gen 22:1-14 in summary, goes like this: In his senior years, **Abraham has finally seen the first glimpse of God's promise.** He has a son, Isaac. And now, God tells Abraham to go to the land of **Moriah** to sacrifice his son. The altar is made, the firewood is laid, Isaac is bound and just as Abraham is about to plunge the knife, God stays his hand. Instead, God provides a ram for the offering. And Abraham names the place "The-Lord-Will-Provide."

In the King James, it specifically says "**God did tempt Abraham.**" And it is a correct translation. The original Hebrew was "**nacah**" which means, "tempt." However, the meaning of the word **goes beyond our concept** of simply "tempting." English equivalents of "nacah" are also, to- *test, assay, examine, prove, try, as well as tempt.*

So to get the full flavor of "nacah", let's consider some of the English equivalents:

**Assay**- *An analysis to determine the presence and amount of a substance. For example, a water assay.* Depending on what you're testing for, you may use a spectrometer, or drop a chemical into the water. The objective is not to change anything, but to simply **show you what's already there.** By the response to the light or chemical, the water reveals what it really is.

**Examine**- *To observe carefully or critically; to study or analyze*

**Prove**- *To establish the truth, validity, authenticity or quality.* Whether it's a testimony or a foot bridge; it's putting some weight on it to see if it will really hold.

**Tempt**- *To try to get (someone) to do wrong; inviting, risk provoking*

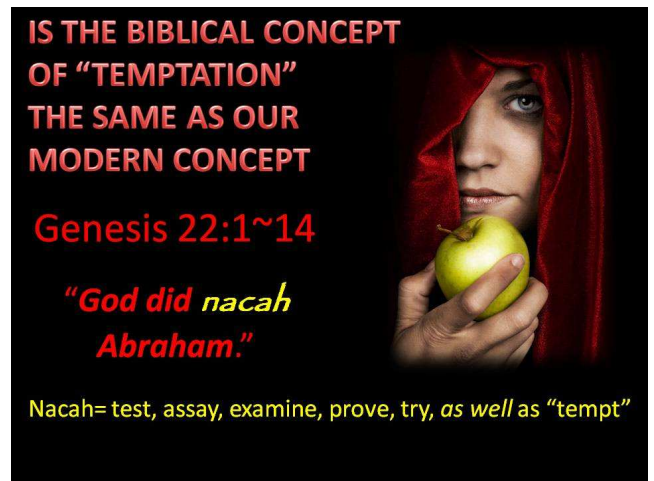
So to "nacah" involves any or possibly, all of those meanings.

Speaking to Moses-

#### Deut 8

2. "And you shall remember that the Lord your God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you and **test you**, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments

The same word, "nacah" is used. God will "nacah", test or tempt Moses to know his heart. And so the word is used over and over again in the Old Testament, **God tempts.**



In the New Testament we read...

**1 Cor 10**

12. Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.

13. **No temptation has overtaken you** except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but **with the temptation** will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.

14. Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry.

Now the original language has changed from Hebrew to Greek. Now the word used is peirazo (*pronounced pi-rad'-zo*). The English equivalents are to: *assay, examine, prove, tempt(-er), try*. –In other words, the **very same meaning**. So we're still comparing oranges to oranges.

And yes, even James:

**James 1**

13. ... God cannot be tempted by evil, **nor does He Himself tempt anyone**.

-It is the same word.

But, before we try to answer our original question, let's add one more complication:

**Matthew 4**

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

2. And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry.

3. Now when **the tempter** came to Him, he said, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread."



Rather shocking, isn't it? -The very same word used for God's "tempting" is used for Satan. **God and Satan doing the same thing!!** So, how do we deal with that?

Let's back up to **the account of Abraham** one more time. We are given a hint in the name of the land Abraham had gone to sacrifice. (*Do you remember? ...Moriah*) The word "Moriah" means "God-learned" or "God-feared." God sent Abraham on a journey to learn something fearful. He would assay the real nature of his own heart. And he would glimpse into God's heart.

Here's the thing with all of these actions:

**When you assay** something- it could be to a **good or bad intention**. You could be testing water with the intention of making it safe, or more toxic.

**When you examine**- you might be a doctor analyzing an MRI; or you might be a terrorist analyzing security so you can plant a bomb.

**When you prove**- you could be the lawyer defending, or the attorney accusing.

**When you try**- you can try to do good, or try to do harm.

**When you test** something- It could be to destroy it; or to verify the quality.

**"Nacah", "peirazo"** in its purest sense, **comes down to a question of intention**.

This is what Adam Clarke's Commentary says about temptation, in reference to Abraham:

*To tempt is originally to try, prove, put to the test. It belongs to the dignity of a moral being to be put to a moral probation. Such assaying of the will and conscience is worthy both of God the assayer, and of man the assayed. [A moral being is answerable for his moral condition; for a moral creator- that extends to His creation.]*

When God "tempted", "nacah" Abraham, (*the father of many*)- he was testing his worthiness as the father of a nation, to prove his quality of faith, to teach him (*that God provides*) **It was purely the positive side of the word. ...The intention was life.**

When Satan tempted Jesus; it was to destroy the plan of redemption, it was to harm- **it was purely the negative side of the word. ...The intention was death.**

2. **IN THE BIBLICAL CONCEPT; THE MEANING OF "TEMPTATION" CANNOT BE PROPERLY UNDERSTOOD, OUTSIDE THE INTENTION OF "TEMPTATION" -Action and intention are indivisible-**

**So, in the true Biblical concept God can tempt and yet not tempt!**

James is a living illustration of this is we understand it against the historical backdrop in which he was writing:

**James 1**

13. Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone.

14. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed.

Jewish theology was ingrained with the concept, God created man. He created everything about man. So, some rabbinical teaching went to the extreme- and taught God created everything, including evil temptation. They ignored the very heart of God.

The purpose of James' statement was to blow that line of thinking out of the water.

God does not allow, or bring challenges into a life for the purpose of malice. He affords temptation to show us ourselves, to prove what is really inside, to teach us, and even to strengthen us. But the ultimate objective is always the same; to bring us to life... eternal life. It is God's intention that explains other verses like:

**1 Cor 10**

12. Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.

13. No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.

14. Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry.

**The focus of the statement is "idolatry"**- putting desires above our desire for God. God is life and freedom. So walking away from God (i.e. idolatry) brings the opposite result; entrapment and death. God may allow, or even bring "temptations" into a life- but it is **ultimately for a good outcome**. The way of escape is always the same direction; toward Him.

So, this is what we've learned so far:

- The original concept of "tempt" goes **beyond our English** meaning. And in that sense...
- God "tempts" but always to good ends. God never tempts to evil ends. (*That falls to Satan and our own weaknesses.*)

## CONCLUSION

**And now; here's the mind-blower:**

**Matthew 4**

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

There's no denying it: The **Holy Spirit led Jesus to be tempted by Satan!**

And that's where this verse comes in:

**Romans 8**

**IN THE BIBLICAL CONCEPT; THE MEANING OF "TEMPTATION" CANNOT BE PROPERLY UNDERSTOOD, OUTSIDE THE INTENTION OF "TEMPTATION"**

**-Action and intention are indivisible-**

**28.** And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.

God uses all things for good, even the evil temptations- **but there's a qualification:** The person must be genuinely pursuing God's call.

Last Saturday, I happened to click by NPR in the car. It was **an interview with the country legend, Ronnie Milsap** called, "A Life in Music, Touched by God":

I came in half way through the program and the interviewer, David Greene, had just begun asking Milsap questions about his mother. Ronnie said, that as a small child, his mom told him repeatedly, that she believed he was a punishment from God, since he was born blind.

She couldn't stand to be around him, so he was sent to live with his grandparents. At the age of six, after years of absence, his mom came to visit him one last time. She now had a little girl, and she placed her in front of Ronnie and said, "Feel her eyes." Then she told him those eyes can see. God had finally given her a child who wasn't a punishment. And after that, his mother never contacted him again. Can you imagine a mother doing that! And yet, Milsap went on to say, with absolutely no bitterness in his voice, he had long since forgiven her.

He went to a school for the blind- one day while standing up for a boy who had his face slapped by a teacher, the teacher turned and slapped Ronnie's face as well. Ronnie said, at the time, he had just a remnant of sight in one eye- he could see white light- after that slap, everything gushed red, and the eye had to be removed. Yet his response was- things were different in those days, and despite the discipline, the education he received at that school, was first rate. He was grateful for the school because it empowered him to a successful life. -No bitterness at all. **The whole interview was a man thanking God for what he had given him.**

**~So back to our question:**

**Does God- tempt?** If by that we mean; assay, test, verify, prove, try, teach? **Yes**, absolutely!

**Does God tempt?** If by that we mean; mislead, destroy in malice, twist our weaknesses, try to make you fall, and cause evil. **No**, absolutely not!

Now from all of this, here is our truly profound hope:

**For those who hear His call; for those who fall in love with the call, and the Caller- no matter what the context of the "temptation", no matter what the source... He will turn it to good.**



#### THE CHALLENGE

**Let me tell you something with 100% certainty.** You WILL face more temptation in your life. -You will flirt with it, fight it, give in to it, overcome it, learn from it, suffer by it, live the consequences of it, be ashamed of it, grow stronger by it; ...**live by it, or die by it.**

The question becomes- Whose "tempting", "nacah", "peirzo"- **will dictate the path of your life?**

**Once again, a perceived "conflict" in Scripture actually leads us to a profound moment of decision, and to the possibility of greater, richer faith.**

**Temptation is all about response; all about choice.** So I think God would like us to take a few minutes to do, just that. If you want to do some serious business with God about

temptation- in the full Biblical sense of the word- the prayer altar is open. ***That's another Biblical theme- wherever temptation is mentioned, the response of prayer is near by.***

\*\*\*  
***Considering the topic today, let's close our worship with the Lord's prayer?***