

# Now the Serpent Was More Crafty Than Any of the Wild Animals God Had Made

## 3: 1-5

**DIG:** Who is this serpent? A real creature? A mythological symbol? Which portion of the serpent's statements (3:1, 4, 5) are *true* and which are *false* (compare 3:3, 3:33 and 5:5)? Why do you think the serpent mixes the truth with lies? Compare Eve's responses (3:2-3) with what God actually said and did (2:9 and 16-17). How does Eve expand on God's commandments?

**REFLECT:** Compare Jesus' temptation to this one (see Luke 4:1-13)? How was His similar? How were His responses different? Has your pride gotten you into trouble? How can you change your heart attitude? How are you most frequently tempted? When have you believed Satan rather than the LORD God in your life and lived to regret it? How might you fall prey to the same tempting question: Did God really say . . . ?

The serpent is a reference to **Satan** masquerading as a snake. The common Hebrew word for **serpent** is *nachash*. In addition, *nechoshet*, which means **bronze**, has the same root word. This connection with **bronze** indicates that the snake appears shiny or bright. When **Isaiah** talked about the **Adversary** he referred to him as the **morning star, son of the dawn**, which is literally, *day star, son of the morning*. It points to the brilliance of a **star** in the early **dawn**, which vanishes when the sun rises. Therefore, the **great dragon**, the master of disguises, who even has the power to transform **himself** into an **angel of light** (**Second Corinthians 11:14**), had apparently either taken the physical form of a **serpent** or somehow possessed the body of one of the snakes in the garden for the purpose of tempting **Eve** (**Second Corinthians 11:3**). **This is also the Jewish view. The rabbis teach that the serpent is the Adversary and that he is the evil inclination. They say the reason that the tempter wanted to lead Eve astray was due to his sexual desire for her when he saw her having sex in the open without concealment.**

The serpent was more crafty (*arum*) than any of the other wild animals the LORD God had made (3:1a). Here we have a play on words with the last verse in the previous chapter (2:25). Adam and Eve were naked (*plural arumim*), but the serpent was crafty or devious (*singular arum*). Adam and Eve were innocent in their nakedness and unaware of evil. So the

devil used his craftiness to take advantage of them. Satan used his *arum* to take advantage of their *arumim*. He was deceptive and determined to destroy their moral innocence. This word play only makes sense in Hebrew. The word *arum* itself is neutral, and can be used in both a positive and negative way. For example, it can be interpreted as prudent (Proverbs 1:4, 12:16, 13:16, 14:8, 21:3, 27:12). So Elohim had created the snake with neutral characteristics of craftiness and prudence, which Satan will now use for evil.

Satan's aim in this temptation is to regain the authority over the earth that he had lost in heaven as a result of his fall. The Lord God did not create Satan evil. As we saw at the end of the sixth day of creation: God saw all that He had made and it was very good (1:31). The tempter appears suddenly and unexpectedly here at the beginning of Chapter 3. That means that Satan's fall must have occurred sometime between the end of creation and sometime after the creation of Adam and Eve. We do not know how long they were in the garden of Eden before the temptation took place. Genesis, focusing on the creation story here on earth, is silent about the fall of Satan, which occurred in heaven. From elsewhere in Scripture, however, we learn that the Enemy of souls was a created angel who fell when he was filled with pride.<sup>54</sup>

The book of Ezekiel gives us good understanding of Satan's rebellion. After describing the fall of the city Tyre, Ezekiel then turns to the person controlled by Satan. This is an example of *double reference*, which refers to one person or event, in this case Ethbaal III King of Tyre (Ezekiel 28:1-10), followed by a second person or event, here the fall of Satan (Ezekiel 28:11-19), blended together in such a way that they form a complete picture. Although these Scriptures begin with the king of Tyre, who said in his heart: I am a god, they end with Satan in Eden, in the garden of God. How wickedness arose in him is not explained, but where sin originated is clear. Ezekiel says: You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created till wickedness was found in you. Satan was created blameless, but he chose to rebel. When banished to the lake of burning sulfur for all eternity (Revelation 20:10), he will never be able to shake his fist at God and say, "I never had a chance, You created me this way."

Isaiah sheds even more light on where sin originated. Like the passage from Ezekiel, it is an example of *double reference* first condemning the earthly king of Babylon (Isaiah 14:1-11), but then looking beyond the earthly ruler to address Satan himself (Isaiah 14:12-15). There are five *I wills* here and Isaiah declares that the evil one said in his heart, first: I will ascend into heaven; he wished to have a higher position than he already had. Secondly: I will raise my throne above the stars of God; he wished to take Michael's position of being

the archangel. Thirdly: **I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain.** These are expressions that **Isaiah** will use later in reference to **Messiah's** millennial reign over Israel. The implication is that **the ancient Serpent**, knowing **God's** future program for the Jews, wished to be the messianic ruler over Israel by **himself**. Fourthly: **I will ascend above the tops of the clouds.** Whenever the word *cloud* is used symbolically, it is a symbol of **God's** Shechinah glory and that is the Shechinah that **he** wished for **himself**. Fifthly: **I will make myself like the Most High.** **He** wished to become the possessor of heaven and earth. And the moment **God** lifted him up, **Satan's** pride caused **him** to fall. **Jesus** said: **I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven (Luke 10:18).** And when **the devil** fell from heaven, **God** allowed **him** to roam the earth so that men and women would have a moral choice, or free will.

Because **God** created **Adam** and **Eve** with free will, or the ability to choose, **the tree of life** and **the tree of the knowledge of good and evil** were located in **the middle of the garden of Eden**. This would be where man would be tested. It is just as true today as it was back then that **the LORD** may test us, but **He** will never tempt us. **James 1:13** tells us that **Elohim** does not tempt anyone. Testing and tempting may be distinguished from each other in two ways. First, **God** is ultimately always **the One** who does the testing, while **Satan** ultimately always does the tempting. It is **the Adversary** who tempts; **God** never tempts anyone. Secondly, the objects and purposes of testing and tempting differ from each other. The purpose of temptation is to cause the person to fall. When **the deceiver** tempts us **he** hopes that we will fall into sin. But that is not true of testing.

The purpose of tempting is to make us *worse*, while the purpose of testing is to make us *better*. Just before entering the promised land **Moses** said to the people of Israel: **ADONAI** led you all the way in the desert these forty years, to humble you and to test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep His commands (Deuteronomy 8:2). Then he said: **God** gave you manna to eat in the desert, to humble and to test you so that in the end it might go well with you (Deuteronomy 8:16). That is why **God** tests us, so that it might go well with us, so that positive results might be the outcome, so that we might grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior **Jesus Christ (Second Peter 3:18)**, so that we might be *better* people after that period of testing is over. And that is why **God** tested **Adam** and his wife in the garden of Eden, to strengthen their faith and trust in Him.<sup>55</sup>

**There are two attacks against the woman.** Where was Adam when Satan was attacking his wife (see Ba - **The Woman Saw the Fruit of the Tree and Ate It**)? **The first attack** is in the second half of verse one and is the first question in the Bible. **He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden?'" (3:1b).** **The serpent's** tactics were unnerving. **He** raises the question in the most mocking, skeptical manner, making **God's** command sound rather silly. "Can it really be true - what I'm hearing - that **Elohim** said, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden?'" You can almost feel **Eve** stiffen defensively.

Here **Satan** begins with what sounds like a very innocent question, only concerned about **Eve's** well being. But **his** question was wickedly designed to start **Eve** down the path of doubting and distrusting **Elohim**. That doubt is the very essence of all **sin (Hebrews 11:6)**. The core of *all* temptation is to create doubt in **God's** Word and to subject it to human judgment. That is what **the serpent** is doing here. **He** twisted and misrepresented what **the LORD** had said. **God** emphasized that **they** had the freedom to eat from all the **trees** except one. But **Satan's** question turned the emphasis around, implying that **Elohim** was actually holding back something good from **them**. Notice the difference between **the serpent's** words and **ADONAI's** actual command. **God** said: **You are free to eat from any tree in the garden (2:16)**. The emphasis was on their freedom to eat, but **Satan** turned that around, saying: **You must not eat from any tree in the garden**. In this way **he** focused **her** attention on the one thing **she** couldn't do and set **her** up for the main assault on **God's** spoken word.<sup>56</sup>

**Satan's** strategy was to portray **Elohim** as limiting, or holding something back from Adam and Eve. **He** was hinting that there was something sinister and evil in the character of **God**. But more than that, **he** implied that **he** was more interested in **Eve's** well being than **ADONAI** was. **He** wanted **her** to have freedom! No restrictions! Freedom is a good thing, right? **Eve** was not aware of **the tempter's** schemes, so **she** replies naively and throws up a flimsy excuse: **We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, "You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die" (3:2-3).** **The rabbis teach that the Adversary pushed Eve until she touched the tree, and when she touched it she did not die. So he said to her, "Just as there is not death in touching, neither will there be any death in eating."** But even though **she** did not know the evil **she** was facing, **she** did know good. **She** did know **God**. **She** had experienced nothing but good from **His** hand, and **she** did have a clear, unmistakable command from **Him**. And even that command, restrictive as it was, was for **her** own good. We must remember this lesson of life: **Do not be deceived like Eve was. Every good and**

perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father (James 1:17a). We must never doubt the character of the LORD. Any restrictions He puts on us are for our own good. Sin starts believing that there is something better out there for us. That somehow, ADONAI is holding out on us. That is what happened to Eve and it can happen to us. She started to believe the Destroyer of souls rather than God.

**Satan's second attack** begins when he moves from questioning what God says to lying about what God knows. He immediately insinuates that he knows more than Elohim. Here we have the first lie in Scripture: **You will not surely die (3:4)**. Here Satan negates that death penalty that God had given (2:17). Satan was a liar from the beginning: **When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies** because he initiated the first lie (John 8:44). And this is the lie: *you can sin and get away with it*. Suspicion had already found root in Eve's mind. The LORD's majesty had been insulted; His goodness had been maligned and His trustworthiness had been defamed. Despite overwhelming evidence of God's goodness from all that surrounded them, no one, neither Eve nor her husband standing there listening to this whole sordid conversation, spoke up for God. So Satan moved in for the kill. "God is a liar," he says. "He has deceived you, taken your freedom, and restricted your joy." The destroyer's lie is still the same today: "You can be free. Do whatever you want. It is your life. There are no divine laws; no absolute authority; and above all, no judgment. **You will not surely die.**"<sup>57</sup>

Continuing the lie to Eve he says: **For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God (3:5a)**. Of course, to be like God was the desire of Satan himself when he said: **I will make myself like the Most High (Isaiah 14:14)**. And it should be no surprise that all the false religions of the world are based on the same lie. They twist the truth. Yes, Elohim wants us to be like Him in that we share His holiness, His love, His mercy, His righteousness, and so on. But what the deceiver wanted Eve to do, and us to do, is to believe that we are *equal* with the LORD and to share in His power, His knowledge, His sovereignty, and His right to be worshiped. That realm belongs to the LORD God alone. Satan's assertion that when we taste of the forbidden fruit in our lives we will be like God, **knowing good and evil** is a dangerous half-truth (3:5b). We know the good but are unable to do it, and we know the evil but are unable to resist it. A. W. Tozer said, "The reason why many are still troubled, still seeking, still making little forward progress is because they haven't come to the end of themselves. We're still trying to give orders, and interfering with God's work within us." In other words: **There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death (Proverbs 14:12)**.

Although some believe the temptation account was purely a fable or a myth, the Bible treats it as a historical fact (**John 8:44; Romans 5:21 and 16:20; First Corinthians 15:21; Second Corinthians 11:3-4; First Timothy 2:13-14**). And the fact is . . . that as soon as **Eve** began to doubt, the Fall was inescapable, as we shall see next.