

# Reflections by the Pond

THE WRITINGS OF DAVID S LAMPEL

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# What if He Hadn't?

But we do see Him who was made for a little while lower than the angels—Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, so that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone.

*Hebrews 2:9*

# Passing His Test

**T**HROUGHOUT HISTORY God has tested the devotion of His people and their leaders. Abraham passed his test on Mt. Moriah.

And Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. But the angel of Yahweh called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." And He said, "Do not stretch out your hand against the boy, and do nothing to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only one, from Me."

*Genesis 22:10–12*

Job passed his test and remained true through tortuous tribulation.

[Yahweh said,] "So now, take for yourselves seven bulls and seven rams, and go to My servant Job, and offer up a burnt offering for yourselves, and My servant Job will pray for you. For I will accept him so that I may not do with you according to your folly, because you have not spoken of Me what is right, as My servant Job has." So Eliphaz the Temanite and Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite went and did as Yahweh told them; and Yahweh accepted Job. And Yahweh restored the fortunes of Job when he prayed for his friends, and Yahweh increased all that Job had twofold.

*Job 42:8–10*

King Saul, by contrast, failed his tests miserably—and repeatedly.

[Samuel said to Saul], "Yahweh sent you on a mission and said, 'Go and devote to destruction the sinners, the Amalekites, and fight against them until they are consumed.' Why then did you not obey the voice of Yahweh, but rushed upon the spoil and did what was evil in the eyes of Yahweh?"

And Samuel said,

"Has Yahweh as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices

As in obeying the voice of Yahweh?

Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice,

And to heed than the fat of rams.

For rebellion is as the sin of divination,

And insubordination is as wickedness and idolatry.

Because you have rejected the word of Yahweh,  
He has also rejected you from being king."

*1 Samuel 15:18–19, 22–23*

Christ Jesus, however, did not waver for a moment through His many trials.

For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things like we are, yet without sin.

*Hebrews 4:15*

As a result of His steadfast obedience Christ Jesus was glorified by the Father.

Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore, God also highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that EVERY TONGUE WILL CONFESS that Jesus Christ is LORD, to the glory of God the Father.

*Philippians 2:8–11*

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**N**OT LONG AFTER THEIR CREATION, Yahweh God tested Adam and Eve with two trees in the garden, representing, as it were, two options for the first two humans: life or death. In truth only one tree was required, for the fullness of the test was contained and encompassed by the one: the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

This tree was placed there for the exercise of man's obedience toward God, and the transgression of God's command would result in man's becoming mortal, becoming subject to death. From the day that he would eat of this forbidden fruit, the germ of death would enter his body, and his final dissolution would be inevitable. If man had stood this test, he would have been confirmed in his possession of Paradise, and through his eating of the tree of life he would finally have been enabled, without pain and death, to enter into the life of eternity. Death is the consequence of disobedience, of sin.

*Paul Kretzmann (1921)*

The first couple was created and lived for a while without the knowledge of good and evil. They were not aware of anything other than what they were, and hadn't the means to even call what they were "good"—it was just what *was*. But all that changed once they bit into the tree's fruit.

Adam, with Eve, failed the test miserably, with cataclysmic consequences for both humanity and the earth on which it dwells.

It is unthinkable, but what if the Son of God had failed *His* test? What if He had been persuaded by Satan in the wilderness, dissuaded from the start of His ministry? What if He had gotten fed up with the hypocritical religious leaders of Israel, or the loathsome condition of the humanity He Himself had created? What if He just woke up one day and decided that these people weren't worth it? What if He had sneaked away from Gethsemane, and avoided the cross?

It is indeed unthinkable, but if Jesus had failed *His* test, then the consequences of the first Adam's failure would have remained without remedy for all eternity. If Jesus had failed His test there would have been no cross, no resurrection—no resurrection for Himself or for us—no ascension to rule next to the Father, no Advocate speaking to the Father on our behalf.

No election.

No regeneration.

No conversion.

No justification.

No adoption.

No sanctification.

No glorification.

If Jesus had failed His test, then there could be no derivation from Adam's birthright. Every person born would be consigned to an inevitable road to perdition. Every last soul on earth would be born without hope, without possibility of escape, but unavoidably placed on a track with only one terminus: the eternal lake of fire.

Jesus the Son of God did *not* fail His test. Being God, He could not. He could recognize and mourn the personal cost to be inflicted on Him, as He did in Gethsemane, but He would not swerve away from the Father's will. He would remain, whatever the cost, on His prescribed path toward death and resurrection.

There is no better reason than that—that Jesus *did* remain true—to ensure our devotion, and our obedience to Him. ♦

