

The Test

SCRIPT REFERENCES

INTRODUCTION

0:00-0:33

Tim: The story of the Bible begins with God creating a beautiful world and then sharing it with all of his creatures.

Jon: And he appoints Adam and Eve to rule it on his behalf.

Tim: And God gives them access to his wisdom and life but then tells them that there's one tree they can't eat from because it will lead to death.

Jon: So they have a choice about how to rule with God. This kind of feels like a test.

Tim: Well, that's because it is a test.

Jon: But isn't that kind of cruel for God to test them?

AN OPPORTUNITY OR A TRAP

0:34-1:11

Tim: Well, not all tests are bad. Let's say there's a king who chooses you to fulfill a royal task because he wants to know if you are trustworthy.

Jon: Well, I guess that's a test, but really it's an opportunity to do something important and noble.

Tim: Right. But then let's say there's a rebel who hates the king and you, and he tries to convince you that you would be better off not doing what the king asks.

Jon: Well, the rebel is setting a trap.

Tim: Right, so a test could be an opportunity or a trap. And the difference is whether the one testing you has your best interest in mind.

TESTING IN GENESIS

1:12-3:03

Jon: I see. And both types of tests appear in the beginning of the Bible. God tells them to eat of the tree of life and not the forbidden tree.¹

Tim: Yeah. This is God's test of loyalty. God wants to rule the world with humans as his partners, which means they will need to trust his wisdom over their own.

Jon: But then a rebel comes and tests them to eat of that other tree.²

Tim: Right. The rebel seizes this opportunity and twists it, so he can lead the humans into exile and ultimately death.

Jon: He turns the test into a trap.

Tim: But after the humans fail, God promises that one day a human will come who will pass the test and defeat the snake.³ And as the story moves on, God gives a couple, named Abraham and Sarah, an opportunity to trust him by leaving their family behind to go to a new land, where God will use them to restore his blessing to all people.⁴

1. Genesis 2:15-17

2. Genesis 3:1-6

3. Genesis 3:14-15

4. Genesis 12:1

Jon: So this is a test.

Tim: And at first things go well, but Abraham quickly fails. He lies to protect himself,⁵ and then he and Sarah scheme to get a son their own way by abusing one of their servants.⁶

Jon: Definitely not passing the test.

Tim: But God doesn't give up on Abraham. He gives him one final opportunity, a test to prove his loyalty. God asks Abraham to go up onto a hill and offer his son as a sacrifice.⁷

Jon: I can't imagine a more intense test.

Tim: And Abraham does it. But in the last moment, God stops him and provides a substitute animal in the place of his son. God then says he will fulfill his promise through Abraham's family because he passed this test.⁸

Jon: So Abraham passed this test, but he hasn't proven to be a fully trustworthy partner. We're still waiting for someone who can pass the ultimate test.

THE NATION OF ISRAEL TESTED

3:04-3:46

Tim: Yeah, and as the family of Abraham grows and becomes a nation, God continues to test them.

Jon: Like when the Israelites wander in the wilderness for forty years.

Tim: They have lots of opportunities to trust in God to provide water⁹ or daily bread.¹⁰

5. Genesis 12:10-20

6. Genesis 16:1-6

7. Genesis 22:1-2

8. Genesis 22:3-18

9. Exodus 15:22-27

10. Exodus 16:4-7

Jon: But they instead blame God and even say that he trapped them in the desert to kill them.¹¹

Tim: And so the rest of Israel's story in the Hebrew Scriptures is pretty much the same. The Israelites don't trust in God and his promise. They're not loyal, and eventually the whole nation fails.

Jon: So humans have an amazing opportunity to partner with God, but no one is really qualified.

Tim: And so all of this brings us forward to Jesus.

THE ONE WHO CAN PASS THE TEST

3:47-4:59

Tim: There's a story where Jesus goes into the wilderness for forty day and forty nights without food or water.¹²

Jon: Ah yes, the wilderness! And there he meets a sinister creature who tries to trap him.

Tim: But Jesus trusts in God's wisdom.

Jon: And he passes the test.

Tim: Then later there's a story about Jesus going to pray with some friends, and God commissions him to go up to Jerusalem and give up his life.¹³

Jon: And so he goes. And on the night of his arrest, Jesus took his friends and went to a garden.

Tim: And he told them to pray because tonight, he said, is "the great test."¹⁴

11. Exodus 17:3

12. Matthew 4:1-11

13. Luke 9:28-51

14. Matthew 26:36-41

Jon: And he prayed to God, "Please let this test pass from me. But not my desire; rather, may your desire be done."¹⁵

Tim: In this garden, Jesus shows us what passing the test looks like. He trusted in God's wisdom, he loved others more than himself, and he confronted evil with good.

Jon: Even though it cost him his life.

Tim: Right. Jesus offered his own life as a sacrifice to cover for all of the failed tests of his people Israel and of all humanity. Jesus passed the ultimate test on behalf of us all.

EVERY GENERATION TESTED

5:00-5:47

Jon: This is amazing, but that doesn't mean everything is going to be great in our lives. I mean, let's be honest. We're going to face our own tests every day.

Tim: Right. Jesus said every generation of his followers would have their own tests that will force them to trust God in radical new ways.

Jon: And these tests can be difficult and often painful.

Tim: But remember, a test from a good God is an opportunity. This is why James, a leader in the early Jesus movement, said that we should be grateful when we face tests and trials because they offer us a gift. It's an opportunity to surrender to God's wisdom and to become more like Jesus, the one who loved us and who passed the test on our behalf.