

Genesis

Creation, Covenants, All Grace – study 6



(part 1)

The SERPENT'S STRATEGY (3:1-5)

3:1 Is Moses making a theological (or interpretative) point in blaming an animal for Eve's temptation?

(1) Whether it is a legend, purified and elevated, or not, is of less consequence than what is its moral and religious significance, and that significance is unaffected by the answer to the former question. The story presupposes that primitive man was in a state of ignorant innocence, not of intellectual or moral perfection, and it tells how that ignorant innocence came to pass into conscious sin. -- **Alexander Maclaren**, *The Bk of Genesis* p.6

(2) The question, however, is not yet solved, why Moses has kept back the name of Satan. I willingly subscribe to the opinion of those who maintain that the Holy Spirit then purposely used obscure figures, because it was fitting that full and clear light should be reserved for the kingdom of Christ. In the meantime, the prophets prove that they were well acquainted with the meaning of Moses, when, in different places, they cast the blame of our ruin upon the devil. We have elsewhere said, that Moses, by a homely and uncultivated style, accommodates what he delivers to the capacity of the people; and for the best reason; for not only had he to instruct an untaught race of men, but the existing age of the Church was so puerile, that it was unable to receive any higher instruction. There is, therefore, nothing absurd in the supposition, that they, whom, for the time, we know and confess to have been but as infants, were fed with milk. -- **John Calvin**, *Genesis* p.140

What is the serpent's strategy of attack? (Note the Bible's first question!)

(3) Again, Satan may well be cunning now -- I may truthfully say, more cunning than he was in the days of Adam -- for he has had long dealings with the human

race ... He has climbed into the citadel of our heart, and he has lived there; he has searched its inmost recesses ... -- **C.H. Spurgeon**, *Treasury of the Old Testament* p. 7

(4) These are ever the methods of Satan. He first suggests that restriction is unkind. That is the very spirit of the thinking of men to-day. They are advised to break through all bonds and bars and limitations, in the measure in which they are restricted. -- **G. Campbell Morgan**, *Great Chapters of the Bible* p. 23

(5) The incredulous tone -- "So God has actually said ...?" -- is both disturbing and flattering: it smuggles in the assumption that God's word is subject to our judgment. -- **Derek Kidner**, *Genesis* p. 67

3:2,3 What inclination in Eve have some commentators detected in her response? (Deut. 4:1,2; Prov.30:5,6)

(6) She added to God's command ... therefore she was led to diminish from it. -- **Rashi**, *Genesis* p. 13

3:4,5 This brazen serpent has a tri-forked tongue. How do we see the genesis of ALL human folly and rebellion in this triple temptation?

(7) A lie which is all a lie, may be met with, and fought with outright, But a lie which is part a truth, is a harder matter to fight. -- **Tennyson**

(8) In all this it must be noted, that the temptation here is already at work with those crafty lies (see 2 Thess. ii. 9) which it has employed through the whole course of the world's history -- that is, with **lies containing elements of the truth**, but misplaced and **distorted**. ... But in this bold assurance of the serpent which immediately follows, namely, that no evil effects, but only good, would result from the eating, there lies the truth that the outward death would not immediately succeed the enjoyment of the forbidden fruit; that with the consciousness of guilt there comes in a conscious though a disturbed distinction between good and evil, and that the sinner has placed himself in a false independence through his own self-wilfulness (comp. ch. iii. 22). -- **J.P. Lange**, *Genesis* p. 229

(9) It is the serpent's word against God's, and the first doctrine to be denied is judgment. If modern denials of it are very differently motivated, they are equally at odds with revelation. -- **Derek Kidner**, *op.cit.*, p. 68

Is there significance in the switch of Divine Names? (vv. 1-5; cf. v.8)

(10) The assault is directed against the paradisaical covenant of God with men; therefore it is that the serpent cannot utter the name Jehovah. -- **J.P. Lange**, *op.cit.*, p. 228

(11) It is very noteworthy that the temptation is associated entirely with doubt of God's Word: "Hath God said?" This is characteristic of sin at all times; the doubt, the denial, and the disbelief of God's Word. First Satan *distorts* the Word, then he leads the woman to *doubt* it, and last of all he *denies* it. It is also

significant that Satan and the woman in their conversation use the term "God," and not "Lord God." This inadequate and defective reference to God was doubtless part of the explanation of the temptation and the Fall. It would not have served Satan's purposes to have introduced the specific covenant term "Jehovah" when raising questions about the veracity and faithfulness of God's Word. -- **W.H. Griffith Thomas**, *Genesis 1-25* p. 48

The SEED of SIN (3:6-8)

3:6 How in this single, simple verse do we see abundantly the importance of worshiping God with the WHOLE mind? (Ps. 19:7-14; 119:97; Job's profound psychology -- the heart follow's the eyes, Job 31:7)

(12) The only way to repel Satan's subtlety is **by acquiring true wisdom**. Again, I repeat it, man hath none of that in himself. What then? Herein is true wisdom. If thou wouldst successfully wrestle with Satan, make the Holy Scriptures thy daily resort. Out of this sacred magazine continually draw thine armour and thine ammunition. Lay hold upon the glorious doctrines of God's Word; make them thy daily meat and drink. -- **C.H. Spurgeon**, *op.cit.*, p. 10

Is Adam's sin less than Eve's? (1 Tim. 2:14)

(13) I became the spendthrift of my own genius, and to waste an eternal youth gave me a curious joy. Tired of being on the heights, I deliberately went to the depths in the search for new sensations. Desire at the end was malady, or madness, or both. -- **Oscar Wilde**, *De Profundis* [Latin for *Out of the depths*, the opening line of Psalm 130]



OSCAR WILDE
One of the 19th century's
most famous sinners

(14) God allows the forbidden its full appeal. The pattern of sin runs right through the act, for Eve listened to a creature instead of the Creator, **followed her impressions against her instructions**, and made self-fulfilment her goal. This prospect of material, aesthetic and mental enrichment (6a) seemed to add up to life itself; the world still offers it (1 Jn. 2:16). But man's lifeline is spiritual, namely God's word and the response of faith ... *She took ... and ate*: so simple the act, so hard its undoing. God will taste poverty and death before "take and eat" become verbs of salvation. -- **Derek Kidner**, *op.cit.*, p. 68

3:7,8 Here we contemplate the seed of sin in a second sense. We have seen sin's germ, now we see its offspring. Who has

prophesied falsely, Yahweh or Satan? (cf. 2:17; 3:4)

(15) Clearly an expression of guilt-consciousness, as also, an indication, at the same time, of the fall into sin, and of the decline into a state of corruption. The particular characteristics are these: consciousness of their transgression, of its effect, of their spiritual and bodily nakedness, of their separation from God -- of a feeling of distrustful, selfish, and servile fear, in the presence of God, and of the loss of their spiritual purity, as originating in their guilt, together with the false notion that they can hide themselves from God. -- **J.P. Lange**, *op.cit.*, p. 231

(16) There is a gulf between being tempted and sinning, but the results of the sin are closely knit to it. ... The promise of knowing good and evil was indeed kept, but instead of its making the sinners "like gods," it showed them that they were like beasts, and brought the first sense of shame. To know evil was, no doubt, a forward step intellectually; but to know it by experience, and as part of themselves, necessarily changed their ignorant innocence into bitter knowledge, and conscience awoke to rebuke them. **The first thing that their opened eyes saw was themselves**, and the immediate result of the sight was the first blush of shame. -- **Alexander Maclaren**, *op.cit.*, p. 8 (bold emphasis added)

(17) Therefore her taking was an act of rebellion, and consequently an act of suicide. There immediately resulted the sense of fear. That is the point at which fear enters the Biblical account of human history. Fear swept upon them, dejection overcame them; and an **overwhelming consciousness of the physical** filled them with a sense of shame. -- **G. Campbell Morgan**, *op.cit.*, p. 25 (bold emphasis added)