

# SATAN, TEMPTATION AND THE END

By Ron McRay

***13. Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he (himself) any man:***

James here makes the transition from outward trials to inner trials, i.e., temptations. The word “*temptation*” carries the idea of luring one into sin. Verse 14 will go into detail of how this is done by way of examples that are inherent in the original words.

In Genesis 22:1, God is said to have “*tempted Abraham;*” but in that verse, the tempting is trying or proving, not seducement (to do evil).

Instead of blaming God for one’s sins, or blaming it on “*Satan,*” man must take personal responsibility for the evil that he does. It is his own lust that allows him to be drawn away to sin. We are taught that God is not the author of any person’s sins. There is nothing in the nature of our holy God upon Whom we can lay blame. The thought here is that God is “*untemptable*” rather than “*untempted.*”

The original Greek shows that the word “*apo*” means origin, i.e., “*from God,*” rather than agency “*hupo.*”

Throughout the scriptures, it appears that the word “*tempt*” has two meanings – (1) solicitation to sin and (2) trial from providential situations or circumstances.

The believers of the twelve tribes of Israel, to whom James addressed this letter, were being told that they could stop sinning and turn from their desire or lust to return to the old covenant system that was about to “*die.*” The “*temptation*” to do so would have a way of escape by God [I Cor. 10:13]. They were not to give in to the “*pressure.*”

***14. But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.***

If you desire to find Satan today, look in the mirror. This verse shows the tempter to be the individual, as he has been drawn away of his own lusts. The word “*Satan*” (and parallel designations) means an “*adversary*” or “*the opposing one.*” Who is your worst “*adversary?*” Who opposes you the most? I have found my enemy, and he is me! How about you?

Sin first draws away, then it entices. As one studies the bible, he will notice that holiness consists of two parts: (1) forsaking that which is evil, and (2) cleaving to that which is good. Sin has two parts also. They are reversed: (1) Man’s heart is carried away from that which is good and then (2) enticed to cleave to that which is evil. It is first by coveting a “*worldly*” thing, becoming estranged from the life of God, and by degrees, fixed on and in the course of sin. The context of the entire letter of James is metaphorically showing that the allurements of going back to Judaism with its natural, seen things were seemingly better than the unseen things of a believer. Reflect upon James 1:1. The letter was written

to the Israelites, not to all of the people on planet Earth. It was the Jewish “*world*” that was alluring them back again. They were being told that the “*bait*” had a hook in it and the end was death. The lust that they were seeing, along with their “*world*” was “*passing away*” as this was being written. Those who were led astray were destroyed in AD 67-70 by the Romans (at God’s direction) who destroyed Jerusalem and the old covenant system [I John 2:16-18]. It was their “*last hour*.”

The fountain or source of that temptation to return to the old covenant system was the “*lust*” that was within the believers. They could and must “*endure to the end*” and they would be saved [Mark 13:13]. It is true that the verses before James 1:13 showed that there were external inducements to sin. However, they would have no force if there was not something in man himself to which those inducements corresponded, and over which they possibly might have some power. Those believers who had a “*lust*” for the old natural elements of Judaism were being led along and beguiled until they fell into sin, as a snare that springs suddenly upon the hunted. They were admonished not to have a desire to look back. “*Remember Lot’s wife*.”

In all of these words, there is a double metaphor. These are “*hunting*” and “*fishing*” words that are used in metaphorical language. The definition of a metaphor is: “*A figure of speech in which a word or phrase literally denoting one kind of object or idea is used in place of another to suggest a likeness or analogy between them*” [Merriam – Webster Dictionary].

The first metaphor is the dragging of a fish out of water with a hook because his lust for the bait had blinded him to the presence of the hook.

The second metaphor is like the enticements of impure women, who draw the unwary person into their chamber snares and involve them in ruin. Illicit attachments of this kind, the writer has clearly in view. Lusts give birth to sin and sin produces death. The cause of sin is in ourselves. Every Greek word that James used refers to something of this nature. The next verse very clearly shows this to be true.

The expression, “*drawn away*,” shows the beginning step, drawn away from truth and virtue. This is like a fish that is secure under a log in a brush pile. What would cause him to come out? The desire for food. But the hook that has the “*bait*” is deceptive, it is the deceiver, but where does the deceit take place? In the mind of the fish. He is fooled. He doesn’t look for the hook; he bites the bait and is then taken away. Where did the “*taking away*” begin? When he was “*drawn away*” in his own mind, he left the security of the log to take the bait. Inherent in the original word is violence. This step is man allowing himself (middle voice) to be enticed.

There is much deceit, cunning and flattery in sin to gain people to its interests. And, there is much violence done to man’s conscience by the power of deceit and corruption. The power of sin could never draw away were it not for its guile and cunning. Man destroys himself. His sin is at his own door and therefore his blood lies upon his own head. The believer would be “*enticed*” by some pleasure. In the “*new testament*,” it is only used

here and 2 Peter 2:14,18, allured by some definite “*bait*,” which was the seen elements of natural Israel (before their destruction in AD 70).

**15. *Then when (the) lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and (the) sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.***

“*Then*” is the next step.

Consider the thoughts in the sense of a pregnancy. First there is the (the Greek has the article “*the*”) lust, then the union, then the conception, then the bringing forth. For this scenario that the apostle James is bringing out, that which is born is sin, and the end of sin is “*death*.” The end of a natural conception to birth process normally does not bring forth “*death*,” but “*life*.” However, to have a lust to return to natural Israel, instead of staying with spiritual Israel, the end of that desire, conception and bringing forth would only produce the death of the natural economy of Israel in AD 70 by at the hands of the Romans.

At conception, sin truly exists, though it be but in the embryo stage. This point of sin’s conception is now only the size of a “*spider thread*,” which should have been broken in the stage of lust.

Those persons who are knowledgeable of the Greek words will recognize that this is certainly a metaphor (see verse 14 for the definition of a metaphor). James does not exhaust the uses of this metaphor.

“*Lust*” is personified as the harlot that allures man. It is the deceitfulness of sin that causes the man to give in to the harlot.

The way that the rabbinical studies render this metaphor is that sin is a very insignificant thing in its beginning. It is like a spider’s thread, that can be easily broken at that point, but if left unbroken, it can grow into a very large rope. At that point, it produces a very strong desire, as well as something that is delightful to seek after, and that produces consent. Eventually, that which the individual’s own mind has produced, and finished in the purpose, is consummated by action. Again, nip sin in the bud of lust.

At this stage, after the conception, sin is strengthened by frequent acts and settled into a habit. James was still telling his audience to stop returning to the natural Israelite system, as its end was death. Theirs was a covenant of death. They now had access to the development of the covenant of life. They were urged not to turn their back on the “*new covenant*.” Jerusalem was to be destroyed (die). “*Why will you die, O house of Israel [Ezek. 33:11]? Their world would be judged by Jesus, the Christ [Acts 17:30-32].*

In this case, sin is the union of the will with lust. Let us look at the same metaphor in Psalms 7:14—16:

*Behold, he travaileth with iniquity, and hath conceived mischief, and brought forth falsehood. He made a pit, and digged it, and is fallen into the ditch which he made. His mischief shall return upon his own head, and his violent dealing shall come down upon his own pate.*

“*Finished*” does not mean “*full-grown*” as we usually use it, but rather a completeness of parts or functions as opposed to rudimentary state, like the butterfly in contrast to the caterpillar.

“*Death*” stands in very striking contrast to the “*crown of life*” [James 1:12], which “*patience*” has brought forth when it had its “*perfect work*” [James 1:4].

The term “*bringing forth death*” is a compound word, to be pregnant, to give birth to. The child of lust is sin, the child of sin is death. The child is dead at birth. For death as the fruit of sin, observe the following verses:

*What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord [Rom. 6:21-23].*

*For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace [Rom. 8:6].*

Outside of Jesus, the Israelites had much of which to be ashamed. The end of those things that they brought forth was death. But they had become believers and could obtain life and peace. What was the warning that James was telling those twelve Israelite tribes that were scattered abroad? Do not go back to natural Israel; it was going to “*die*,” being destroyed between AD 67-70. Endure the fiery trials. Your salvation is nearer than when you first believed. For more, see [www.eschatologyreview.com](http://www.eschatologyreview.com)