

The Appointed Time of Testing

Why was the Lord tested in the wilderness?
And why does God ordain our similar testing?

by Jim Sayles

Many believers presume inaccurately that once they are “saved” they will not continue to experience serious physical, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual struggles. But the opposite is true. Those struggles will increase dramatically.

We also falsely presume that the anointing (spiritual gifts and ministry assignments) that we received upon our regeneration as “born again” believers will spring forth and bear fruit on its own regardless of what we do.

What I have noticed in freedom ministry to those who are compromised in their walk with the Lord through natural, unyielded flesh impulses and demonic bondages of various kinds, is that every believer, not just those in demonic bondage, is appointed to various times of testing in which we will either overcome or not.

The result of each level of overcoming the flesh and/or obtaining freedom from demonic influences is an increase of maturity and fruit in the anointing and ministry assignments we have received.

Likewise, the result of failing to overcome the influences that inhibit our spiritual growth is the stagnation of our anointing with no increase of “fruit,” and in some cases, a reduction of the “fruit” that was once present in our life.

The primary understanding we need to have is demonstrated by the Lord’s fasting and testing for forty days in the desert. Yet, we have believed that this appointed time for testing applied only to Him and does not apply to us.

We have also believed, incorrectly, that the calendar of appointed times (for the redemption of fallen mankind in Christ), a.k.a. the seven feasts and Sabbaths of the Lord, were for Israel and have nothing to do with spiritual Israel, the body of Christ.

Yet, this calendar identifying the seven primary events (appointed times) for the redemption of fallen mankind in Christ is OUR calendar, and though we are not required to observe the ritual Law associated with the appointed times and feasts of the Lord we will celebrate them throughout all eternity.

Israel was required to observe the ritual Law associated with the appointed times and feasts of the Lord so that they would be without excuse for not recognizing the fulfillment of those same appointed times.

Yet, all but the 120 upper room believers did miss the Lord's fulfillment of Passover, Unleavened Bread, and Firstfruits on the exact days and the exact manner prophesied and demonstrated in the ritual Law, and their failure resulted in Israel's judgment.

“For the days will come upon you when your enemies will throw up a barricade against you, and surround you and hem you in on every side, and they will level you to the ground and your children within you, and they will not leave in you one stone upon another,...(the sacking of Jerusalem and Diaspora of the Jews in 70AD)...because you did not recognize the time of your visitation.” Luke 19:43,44 NASB (insert is the author's)

We, however, are NOT required to celebrate the appointed times and feasts of the Lord, but they ARE important to us for two primary reasons: 1) this is God's specific calendar for the seven primary events of redemption with which all biblical prophecy and doctrine must comply; and 2) in them, and through them, the “Way” of, the “Truth” of, and, the “Life” of, Christ in us by grace through faith is clearly demonstrated for our instruction.

But how does the testing of Jesus of Nazareth during the forty days prior to feast of Atonement (10 Tishri on God's calendar) when He announced the beginning of His ministry in the synagogue by reading Isaiah 61:1,2a apply to us?

After thirty days of fasting, followed by ten days of testing by Satan during the feast of trumpets, the Lord was handed the scroll on the high holy Sabbath of the feast of atonement, 10 Tishri, and He read Isaiah 61:1,2a:

The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord...

Thus the Lord announced the beginning of His ministry on the feast of Atonement as the literal fulfillment of Isaiah 61:1,2a.

What is interesting is the fact that He stopped in the middle of verse 2, because the the rest of Isaiah's prophecy vv.2b – 11 were yet to be fulfilled by His

ministry. (i.e. Isaiah 61:2a-61:10 describes the Lord's complete ministry, including things to come).

Thus the Lord through fasting and obedience successfully overcame every temptation and trial of the flesh, followed by the very real and powerful temptations of Satan, demonstrating His obedient faith responses to the Father before He was released by the Father to fulfill the three and a half years of ministry that will be honored and celebrated throughout all eternity by those who are now, as well as those who will be, His at His coming.

What He is causing me to examine is the prelude to the beginning of His ministry, which was His testing in the wilderness, because every believer who desires to experience the fullness and maturity of the anointing they have been given for ministry is required to go through similar testing, which, if responded to by faith and obedience, ultimately results in the believer becoming a vessel of honor through which Christ can be fully manifested according to the anointing and ministry assignments he/she has been given.

The month of Elul preceding the month of Tishri was identified in the ritual Law of the appointed times and feasts of the Lord as a time of fasting, self-examination, and seeking God. "Fasting" in this sense is fasting from the influence of one's natural impulses, natural appetites, and habits of the flesh that hinder our relationship with God.

The primary list of what this includes comes from Paul in Ephesians 4:30-32 NASB:

Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.

Grieving the Holy Spirit through unforgiveness, for example, will hinder the manifestation of the Holy Spirit's anointing. This is also true for those believers who are in bondage to various demonic controls.

The continued grieving of the Holy Spirit through bitterness, wrath, anger, slander, and unforgiveness completely stifles the anointing of the Holy Spirit, and ultimately it can, and often does, lead to unbelief, which is the opposite of the believer becoming mature in his/her anointing.

It is, therefore, of prime importance for any believer who desires to glorify Christ through the anointing and ministry assignments given to them at the

moment of regeneration, to “fast” from everything that grieves the Holy Spirit and hinders the manifested glory of Christ through our faith and obedience.

Following each time of fasting and repentance from everything that separates us from our intimate fellowship and obedient faith responses to the truth, promises, and will of God in Christ comes a specific time of testing by Satan. And though this testing is allowed by God, it is also limited by God to that which He has prepared each one of us for in our specific times of fasting and repentance.

Metaphorically this is the trimming of our wicks that the awakened virgins (Matthew 25:1-12) will be required to do before the oil of the Holy Spirit will become the manifested light that glorifies the Lord.

There is no requirement for us to imitate the Lord’s testing on the specific days and specific manner in which He prepared for His public ministry. But each of us IS required to “fast” from the influence of our untrained soulish desires, impulses, and compulsions, and we are each required to overcome the specific assaults of the enemy against us if we desire to experience the fullness of the anointing He has given us as administrators of His truth, love, and glory in this present dark world.

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This year the **feast of trumpets** (*Rosh Hashanah*) begins at twilight on Wednesday, September 20th (1 Tishri on God’s calendar of redemption), and the **feast of atonement** (*Yom Kippur*) begins at twilight on Thursday, September 29th and ends on September 30th at twilight.

It was on the first day of the month of Elul that the Lord began His forty day fast, and it was on the first day of the feast of trumpets, 1 Tishri, that the Lord, having fasted from every influence of the flesh for thirty days, began ten days of testing by Satan in the wilderness.

These ten days, during which our Lord had to endure extreme testing by Satan, are also known as the “ten days of awe.” These ten days of awe will be fulfilled in the future beginning with the resurrection of all the saints of all time, living and dead, on the feast of trumpets (1 Tishri) and will conclude on the feast of atonement (10 Tishri) a.k.a. the “**great and terrible day of the Lord**” when the Lord returns to the earth with His saints to destroy His enemies and reveal Himself to those “**survivors**” (Joel 2) who have not covenanted with the beast kingdom during the 3.5 years (7th seal) of “**great tribulation**,” and have not persecuted the body of Christ in the earth during that same time.

For our Lord the entire forty days was a time of fasting, including the final ten days of testing by Satan as described in Luke 4.

It was then on 10 Tishri, the feast of atonement, after our Lord had been tested for forty days in the wilderness, that He entered the synagogue and was handed a scroll from which He read Isaiah 61:1,2 and then said, “***Today*** ... (10 Tishri, the feast of atonement)... ***this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.***”

What we have not generally recognized is the fact that our Lord’s ministry of reconciliation did not begin until this specific appointed time by God, and it did not begin until He had been tested as a man for forty days, including thirty days of fasting (from the needs, impulses, and influences of the natural man without the Spirit), followed by ten days of extreme testing by Satan.

Thus the Lord was required to fast from every influence of man’s physical and soulish nature apart from the presence and influence of the Spirit. Then, having fasted, He was required to undergo testing by Satan for ten days before He was allowed by the Father to begin His earthly ministry on 10 Tishri.

Individually we need to recognize that the Father has ordained a time for every believer to be tested by our natural thoughts and impulses (the “flesh”), by the influence of world systems, including various corrupt aspects of the divided institutional church of Jesus Christ, and by Satan’s direct opposition before WE will be fully equipped to manifest the mature anointing and ministry He has ordained for each of us.

Romans 12:1,2 reveals that this testing of our flesh, and testing by Satan, is for the God-ordained purpose of transforming (renewing) our minds so that we are no longer influenced and controlled by the urges and impulses of our flesh-trained minds, and, therefore, responsive to the Holy Spirit given to us for the purpose of manifesting the truth, the covenant promises, the anointings, the ministry, and the commands of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

Romans 12:1,2 also reveals that it is not enough just to be a “good Christian” in order for the specific anointing and appointed ministries to be manifested in and through us individually.

Being “saved” and destined for heaven is good, but it is only when we have been proved and tested by fire that we become all that He has intended for us to become in the world.

This is a little like Marine Corps boot camp. When a man joins the Marine Corps he is IN the Marine Corps, but he is not equipped for the combat to come. It is only after the serious and difficult testing of boot camp that he IS prepared to be fully and successfully engaged with the enemy.

Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies... (all that we are – spirit, soul, and body)... ***as a living and holy sacrifice,***

acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship...(expected of every believer).... **And...**(the way we present all that we are on the mercy seat of God is)... **do not be conformed to this world...**(do not remain as you were before you received His Holy Spirit)...., **but be transformed ...**(from the word, “metamorphis” indicating a change initiated in our inner spirit-man)... **by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove...**(demonstrate and manifest)... **what the will of God is...**(in all that you think, say, and do)...., **that which is good and acceptable and perfect...**(in His eyes). (Romans 12:1,2 NASB, emphasis and inserts are the authors)

Romans 12:1,2 is also the “boot camp” that ultimately results in **Galatians 2:20**:

I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.

Do not, then, be surprised or angry because you find yourself in the wilderness. Embrace the time of testing with fasting and prayer, and stand fast against the direct assaults of Satan, even if Satan uses those closest to you to test you.

Your day of atonement is coming, and the fullness of His anointing will ultimately be manifested in you and through you if you embrace and endure the time of testing ordained for you.

So be it.