

THE SERPENT

Genesis 3:1

INTRODUCTION

- What if you were informed that a highly dangerous person has targeted you for attack?
 - ✓ This individual is a sadistic, barbaric murderer, and is responsible for the death of many people
 - ✓ He is highly intelligent, he knows how to remain undetected – in fact most people don't even know he exists
 - ✓ He has a great army of loyal soldiers who are ready to follow his commands
 - ✓ He has been surveilling you for a long time and knows a great deal about you, your behaviour and your weaknesses
 - ✓ You cannot reason with him; you cannot make peace with him; your strength is no match for his power
- What would you do if you were told this?
 - ✓ Would you laugh it off and say, "Oh that's nonsense, I'll be fine."
 - ✓ Or would you immediately take every action to prepare yourself against the attacks of this enemy, researching his identity, background and strategies, and seeking to acquire the aid of one who is strong enough to overcome him?
- Well this scenario is not a mere hypothetical, it is the reality for every one of us
- Genesis 3 is one of the most important chapters of the Bible
- *"It is hardly too much to say that this chapter is the pivot of the Bible, for if we take it away the rest of Scripture becomes meaningless. With the exception of the fact of Creation, we have here the record of the most important and far-reaching event in the world's history—the entrance of sin."* (William Henry Griffith Thomas)
- Genesis 1 answers the questions of the origins of space, time, matter, energy and life, including the origin of man
- Genesis 3 answers the questions as to the origins of evil, pain, sickness and death
- If we remove Genesis 3, treating it as mere poetry, allegory or symbolism, the rest of the Bible becomes meaningless, particularly the Gospel, and man's need of redemption

- In Genesis 3 we have:
 - ✓ The first appearance of Satan as a serpent
 - ✓ The temptation
 - ✓ The sin and fall of man
 - ✓ The curse upon the creation
 - ✓ The origin of death
 - ✓ Man's banishment from Eden and the tree of life
 - ✓ The promise of a Saviour
- The transition from the end of chapter 2 into chapter 3 seems sudden and abrupt
- Having established Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, we might expect an account of some of their activities and how they spent their days there, but instead there is the sudden appearance of the serpent tempting Eve
- We must remember the principle teaching of the Bible – what man is to believe concerning God, and what duty God requires of man (2 Timothy 1:13; Ecclesiastes 12:13)
- The question arises, how long was it between man's creation and man's fall? Was it years or even centuries?
- It was likely only a short time, perhaps even days
 - ✓ From Adam's creation to his death was 930 years (Genesis 5:5), a similar lifespan to others of that era
 - ✓ Adam and Eve were commanded to be fruitful and multiply (Genesis 1:28) – if they lived for many years without bearing children they would have been disobeying God
- In this sermon we will focus on this character that appears in verse 1 – the serpent
- This evil creature, suddenly enters the narrative, apparently from nowhere, and begins his diabolical attack on man
- The appearance of the serpent raises a number of questions:
 - ✓ Where did he originate?
 - ✓ Is he a spirit being or a fleshly being?
 - ✓ Was he created good?
 - ✓ How and when did he become evil?
 - ✓ What are his motives?
 - ✓ Does he act alone?
 - ✓ What other activities has he engaged in over the last 6000 years?
 - ✓ Does he appear in different forms?
 - ✓ Is there any way he can be overcome?
 - ✓ Will he finally be destroyed?

- We will seek to answer these questions today
- Perhaps Satan's greatest accomplishment is to convince people that he doesn't exist
- The popular attitude today is to take the "d" off devil and simply speak of "evil"
- Even the modern-day Satanists do not actually believe that such a being exists
- The precise identity of this serpent is given in the New Testament:
 - ✓ "And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him." (Revelation 12:9)
 - ✓ "And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years," (Revelation 20:2)
- Satan chose this particular animal to take possession of and use as his vessel and mouthpiece to tempt Eve
 - ✓ The serpent was originally thought to have been a very beautiful creature and walked uprightly (cf. v.14)
 - ✓ The term serpent is a broad term that applies beyond snakes – for instance, leviathan, a fire-breathing dragon, is called "the piercing serpent" and "that crooked serpent" (Isaiah 27:1)
 - ✓ Satan was able to speak through this animal, even as God spake through Balaam's donkey (Numbers 22:28)
 - ✓ Eve, in her innocence, was not alarmed at an animal speaking in human language, either because she did not know that animals could not speak, or, as some suggest, some animals *could* speak and converse with man in the original creation
 - ✓ This serpent was more "subtil" (crafty, clever, shrewd) than any other beast, in that it was possessed by a highly intelligent spirit
 - ✓ Man, possessing high intelligence and rationality, would not be outwitted and seduced by merely an irrational animal
- As God's people, we are engaged in a spiritual war against Satan and his forces, therefore it is vital that we understand our enemy that we may withstand his attacks
- "Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices." (2 Corinthians 2:11)

I. HIS ORIGINATION

- A. Satan was originally Lucifer, a highly exalted cherub, given great authority by God

1. In Ezekiel 28:11-19 and Isaiah 14:12-15 prophecies are given concerning two kings, the king of Tyre and the king of Babylon, whose descriptions go far beyond any human king, and clearly describe Satan, his original position and his fall
 2. He was the anointed cherub who covered the throne of God
 3. His position was not only in heaven but also “in Eden the garden of God”
 4. He was bestowed with immense beauty and intelligence
 5. He possessed great abilities in creating music
 6. His name, Lucifer, meaning “son of the morning” and “shining one”, gives an indication of the glory that he originally possessed
- B. He was filled with pride and God cast him out of his heavenly position
1. Not content with his exalted position under God, he sought to exalt himself *above* God
 2. Satan’s chief sin is the same sin that is found in the heart of man – pride
 - a. To live independently of God
 - b. To reject God’s laws and choose our own way
 - c. To place self as king instead of Christ
 3. When God judged Lucifer and cast him out of his presence he became the devil and Satan, the arch-enemy of God and man
 4. Jesus spoke of this event: “I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.” (Luke 10:18)
 5. Satan was not alone in his rebellion – he amassed a following of one-third of the angels who were also cast out with him, and who became devils/demons/evil spirits (Revelation 12:4)
 6. He presently still has access to God’s presence where he accuses the brethren (Job 1:6-12; 2:1-7; Revelation 12:10), and is called the “prince of the power of the air” (Ephesians 2:2)

II. HIS DESIGNATION

- A. Satan bears many different names in Scripture
1. Accuser (Revelation 12:10)
 2. Adversary (Peter 5:8)

3. Beelzebub (Matthew 12:24)
4. Belial (2 Corinthians 6:15)
5. Devil (Matthew 4:1)
6. Dragon (Revelation 12:3,7,9)
7. Enemy (Matthew 13:28)
8. Evil one (John 17:15)
9. God of this world (2 Corinthians 4:4)
10. Liar (John 8:44)
11. Murderer (John 8:44)
12. Prince of the power of the air (Ephesians 2:2)
13. Roaring lion (1 Peter 5:8)
14. Prince of devils (Mark 3:22)
15. Prince of this world (John 12:31)
16. Satan (1 Timothy 5:15)
17. The old serpent (Revelation 12:9; 20:2)
18. Tempter (1 Thessalonians 3:5)

III. HIS OPERATION

- A. Satan, as a created being, has limited power
 1. He is always under God's sovereign control (Job 1-3; Luke 22:31)
 2. Satan can tempt me, but he cannot make me sin (James 1:14)
 3. Satan can hinder me, but he cannot stop me in the will of God (1 Thessalonians 2:18; Philippians 4:13)
 4. Satan can persecute and even cast me down, but he cannot destroy me (2 Corinthians 4:9)
 5. Satan can wish me evil and curse me, but he cannot stop God's blessing (Ephesians 1:3; Proverbs 26:2)
- B. Revelation 2:13 describes "Satan's seat" in the city of Pergamos

1. The Greek word for "seat" is *thronos*
2. This is where Satan not only dwelt, but was the seat of his power
3. This designation has been linked by many to the pagan worship in Pergamos
4. Satan, as a created being, does not possess the divine attribute of omnipresence
5. Contrary to popular belief, Satan's headquarters are not in hell but upon the earth (Job 1:7)
6. He was in the Garden of Eden with God, Adam and Eve (Ezekiel 28:13)
7. Satan's throne appears to have been in Babylon for centuries (Isaiah 14:4ff)
8. Subsequently his throne was in Tyre (Ezekiel 28:12-19)
9. From Tyre it moved to Pergamos, followed by Rome where Satan has ruled through the Papacy (Revelation 17:18)
10. During the Tribulation, Satan will set up his throne in the temple in Jerusalem (Matthew 24:15; 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4)

C. Satan's objectives

1. Opposing God's plan for the ages (Revelation 12:1-9)
2. Opposing God's people (1 Peter 5:8; Zechariah 3:1; 1 Chronicles 21:1)
3. Opposing, hindering, and seeking to corrupt the work of the Gospel (Matthew 13:19,39; Mark 4:15; 1 Thessalonians 2:18)

D. Satan's devices

1. Tempting men to sin (Genesis 3:1-5; Matthew 4:1-11; John 13:2; Acts 5:3; 1 Corinthians 7:5; 1 Timothy 5:15)
2. Controlling unsaved people (Ephesians 2:2; Luke 22:3; John 8:44; 2 Timothy 2:26)
3. Empowering false religions and idolatry (Leviticus 17:7; Deuteronomy 32:17; Psalm 106:37; 1 Corinthians 10:20; Revelation 9:20)
4. Promoting false teachings (1 Timothy 4:1; 2 Corinthians 11:1-4,12-15; 2 Timothy 2:25-26)
5. Blinding men's minds to the Gospel (2 Corinthians 4:4)

6. Accusing Christians (Revelation 12:10)
7. Destroying the lives of disobedient Christians (1 Corinthians 5:5)
8. Inflicting disease and trouble under God's sovereign eye (Job 1-2; Luke 13:16; 22:31; Acts 10:38; 1 Corinthians 5:5; 2 Corinthians 12:7; 1 Timothy 1:20)
9. Working miracles to deceive (Matthew 24:24; 2 Thessalonians 2:9; Revelation 13:11-15; 16:14)

IV. HIS DAMNATION

- A. Throughout history, Satan has continually sought to usurp the authority and rule of God, to exalt himself and cast down God – but every time he has failed
 1. The devil sought to “cast down” the Lord Jesus during his time on earth, but failed (Matthew 4:6)
 2. In Luke 4, Satan stirred up the wicked people of Nazareth to rise up against Jesus, taking him to the brow of the hill to cast him down headlong. (Luke 4:29-30)
 3. Ultimately, Jesus was not cast down but "lifted up from the earth"
 4. Then, after his resurrection, he ascended to the highest place in heaven
- B. The record of Satan is one of him repeatedly being cast down by God
 1. He was cast down from his exalted position after his first rebellion against God (Isaiah 14:12; Ezekiel 28:16)
 2. He was cast down to the ground after tempting Eve in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:14)
 3. Christ's death and resurrection marked Satan's defeat and sealed his future casting down (John 12:31; Colossians 2:15; Hebrews 2:14)
 4. He will be cast out of heaven by Michael (Luke 10:18)
 5. He will be bound and cast into the bottomless pit at the coming of Christ (Revelation 20:2-3)
 6. After 1000 years he will be cast into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:10)

V. OUR RETALIATION

- A. Satan can be overcome by the Christian
 1. He is far more powerful than we are

2. Yet Christ has conquered Satan and through him we are “more than conquerors”

B. How do we overcome Satan?

1. By faith in Jesus Christ (1 John 5:4-5)
2. By the blood of the Lamb and the word of our testimony (Revelation 12:11)
3. By resisting steadfast in the faith (1 Peter 5:8-9)
4. By putting on the whole armour of God (Ephesians 6:11-19)
5. By using the Word of God (Matthew 4:4)
6. By submitting to God and resisting the devil (James 4:7)
7. By the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit (1 John 4:4)
8. By continuing in the Word of God (John 8:31-32)

CONCLUSION

1. Satan is a real being, active in the world today
2. We are commanded to be vigilant against him and his devices (1 Peter 5:8)
3. Yet God has not left us at his mercy, but has given us the Lord Jesus Christ to bring us victory over Satan
4. All of us are either children of God, or children of Satan – which are you?
5. Often Satan’s people can appear to be saints (Matthew 7:15; 13:25; 2 Corinthians 11:14-15)
6. But in due time, such deceivers will be exposed and judged
7. Unless you repent and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, you remain under Satan’s bondage and destined to eternal judgment (Colossians 1:13)
8. We are not to fear Satan or any other created being – we are to fear God alone (Matthew 10:28)
9. May God give us his grace to overcome the wicked one!