

Research: Genesis 3:1-6, 11-13, 17, 23

## The Serpent of Genesis 3

1 Now 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?

*More subtil* – in Hebrew “subtil” is *arum* which can mean “crafty” (Strong 6175). A synonym for the serpent is found in Rev. 12:9 – “the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world.”

Only Eve confronts the serpent in Genesis, chapter three, verse one. She is the one beguiled by the serpent. It seduces and manipulates the woman and gives the impression that the serpent must think for humanity.

“The serpent is characterized as ‘more crafty’ (*arum*) than any of the others God formed; this is a play on the word for ‘naked’ (*arummim*) in 2:25. The link suggests that human beings may be *exposed* at times to shrewd or crafty elements in the world, language often associated with temptation” (*NIB*, Vol. 1, 359).

“On two grounds the writer was left to fix upon the serpent as the medium of the temptation. One was the natural habits of the creature, its stealthy movements, its deadly venom, and the instinctive feeling of repulsion which the very sight of it provokes. These things are all suggestive of the insidious approach and fatal power of temptation. The other was the fact that already the serpent in older mythologies was associated with the powers of darkness” (Dummelow 9).

2 And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden:

In Hebrew the word *serpent* is *nachash* – “figurative of enemies; figurative of oppressor, simile of perniciousness of ungodly; crafty tempter; symbolic of world-powers; of sea-monster” (B-D-B 638).

3 But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.

“Eve’s response seems motivated by an effort to explain the situation to the serpent. She evidences familiarity with the prohibition (not established to this point in the narrative); she both paraphrases the permission/prohibition in her own words and quotes God directly” (*NIB* 1.360).

#### 4 And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die:

“The serpent grows bolder on seeing that the woman is willing to argue the matter, and now flatly denies the truth of the divine warning. . . . The serpent avers that the threatened penalty will not be exacted, that God has selfishly kept out of their sight a great boon which men may gain; that He is unwilling to see them rise too high. So the serpent sows discord between man and his Maker, by misrepresenting God’s character” (Dummelow 9).

#### 5 For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.

“The Word of God was to be the model, the rule by which man was to differentiate between good and evil. . . . It is at this point that man first encounters animal logic in the form of its most subtle exemplification; the serpent. Even the most intelligent animal is incapable of understanding how man could possibly remain indifferent to the best, the most beautiful and appealing physical delights” (Hirsch 17).

#### 6 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.

“Eve gazed and reflected when she should have fled. Here we see the physical basis of temptation, the lust of the flesh, which ‘when it hath conceived bringeth forth sin’ (James 1:15)” (Dummelow 9).

“With one efficient sweep, the serpent removes the only curb that the Lord God has been able to put upon his creation: fear of punishment. He assures Eve that the eating of the fruit will not bring death. On the contrary, it will bring a wonderful reward, the ‘gift of wisdom’ (Gen. 3:6). Naturally the Lord God does not want any rivals, and it is for this reason alone that he has forbidden the fruit to Adam and Eve.

“The argument is ingenious, and it convinces Eve. She shares the fruit with Adam, they eat, and at once the results of their new knowledge begin to appear. The first result is guilt and the second, fear. Nakedness is used as the symbol of the guilt . . . the fear is more fundamental, being the universal and inevitable fear of consequences, and in their

terror Adam and Eve try to hide themselves from their creator among the trees of the garden.

“This attempt at concealment is actual confession that the command has been broken, although the Lord God, who is by no means omniscient, is obliged to inquire pointblank if he has been disobeyed. Adam immediately uses his disastrous intellect in an attempt to avoid punishment, and undertakes to divide the blame equally between the Lord God and Eve” (Chute 52-53).

### 9 And the Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou?

“In this section God conducts a judicial inquiry. Whereas the woman functioned as the dialogue partner in vv. 1-5, the man serves that function in vv. 9-12” (NIB 1.362).

“*Where art thou* implies that the Lord was aware of their endeavor to hide themselves from Him” (Murphy 120).

### 10 And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.

“Adam confesses that he was afraid of God, because he was naked. There is an instinctive hiding of his thoughts from God in this very speech. The nakedness is mentioned, but not the disobedience from which the sense of it arose” (Barnes online, <http://biblehub.com/commentaries/genesis/3-11.htm>).

### 11 And he said, Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat?

### 17 And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake;

“The judgment on the man. Work had already been appointed as the duty of men ([Genesis 2:15](#)). But it was not laborious. The change from innocence to sin is marked by the change of order from the keeping of the garden to the tilling of the ground ([Genesis 3:23](#)). Henceforth work is to be done under adverse conditions. The connexion between the sin of man and the productiveness of the earth is not so easily traced, but the conditions of labour are undoubtedly made harder by the evils and inequalities of human society due to man's sin and selfishness” (Dummelow's Commentary).

“Harkened unto the voice of thy wife, i.e. obeyed the word and counsel, contrary to my express command.

“Cursed is the ground, which shall now yield both fewer and worse fruits, and those too with more trouble of men’s minds, and labor of their bodies;

“for thy sake, i.e. because of thy sin; or, to thy use; or, as far as concerns thee.

“In sorrow; or, with toil, or, grief.” (Matthew Poole’s Commentary, [www.biblehub.com](http://www.biblehub.com)).

**23 Therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken.**

“For prevention thereof, the Lord God sent him forth, or expelled him with shame and violence, and so as never to restore him thither; for it is the same word which is used concerning divorced wives.

**24 So he drove out the man;**

“God bid man go out; told him he should no longer occupy and enjoy that garden: but man liked the place, and was unwilling to leave it, therefore God made him go out. This signified the shutting out of him, and all his guilty race, from that communion with God, which was the bliss and glory of paradise.” Matthew Henry

“ This expresses the banishment of man from the garden as a judicial act.” (Barnes’ Notes)