

On the Beginning

6. Satan's Subtilty

NOTE ESPECIALLY Genesis 3:1-6

The third chapter of Genesis begins with a story about an animal that talks! It says that

"... the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?"

We know from another passage in the Bible that Satan, the enemy of God, was in this reptile and speaking through it in order to entice the man and woman to sin. The subtlety of Satan is emphasized elsewhere in Scripture.

"But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ." (2 Corinthians 11:3)

We must all beware that our enemy is subtle. Naivety about the Devil is dangerous to a Christian.

1. Satan's Identity.

As we saw, Genesis 3:1 speaks of a serpent talking to Eve. We are not told directly that the Devil was in that serpent *until the last book of the Bible!* Revelation 12:9 speaks of

"... that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan ..."

and represents him as a dragon. The word Devil means "accuser," and the name Satan means "enemy." The Book of Revelation says that the Devil was in the serpent that tempted Eve. That's why he could talk!

Certainly, the Bible teaches that the Devil began as a high-ranking angel, maybe an archangel! Read Isaiah 14:12-15, Ezekiel 28:12-15, Luke 10:17-18, and Revelation 12:3-9. See what you think! Through pride, he fell from his original state of holiness and beauty to become God's chief enemy. He leads an army of fallen angels, called devils or demons (Matthew 12:22-29; 25:41). His goal seems to be to dethrone God, or at least to strike out at Him. Satan's first great move in the battle between light and darkness was to tempt man to sin, and thus put the object of God's love and attention (mankind) under the same condemnation as he was under!

2. Satan's Strategy.

The Devil's subtle approach to tempting the woman was to undermine her faith in God's Word. Remember how important the Word of God is to man's well-being?

- a. Satan cast doubt upon what God had actually said (v. 1).
- b. Satan, finding a certain willingness in the woman to see God's Word in a critical way (Notice her reply in vs. 2-3, compared to God's actual words in Genesis 2:17), went so far as to deny its truthfulness outright (v. 4).
- c. Satan, having stripped God's Word of its trustworthiness and God Himself of His honesty, lied about God's character and motives (v. 5).

Because Eve listened to the Devil, her faith was wrecked and she was ready to fall into sin. See how differently Jesus treated Satan and God's Word in Luke 4:1-13! Words that undermine our trust in the Word of God will corrupt our character and ruin our lives unless they are quickly discarded.

3. Satan's **Success**.

When the woman believed the Devil, she then cooperated with him, and acted according to his lying words. Look up what Jesus said in John 8:44-47, and refuse to listen to Satan any more. Eve fell through . . .

“ . . . the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life . . . ” (1 John 2:16)

“And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.” (Genesis 3:6)

These three are his enticements, even today!