

January 2007

SATAN’S PURPOSE IN THE LIFE OF A SON

by *Stacy R. Wood, Jr.*

GETTING TO KNOW SPIRIT	1
Discerning Between Spirit And Soul	2
God Is Spirit That Possesses A Soul	2
Satan’s Purpose In The Life Of Every Son	3
The Importance Of Obedience	3
The Importance of Patiently Enduring	3
A Third Son Tested by The Devil	4
Coming Into A New Day	4
What Was The Purpose For Testing?	5
Zion And Eden Compared	5
Testing The Focus of The First Son	6
What Is The Challenge?	6
What Should We Learn?	7
Three Easy Steps To Sonship	8
Proving His Placement In The Body	8
Does The Bible Always Apply?	9
What We Learn In The Second Testing?	9
The Third Test Ascribes Worth & Value	9
Testing is Necessary for All Sons	10
The Refining Of Silver	11

GETTING TO KNOW SPIRIT

In our study of Satan some have asked if I believe in a "literal" devil. My answer is, "I believe there is a "literal" devil, just as I believe there is a "literal" God." However, I do not see God in human form, sitting on a "literal" throne or a judge’s bench with a gavel in his hand. For "God is spirit." Those who worship God must ascribe worth or value to him in spirit even truth. (Joh. 4:24) Moreover, I do not see Satan in human form, wearing red flannel underwear, with a pointed tail, horns on his head and carrying a pitchfork.

When I think of God I often consider the wind, because it is a force that we all experience each day. It blows and we hear its sound or voice, but we do not know where it came from or where it goes. (Joh. 3:8) Moreover, the force of the wind is unlimited like the power of God.

I also think of Satan as a spirit. The majority of the church would agree that Satan is described by Paul when he wrote concerning "the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in the sons of disobedience." (Eph. 2:2) That is, the adversary is an invisible force or influence in and about the life of God’s sons. It is important to understand that Satan is given primarily for the perfection or maturity of God’s sons. In the Bible the first mention of

Satan is when the adversary stood up against Israel, and again when he provoked David to number Israel. (1Chr. 21:1; 2Sa. 24:1) Then, in Job's day the sons of God came to station themselves by the Lord, (meaning to place themselves above the Lord), and the Adversary or Satan was also in their midst. (Job 1:6, 2:1) Next, we see Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him. (Zec. 3:1)

Some get the idea that we are speaking of "Casper the Ghost" when we mention spirit of the devil. However, this is not at all what we are trying to portray. First, and foremost, we are speaking of the invisible force and influence that brings adversity, condemnation and accusation to the life of the believer. (Re. 12:10) Now, let us add another definition of spirit that helps to give recognition of the adversary. Consider John's writing, "*Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but try (that is, test) the spirits to see if they are of God.*" (1Jo. 4:1) How does one test what they cannot see. John gave us this instruction to help us recognize the difference between the spirit of God and the spirit of antichrist. Again we need to understand that "*antichrist*" primarily means "*instead of*" or "*in-place of the anointed one.*" The spirit or attitude behind what is being ministered reveals the truth. I use this test to determine if what is being ministered is or is not God. This is how we know the spirit or attitude of God: "*every spirit (that is, attitude) that confesses (or agrees) that Jesus Christ has come and continues in the flesh is of God; and every spirit (or attitude) that does not confess (or agree) that Jesus Christ has come and continues in the flesh is not of God.*" (1Jo. 4:2-3) Now, anyone can make a verbal confession and say, "*Jesus Christ has come and continues in the flesh.*" This confession is often made with the defiant or quarrelsome attitude of a religious mind. If we learn to look at the attitude (or spirit) that is behind a verbal confession we will discern the true spirit every time.

Discerning Between Spirit And Soul

In the early stages of Bible chronology the serpent and Adam are found in the middle of the garden at the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. It is made clear in the book of Revelation that the serpent is just another name for the devil or Satan. (Re. 12:9)

Why do I say, "*Adam*" was at the tree rather than "*Adam and Eve*"? In Genesis chapter five we read, "*This, is the record of the generations of Adam. In the day when God created man (Heb. 'âdâm). In the likeness of God, made he him. Male and female, created he them, and blessed them, and called their name Adam, in the day they were created.*" (Ge. 5:1-2) Did you notice that God called the name (or nature) of both the male and female, Adam, not Adam and Eve? They were so much like one another that they both received the same identity. Apparently, Adam was about as bewildered over his state of being, as many are about their's today. We are told that Adam was placed in the garden of Eden where he diligently named all the fowl of the air along with the beast and cattle of the field, but he found no help meet for himself. (Ge. 2:19-20) God determined it was not good for Adam to continue in his lonely state of existence. So he caused a lethargic state to come upon Adam and the female portion was extracted from him in what the Bible calls a "*rib.*" From this rib God formed a help meet or assistance for times of distress. When Adam saw his counterpart he said she would be called, "*Woman*" (Heb. '*ishsha' nâshîym*), because she was taken out of "*Man*" (Heb. '*îysh.*') (Ge. 2:23) Adam does not call his counterpart Eve, until after the transgression and pronouncement of God's judgement. (Ge. 3:20) Thus, it is not Eve, but it is Adam, "*ish*" and "*isha,*" at the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This shows the transgression involved Adam, both male and female, which represents the spirit and soul of humanity. (Ro. 5:14; 1Ti 2:14)

God Is Spirit That Possesses A Soul

The Scripture tells us Adam was created in the likeness of God. Now, this does not mean God looks like a man, or that Adam looked like God. For God's image and likeness speaks to us of something much more than mere form or outer appearance. God is not a man, but is spirit, possessing a soul. (Nu. 23:9; 1Sa. 15:29; Job 9:32; Ps. 11:5; Pr. 6:16-19; Isa. 42:1; Jer. 5:9, 29, 6:8, 9:9, 12:7, 51:14; Am. 6:8; Joh. 4:24) How are we to describe God, as a being?

For both spirit and soul are like the wind. They are invisible and not limited by shape or location. The spirit is the force or energy of life. While the soul gives expression to the life. The spirit breaths out the intellect, desire, will and emotion of the heavenly plain. While the soul gives expression or birth to the heavenly intellect, desire, will and emotion on the earthen plain. The likeness and image of God is seen as spirit expresses through the soul. This is what we see in the creation of Adam, for God created Adam both male and female. That is, God created a heavenly expression of himself, a spirit possessing a soul. Then, he breathed this heavenly creation into a earthen vessel or body. (Ge. 1:26-31; 2:7; 1Co. 15:45) Thus, Adam first functioned as a epicene (*ἑπισησῆν* from Greek *epikoinos*) creation. That is, he had both male and the female characteristics. He was created to function as God, a "living spirit" that births the seed of his intellect, desire, will, and emotion through the "soul." When God divided Adam into two individual expressions, he was unveiling the "adamic soul" to Adam, who was a "spiritual man." The soul and spirit, separated in Adam, are destined to become joined as one "new man." (2Co. 5:17; Eph. 2:15, 4:25) That is, it is necessary for spirit and soul to become unified in every human being. (Ge. 2:24; Eph. 5:31-32)

Satan's Purpose In The Life Of Every Son

The tree of the knowledge of good and evil represents the letter of the law. Adam had been forbidden to partake of it. Because the letter of the Law, serves only to produce condemnation and adverse judgment, which leads to death. (Ge. 2:7, 15-16; De. 30:11-16; 2Co. 3:6, 9) It is the spirit of God alone that gives life to the soul. The spirit of God is represented by the tree of life that is also at the center of the garden. However, the tree of life is not immediately unveiled or recognized by Adam. Possibly the foliage or abundance of the knowledge of good and evil prevented Adam from recognizing the tree of life. Just as the reading of the law of Moses opens the knowledge of good and evil to the understanding and prevents so many from coming to the life hidden or veiled in the very midst of the law. (Ge. 2:15-17; De. 29:29, 30:19; 2Co. 3:15; Col. 1:26-27)

The Importance Of Obedience

In our last writing we looked at God's first son, Adam, where we learned the importance that God places on obedience. Obedience is so much more than merely doing what one is told. The Hebrew word for obey and its Geek equivalent both mean "to hear intelligently." That is, listen intently using ones ability to acquire and apply both the knowledge and the skills to what is heard. Thus enabling the hearer to submit to authority and carry out the instruction or command. Samuel declared, "To obey is better than sacrifice!" That is, to listen and pay attention is better than the fat of rams! (1Sa. 15:22-23)

"Two transgressions" took place in the garden at the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The first was with the Adamic female, or the soul of Adam, who was deceived or beguiled by the serpent to transgress God's command. (2Co. 11:3; 1Ti. 2:14) Then, the Adamic male, or the human spirit, was not deceived, but deliberately violated and disregarded what God had commanded. This deliberate act or side stepping of the command of God by the federal head of humanity, caused sin and condemnation to come into the ordered arrangement or world. Moreover, death passed into all humanity through sin, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. (Ge. 2:16-17; Ro. 3:23, 5:12, 14, 6:23; 1Ti. 2:14) Some want to deny their connection with "the first Adam." This would then disconnect them from "the last Adam." However, since we all came through "the first Adam" taking on his earthen form and identity, we are also experiencing overcoming in the soul and the taking on of a new identity that concludes in "the heavenly form of Christ." (1Co. 15:45-49)

The Importance of Patiently Enduring

The next son that we examined in our last writing was Job, who patiently endured during the days that the sons of God, with Satan in their midst, came to set or station themselves above the Lord. (Job 1:6, 2:1; Is. 12:14-16)

It is in Job's experience that we find the conclusion, or goal of the Lord, for Job came to recognize that there was so much more than learning about God by what one hears. That is, the letter of the word can never fully teach one what they need to know, for each person must come to the place of *seeing God, as he is*, which brings a person to a change of thinking. This is commonly called an act of repentance and is brought about with a mighty shaking of the earth. The quaking of Job's earthen heritage caused a removing of all that was shaken. (Job 42:5-6; Ro. 2:4; 2Co. 7:10; He. 12:25-29)

Remember. Although, we are God's offspring it has not been fully revealed what we will become as we reach full maturity. Yet, we know when Christ is revealed, we will be like him, for we *shall see him, as he is*. Now, everyone who has this confidence in Christ keeps themselves pure, as Christ is pure. (1Jo. 3:2-3)

Job's experience demonstrates how extremely compassionate and full of mercy the Lord is. All of Job's friends, being also sons of God, did not speak to him as they should have. For they spoke to condemn him as a hypocrite. They did not support or encourage him throughout his trials, but became false accusers and adversaries in his situations. (Job 42:8) They all had the same word of God, but ministered guilt and condemnation rather than life and strength. Just as many brethren do in this hour. However, Job did not become bitter because of the way they judged and condemned him. Instead, he arbitrated or interceded with God on their behalf, as a priestly son. Thus, God restored his family, health and fortune and then doubled it! (Job 42:10; Jam. 5:10-12)

The prophets, who spoke the word of the Lord, are also an example of the cost paid to enter the kingdom of God from Adam to Christ. They patiently suffered affliction, and by doing so they illustrated that by enduring much pressure each generation is brought into the kingdom of God. (Ac. 14:22; Jam. 5:10)

A Third Son Tested by The Devil

This son of God came into a unbelieving and corrupt generation to usher in the dawning of a new day and establish it with a new and better covenant. (Heb. 8:6) In this writing we will look at the Jesus, the Son of God, who was sent into a generation of "*poisonous serpents*." (Mt. 3:7, 12:34, 23:23)

The experts of his day taught from the law of Moses and loaded the people down with grievous and wearisome burdens of guilt and condemnation. Yet they would not help to lift the load in any way. (Lk. 11:46) These religious rulers were to lead men in the ways of the Lord, but had made the word of God of no effect through their tradition. (Mk. 7:13) They took away the key of knowledge by refusing to enter the kingdom. Moreover, they hindered those who wanted to enter. (Mt. 23:13; Lk. 11:52) By not being able to practice what they preached they set a poor example, thus raising up an unbelieving and corrupt generation. (Mt. 17:17)

You know the story of what happened in Judea. It began in Galilee, after Jesus turned thirty years of age and went to his cousin, John the Baptist, who preached a total change of life through water baptism. (Lu. 3:2-23) Jesus told John that he needed to be baptized in order to fulfill what was right and to be completely fair in his generation. That is, he was completing the state, the quality, or ideal of being just, impartial, and fair, according to the law. (Mt. 3:15) I do not want you to be ignorant, for all of Israel had been baptized or birthed into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, when they left Egypt. (1Co. 10:1-2) Thus, John's baptism symbolized the birthing of Israel out of the era of Moses into a "*new day*" that was dawning upon the world (*or the ordered arrangement of traditional religion*). That is, the law, which came through Moses, was being made replete or full by the grace and truth that came through Jesus Christ. (Joh. 1:17; Ac. 10:36-38)

Coming Into A New Day

After Jesus was immersed, he immediately stepped forth out of the water to follow in his Father's footsteps. The experience that pursued began with a personal *spiritual* revelation. This confirmation of his calling brought him into the wilderness where the testing of his faith, virtue and character began. Finally, these trials would consummate with the approval of his calling and the breaking forth of his ministry.

It all began when Jesus came out of the water and the heavens opened to him, revealing he was to relentlessly seek those things which were above his earthen heritage. This shows us that sons are to give their thinking to those things that are above and not to the things on the earth. (Col. 3:2) In this experience Jesus witnessed the spirit descending like a dove to abide upon his life, which suggests the anointing gently rested upon him from this very time throughout his entire ministry. The signification of the Holy Spirit abiding upon him tells us the "*spirit of conciliation*" and "*attitude of peace*" rested upon him throughout his entire life. (Joh. 12:20-31; Ro. 5:14-19; 2Co. 5:19; 1Ti. 2:1-6) Finally, what a wonderful word of affirmation and encouragement he received, as he heard the Father openly declare, "*This is my son, the dearly loved, in whom I am well pleased.*" The title "*son*" was given to him by God himself. This experience also denotes the nearness of their relation and the love of the Father for him. (Mt. 3:16-17, 17:5; Lu. 9:35-36; Joh. 12:25-30; 2Pe. 1:17)

Jesus obeyed and followed the leading of the spirit. This took him, like Israel of old, into a *solitary, uninhabited, lonely, desolate place or wilderness* where wild dangerous beasts lived. It is here that his testing or proving would begin to qualify him to bring righteous judgment upon the failed Mosaic tradition. (Mt. 4:1-11; Mk. 1:12-13; Lu. 4:1-10) There is a definite purpose for the wilderness of solitude in the life of every son.

What Was The Purpose For Testing?

All the tests *in* the life of Jesus challenged his true identity and focus as the son of God. The first test dealt with the focus and importance he put on the flesh or carnality. It is absolutely impossible for flesh and blood to be an heir of God's kingdom. (1Co. 15:50) The second tribulation dealt with his feelings of self-importance and his need for recognition. The need for recognition can become a deadly trap, as can the focus on one's self-importance. (Ps. 131:1-2; Isa. 57:15; Mt. 18:1-4, 20:26-27, 23:11-12) The third trial proved him in the area of his heritage and allotted portion. God's sons are given an allotment in God's kingdom and it is necessary to qualify as a recipient of the prize. (1Co. 9:23-27; Phil. 3:13-15) It makes no difference in what sequence these hardships come, the purpose is the same, they are all given to ascertain the quality of faith, virtue and character in the life of a son. Why was the wilderness chosen for the first testing? Let us remember that God placed his first human in a garden called Eden. This garden was a representation of the kingdom of heaven and Adam was to receive his sustenance from it. Furthermore, he was to govern God's entire creation from this vantage point. (Ge. 1:26-30, 2:7-8, 15) However, the first Adam transgressed the law of God and there had been no one to tend, guard or keep the garden for nearly four thousand years, biblical chronology. (Ge. 2:15, 3:23-24; Ro. 5:14; 1Ti. 2:14) Thus, the heavenly kingdom had become a solitary, lonely, desolate and uninhabited wilderness. It had become inhabited with wild beasts, which represent the bestial nature of the Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees, who were sitting in the seat of Moses to govern the people of Israel. (Mt. 23:1-3) However, it was time for the promised Seed of God to come forth, as the Head of a corporate son, and crush the head of the serpent. Thus, re-establishing the garden or kingdom of the God. (Ge. 3:15; Job 18:3; Ps. 49:20, 73:21-24; Ec. 3:18)

Up to the time of Jesus the promises of God had been limited to those who grew up under the teachings of Moses. The Mosaic covenant had been the true way of God for nearly two thousand years. However, the laws and tradition of the Pharisees became more important than the law of God and this resulted in the word of God being made ineffective. (Mt. 15:1-6; Mk. 7:1-16) This formed a void or wilderness in the life of those who heard their teachings.

Zion And Eden Compared

It is interesting to note the prophet Isaiah mentions Zion and Eden in the same breath. (Isa. 51:1-4) It seems odd to compare Eden, which means "pleasure or delight," with Zion, which means "a dry or parched place." However, clarity comes when we recognize that both Eden and Zion represent the two Jerusalem's, or covenants of the living God; The new Jerusalem, or covenant, from above, which is the mother of all who live by faith and are born from above. Then the Jerusalem, or covenant that is from below that generates bondage and death. (Lk. 23:43; 2Co. 12:4; Ga. 4:22-31; He. 12:22-23; Re. 2:7)

God's chosen people were a delight and pleasure until they became a dried and parched representation of godliness. Isaiah prophesied to those who pursued fairness and relentlessly sought after the Lord, saying, *"The Lord will comfort Zion (the dry or parched place). He will comfort all her waste places, and he makes her wilderness like Eden (a pleasure or delight), and her desert like the garden of the Lord; joy and gladness will be found in it, thanksgiving and the voice of singing. Hear me, my people, for a law shall go out from me, and my justice I will make rest as light to peoples."* (Is. 51:1-4) The promise of the Lord to comfort Zion and all her waste places had not yet been made manifest. Jesus' ministry would be the beginning of the restoration of Zion's wilderness to the glorious state of the garden of Eden.

It is not the wars in the middle east that are bringing a restoration to Zion's wilderness. I believe the past two thousand years have proven this over and over again. God gave gifts of grace to his people to fully equip them for the work of serving creation and the building up of Christ's body. These gifting's of God will continue to operate until we all come into oneness of the faith and into the full and accurate recognition of the Son of God. Finally, the restoration of Zion will become fully evident with the maturity of sons, who come to the stature of fullness of Christ. (Eph. 4:12-13)

Testing The Focus of The First Son

Jesus was compelled or driven by the Spirit into the wilderness, where he would have a spiritual experience. This would take place after forty days and forty nights of fasting. (Mt. 4:2; Lu. 4:2) This time of going without food establishes two important things. First, it declared a significant and lasting change was about to take place through his ministry life, just as it had in the days of Noah and Moses. (Ge. 7:4, 12; Ex. 24:18) A "new day" was about to dawn upon God's people. It also served to prepare his soul or life for the testings that were set before him.

The first testing determined how much focus Jesus put on himself or his fleshly state of being. The first Adam saw the tree or ordered system of his day and how it was good for sustenance. (Ge. 3:6) It always appears that if one is willing to partake of the existing system and its identification with the law what is needed for the flesh will be provided. What was the true focus and desire of Jesus? Did he focus on the needs of his flesh more than the needs of the spirit? How important was the hearing of God's voice? It was immediately after the forty days of fasting that Jesus was tested of the devil or adversary. This first testing came during the time of hunger and weakness of the flesh. Trials and testings most often come to take advantage of our circumstances. That is if we are jobless, poor, hungry, sick, or addicted the testing comes to cause us to doubt our placement as a son of God. The test seeks to get us to look to another source for our supply. Moreover, Jesus was fully aware of the solitary, lonely, desolate, uninhabited, waste that all about him, because of the religious order. Then the adversary began to whisper or hiss within his thought life, *"In view of the fact that you are God's son, by virtue of your participation in the divine essence of deity, speak, to these stones and turn them to loaves of bread."* (Mt. 4:3)

What Is The Challenge?

The first testing challenges several areas in the life of the son. For it brings to question the relationship Jesus has with the Father. Just forty days prior to this experience Jesus received a glorious confirmation of his true identity when he clearly heard the voice of the Father say, *"This is my son, in whom I am well pleased."* (Mt. 3:17) Now, while his flesh is weak a whisper

surfaces within his thinking. Will he be able to stand with confidence in what he heard the Father say? Or will he feel the need to prove God's word with a sign? The spirit is indeed willing, but the flesh is weak at this point. (Mt. 26:41)

The forty days and nights of fasting served to humble Jesus, as he sought the will of the Father. He had taken this time to consider the lessons learned by the elders, who preceded him in the forty years of a wilderness journey. All that happened to them had a figurative meaning for the present. It had been passed on from generation to generation to admonish those upon whom the end of the ages would come. These were to remember, *"The one who thinks he is standing securely, needs to beware of falling."* Moreover, *"No testing comes upon a son, but such as is common to the human nature."* Yet, *"God is faithful and will not allow anyone to be tested beyond their strength. For when the testing comes, God also provides the way of escape and that is made manifest in that you are able to bear up, under the testing."* (1Co. 10:1-13; He. 9:26) These are all principles of wisdom that every son can hold to during these times of testing.

Jesus never swerved from the standard or foundation given to him by the Father. He did not look for a "new" expression or idea beyond what was recorded as God's word, even though, the law of Moses had become weakened by the Pharisees interpretation. Jesus simply quoted the law of Moses in answer to adversarial thinking that had risen within his mind, saying, *"It has been written and is at present on record, "Not upon the basis of bread only will an individual live, but upon the basis of every word proceeding out of God's mouth."* (De. 8:3; Mt. 4:4; Lk. 4:4)

This response was taken directly from a dialogue of Moses concerning manna. For Moses had taught that the Lord humbled Israel in the wilderness and fed them with an unusual food, called "manna." When the sons of Israel saw God's provision for the first time they said, *"what is it?"* For they had not seen manna before. Then Moses said to them, *"This is the bread which the Lord has given you to eat."* (Ex. 16:15) God's purpose was to teach Israel that *"man does not live by bread alone."* (De. 8:2-3) Thus, man is not exclusively what he eats! That is, there are things other than food that support life. Moreover, everything God commands is beneficial and will support life. Thus, humanity is to live by what comes from God's mouth, such as what God commands or desires.

Jesus answered this testing with substance by declaring, *"Bread is not the most pressing or necessary issue at this time, for life first depends on the will of God. He supports life in other ways than with bread. Humanity will live by everything his Maker commands."* In other words, *"I have bread to eat that you cannot comprehend. For my bread is to do the will of the Father who sent me and to accomplish his work."* (Joh 4:32, 34)

What Should We Learn?

It is important that we understand what the spirit is teaching through the testings of Jesus. We do not see a literal Satan in red flannel underwear, with a forked tail, horns and a pitch fork in hand coming to Jesus in the wilderness. Moreover, we do not imagine a literal snake slithering up to Jesus and talking with him. For this is a spiritual experience and it is taking place on the battlefield of his mind. These questions are rising up in his thinking as he ponders his true identity and the call of God on his life. Although Jesus literally walked in the flesh he did not war according to the flesh. The weapons of his warfare were not fleshly or self-centered, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds. He cast down reasonings and every lofty thought that exalted itself against the knowledge of God, thus bringing every thought into captivity. (2Co. 10:3-5)

Those who are fleshly, focus their thinking on the acts and desires of the flesh. This obsession with self is a dead end and is hostile toward God. This thinking is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can it be. Focusing on self or flesh is the opposite of focusing on God. Anyone completely absorbed with self ignores God and ends up thinking more about the flesh than God. This only leads to ignoring who God is and what he is doing. God is never pleased

with being ignored. Therefore, those who are self-centered and in the flesh cannot please God. (Ro. 8:6-8) However, if a son focuses upon the spirit of God, who has taken up residence in his life, he will not be able to think more of himself than of God. For anyone, who experiences the indwelling spirit of Christ – even though they still experience all the limitations of the fallen Adam – they truly experience life on God's terms. (Ro. 8:9-10) The testing of the self-life or flesh takes place to help a son learn where his thinking is truly focused. When one has risen above the earthen realm, they seek what is above, where they are seated and enthroned with God. So give yourself to thinking on things that are above and not to those things that pertain to earthliness. (Ro. 8:5-9; Col 3:1-2)

Three Easy Steps To Sonship

Early in my ministry I began to seek the Father's will for my life. I wanted to know how to manifest the life of God's son while in this weakened flesh. One night the Lord came to me while I was dozing off. You know the place that is part way between sleep and consciousness. What took place was so vivid that it became imprinted in my memory. I remember it today, nearly forty-five years later, as if it just happened. One night the Lord entered my bedroom and came to the right hand side of my bed, where he handed me a booklet. The title read, **"How to Manifest Sonship In Three Easy Steps."** I became so excited over the writing that I hardly noticed Jesus leaving the room. However, I did say, *"Goodbye, I will see you later."* I began to skim through the booklet in which there were three chapters. Chapter one was titled, *"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind."* (Mt. 22:37) I thought, *"I pretty well understand this and have applied it in my life."* So I turned to chapter two, which was titled, *"You shall love your neighbor as yourself."* (Mt. 22:39) Again I thought, *"This I also understand and practice. What am I lacking?"* Finally, I turned to the third and last chapter which was titled, *"You Can Eat All The Fish You Want, But Don't Waste Any Time Catching It."* As I read this title I suddenly awakened and started laughing uncontrollably. What had been so real to me turned out to be a joke. I carried this memory with me and shared it with others as one of the funniest experiences of my Christian walk. Then, one day I was sharing this memory with a group of ministry and an elder said,

"Son, don't laugh at that, it is a prophetic word to your life." Suddenly, what I had long considered a joke became a very serious thought. Where I had never given any thought to the third chapter I now began to seek the understanding. When the cognition finally dawned it was simple, yet quite profound. Fish speak of the sustenance of life. So the title told me that I could have whatever it takes to sustain my human life, but I was not to waste any time obtaining these things. Jesus said, *"Do not be anxious, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? Or, with what will we be clothed? For the heathen seek after all these things. Your heavenly Father knows that you have need of all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God even his righteousness or fairness; and all these things will be added to you. Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow; for tomorrow shall be anxious for its own things. Sufficient to the day is the evil of it."* (Mt. 6:31-34) What a lesson, and when it is understood, what peace it brings to ones life.

Proving His Placement In The Body

For the next test the adversary took Jesus into the holy city, Jerusalem, and sat him upon the pinnacle of the temple. (Jn. 1:28, 10:40, 11:18) This appears to be an obvious spiritual experience. For Satan and Jesus were in the wilderness one moment and the next moment they are on top of a pinnacle of the temple in Jerusalem, two or more miles from the wilderness. It is not likely they took a casual stroll into the city and scaled to the top of a pinnacle so this testing could take place. To think of it as a spiritual experience does not take away from its reality, but it simply demonstrates it was a spiritual reality, rather than a physical comedy.

The historian, Josephus, describes the pinnacle of the temple, as being so high that it would make a man's head giddy to look down from its towering heights. (Antiq. 15.412) It was on the

lofty extremity of the temple that the adversary once again challenged Jesus. A thought or whisper rises within his thinking, *"Since you are God's son, cast yourself down from here, because it is written, He will give his angels (messengers) charge over you, to keep you in all your ways. They will bear you up in their hands, lest you dash your foot against a stone."* (Ps. 91:11-12; Mt. 4:6) Is it possible for a son of God to qualify himself through such an arrogant act as to cast himself down from the heights of the temple? If anyone deserved to be given recognition and pre-eminence by the religious leaders of his day, Jesus did. Remember. *"Everything is permissible, but not everything is helpful. Everything is permissible, but we are not to be brought under the control of anything."* (1Co. 6:12, 10:23) Could he cast himself down without coming under *the control* of carnal headship?

The adversary misuses and abuses God's word in an attempt to misguide, deceive, and beguile those who blindly accept whatever comes into their mind. If someone is looking for a verse from the Bible to backup their thinking, no matter how misdirected, they will find it. However, just because it is recorded in the Bible does not mean it is God's will or even God's word for the present moment.

Does The Bible Always Apply?

One of my pastors used to tell about a young man who was looking for God's answer for a problem in his life. He understood the Bible held the answer to his dilemma and decided to look for an answer. Because he was not a faithful student of the Bible he decided to play a game that I call, Bible roulette. So he picked up a Bible, randomly flipped it open and pointed to a verse. His finger landed on a verse that said, *"Judas went and hanged himself."* (Mt. 27:5) Thinking this did not answer his quandary he decided to give it a second try. Once again he randomly flipped open the Bible and pointed his finger. This time the verse read, *"Then said Jesus unto him, 'Go, and do thou likewise.'" (Lk. 10:37)* Now this story is an extreme example given to make a point. Yet, some have risked their true identity, as a member of the body of Christ, on such foolishness as this.

What We Learn In The Second Testing?

Throughout the Bible Jerusalem speaks to us of a bride. (Isa. 49:18; Jer. 2:2, 7:34; Rev. 21:2, 9-10) The temple represents the body of Christ or the promised son within the womb of the woman. (Ge. 3:15; Isa. 62:4-5; Joh. 2:19-21; 1Co. 12:27) Jerusalem and the temple depict a corporate son within a bride, even as there was a promised seed within Eve. That is, there is an anointed (*Christ*) body or ministry in the midst of the *bride* church. One is not better or more important than the other, but they each have a unique function and responsibility (*that is, an ability to respond*) to God's call. The pentacle of the temple represents a high position and recognition in this anointed body of ministry. Surely Jesus knew that his ministry was to present what the ministry of the *"present day"* could not see or understand. The temptation would have been to show himself superior to the Pharisees of his day. However, if one is puffed up with pride and arrogant with self-worth they will surely fall. High positions in the church are equally as dangerous. Those who excel in gifts, who are in eminent positions, and have gained great reputation, have need to be humble. This is because Satan's darts will be aimed at them, to puff them up with pride, so they might fall into the condemnation of the accuser. Those who sit in high places of recognition must guard themselves with humility of mind, because one who is seated in an exalted position is set up for a *"fall."* Remember. *"Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall."* (Pr. 16:18; 1Pe. 5:5-9) Again, Jesus responded to the second trial with the proven word of God. He did not seek some *"new"* thinking or create a different sound. He stood on the foundation and quoted from Deuteronomy, saying, *"Again, it is written, You will not test the Lord your God."* (De. 6:16; Mt. 4:7) This simple reply completely disarmed the adversary demonstrating that God's promise of protection had been misapplied.

The Third Test Ascribes Worth & Value

It is said, "*Things come in threes.*" This time it was true for a third testing soon became apparent. We are told the adversary took Jesus with him, into an exceeding high mountain, and pointed out all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. An eagle can see a rabbit about 1 mile or 1760 yards away. The average person needs to be about 550 yards away to see the same rabbit. Now Pamla and I live on a mountain ridge and we are told that four states can be seen on a clear day.

It should be easy for anyone to understand that this was a spiritual experience in the life of Jesus. After all, there is no earthly mountain in existence from which all the kingdoms of the world can be seen. The whisper of Satan's voice could be heard within the thought process of Jesus' mind, saying, "*All these things, will I give you, if you will fall down and worship me.*" (Mt. 4:8-9)

Jesus was brought to a place where he could view all the kingdoms or dominions of the world (*ordered system of traditional religion*) and its glory (*doxa, thinking, opinion and estimation of others*). It was this voice that brought Jesus to a place of quandary about himself and his heritage. In this place he would make the most important decision. Would he bow and ascribe worth and value to that which accuses the brethren? Would Jesus accept the judgment and condemnation of the brethren, so that he might possess and rule the kingdoms or dominions of the religious minded?

It is at this point that Jesus said to the accuser, "*Withdraw, Satan! For it is written, 'The Lord your God, will you worship, and, to him alone, render divine service.'*" (Mt.4:10) He declared at this point he would not accept the guilt and condemnation of the Pharisee's traditional interpretation of the law. He would only attribute worth and value to the Word of God. Thus, the adversary left him, and messengers came near, and began ministering to him. (Mt. 4:1-11)

From that time Jesus of Nazareth was anointed by God with the Holy Spirit and he was ready for action. He went through the country helping people and healing everyone who was beaten down by the Devil. That is, the accusing, judgmental religious system with its tradition. Jesus set people free from the bondage of condemnation and was able to do all this because God was with him. (Ac. 10:36-38)

Testing is Necessary for All Sons

Just as the tests *in* the life of Jesus challenged his true identity and focus as the son of God so are all who are called to Sonship tested. Remember, the first test dealt with the focus and importance he put on the flesh or carnality. It is absolutely impossible for flesh and blood to be an heir of God's kingdom. (1Co. 15:50)

The second tribulation dealt with his feelings of self-importance and his need for recognition. The need for recognition can become a deadly trap, as can the focus on one self-importance. (Ps. 131:1-2; Isa. 57:15; Mt. 18:1-4, 20:26-27, 23:11-12)

The third trial proved him in the area of his heritage and allotted portion. All of God's sons are given an allotment in God's kingdom and it is necessary to qualify as a recipient of the prize. (1Co. 9:23-27; Phil. 3:13-15)

It makes no difference in what sequence these hardships come, the purpose is the same, they are all given to ascertain the quality of faith, virtue and character found in the life of a son.

The apostle John wrote, "*Love not the world (ordered system; traditional religion) neither what is in the world (ordered system; traditional religion). If ever anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. the desire of the flesh, and the desire of the eyes, and the pretentiousness of living, is not of the Father, but it is of the world. The world is passing by,*

and its desire, yet he who is doing the will of God is remaining for the age (eon)." (1Jo. 2:15-17)

In Eden Adam was tested at the tree and he found the tree, or ordered system of his day, to be pleasing to the eyes. What was the desire of Jesus' eyes? When Jesus was tested he had to look at his vision of sonship to see if it caused him to desire recognition and preeminence among the religious leaders. Was the pride and pretentious display of wealth, skill, and knowledge that the Pharisees designed to impress others an element in Jesus life?

On the other hand, testing in this area may result in a person attempting to defend what God has said which results in one being filled with pride, vanity and self-conceit. Having heard Father's voice we know who we are in him, we are God's sons. We have heard God so clearly, yet we need to beware of the serpents hiss endeavoring to cause us to do something that may bring forth activities of the lower nature, leading us to "miss the mark" or sin. Remember, we never have a need to prove God's word.

James wrote, "*Happy is the person who endures trials! Because, being approved, they will receive the crown of life which God promised to those that love him. Let, no one say, while they are being proven, I am being tempted by God. For God is incapable of being tempted to do evil, and he himself tempts no one. Everyone is tried when they are drawn out and enticed by their own overpowering desire. Then when their desire conceives, it brings forth sin; and sin when it has matured, brings forth death. Do not err, my beloved brethren. Every good and perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variableness nor shadow of change. It is he who begot us of his own will through the word of truth, so we would become the first fruit of himself creatures.*" (Jam. 1:12-18)

The testings of life often seem plausible and necessary, because so often they serve only to urge us to do what is worthwhile and proper. They even serve to promote the glory and honor of God. Some of the most powerful testings occur when we are urged to do what will be for the glory of God. However, *we are not to think that just because a thing seems to be good in itself, that it is to be done*. For we must hear the voice of the Father to know the timing for the work that is to be done.

Finally, we are to meet the trials that come upon our lives, as Jesus did, with the plain and positive declarations of God's established and proven word. We are to inquire whether the thing is commanded and whether it is right to do according to the refined word of God. It is this proven word of God that raises the Lord as a shield to those who seek refuge in him. We must never add to God's word, lest he convict us, and we be found false. (Pr. 30:5-6) We are never to trust our own feelings and desires in the matter.



The Refining Of Silver

A story has been told about a group of women in a Bible study group, who were studying the book of Malachi. As they were studying chapter three, they came across verse three which says: "*He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver.*" This verse puzzled the women and they wondered what this statement meant in relation to the character and nature of God.

One of the women offered to find out about the process of refining silver and get back to the group at their next Bible study.

That week this woman called up a silver smith and made an appointment to watch him at work. She didn't mention anything about the reason for her interest in silver beyond her curiosity about the process of refining silver. As she watched the silver smith, he held a piece of silver over the fire and let it heat up. He explained that in refining silver, one needed to hold the silver in the middle of the fire where the flames were hottest as to burn away all the impurities.

The woman thought about God holding us in such a hot spot—then she thought again about the verse, that states he sits as a refiner and purifier of silver.

She asked the silver smith if it was true that he had to sit there in front of the fire the whole time the silver was being refined. The man answered, yes, he not only had to sit there holding the silver, but he had to keep his eyes on the silver the entire time it was in the fire. If the silver was left even a moment too long in the flames, it would be destroyed.

The woman was silent for a moment. Then she asked the silver smith, how do you know when the silver is fully refined?

He smiled at her and answered, *"Oh, that's easy--when I see my image in it."*

This story is a good analogy for when we feel like we are in a hot spot. In the difficult times we find the reminder, *"He sits as a refiner and purifier of silver."* There are times we feel like we are going through a refining fire and it is comforting to know that we are not alone, but Father is carefully watching over us. We know this to be true for, we are told that he will never leave nor forsake us. (He. 13:5) He is all the while looking for his own reflection to show forth. For deep within our life is hidden the image of that we have had from the beginning. He is patiently bringing us all back into himself. (Ge. 1:27; Ro. 11:36) Is there anything more that we could want, than to reflect Him to others? (1Jo. 3:2)

Stacy and I are fairing well. He continues to lose weight. It is a process, but he remains hopeful and cheerful. Thank you for your prayers and consideration during this time. We appreciate the cards, calls and support. It is our hope to see everyone again one day before too long. Until we do come your way, please visit us online at www.promiseed.com. It is our desire to soon post a "blog" which will have updates concerning us and new information at regular intervals. It will also be possible to ask questions and have Stacy answer, which will be published for the entire world to see. We continually hold you in our hearts before Father and pray you have a wonderful 2007.

Love & Blessings,

Pamla