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SUPERNATURAL

SERIES: Part 4



4

Understanding the Origins of Good, Evil, Sin,
and Salvation in the Bible

Michael the Archangel, Guido Reni 1636



The First Rebellion, Part B

Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made. **Genesis 3:1 (ESV)**

WHY WASN'T EVE AFRAID OF THE SERPENT?

Ancient readers would have understood that the garden was the abode of God, the elohim, and man. We, therefore, should not assume it would be surprising for her to see an elohim in the garden, or that she never saw one or spoke to one before.

Ancient Israelites and first century Jewish Christians would have known the serpent was a divine being, an elohim. But not just any elohim. This one was not happy with God's decision to make mankind in his image and give him dominion over God's material creation. So, this elohim engaged in deception to lead Adam and Eve to rebel.

WHO WAS THE SERPENT?

In the OT the serpent is never called Satan. It's not until we get to the NT that we see a connection between the serpent in the garden and our divine nemesis called Satan. The Apostle John writes...

*So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. **Rev. 12:9 (NKJV)***

This helps us understand that Eve was not talking to an actual snake or serpent. She was talking to an intelligent malevolent divine being, created by God, who was intentionally interfering in the affairs of mankind for evil.

Why didn't the writer of Genesis use language that would more directly identify this serpent as a divine being (an elohim)?

The writer was not trying to confuse us. Keep in mind he wasn't writing FOR US in 21st century America. He was writing in ancient Hebrew to ancient Israelites who had a supernatural worldview that would have immediately identified the serpent for who he really was – a rebellious elohim bent on the destruction of mankind and the overthrow of God's authority.

We miss some of the meaning in the passage because we don't have the same worldview as an ancient Israelite, we don't read ancient Hebrew, and we have to wade through centuries of traditions that don't always serve us well.

To better understand the rebellion in the garden let's look at a few other passages in the bible that are connected to Genesis 3. Then we'll put them all together to get a better picture of this rebel called the serpent and the rebellion itself.

EZEKIEL 28 AND THE SERPENT OF GENESIS 3

Ezekiel 28 is not directly related to the Genesis rebellion, but there are some things we can glean about it from the prophet. The main idea of Ezekiel 28 is a charge brought by God against a wicked human ruler called the Prince of Tyre.

But in verse 12 the chapter shifts from an account of this earthly prince to a lament over some fallen divine being. God seems to be comparing the fall of the earthly prince to the fall of a divine being.

*You were the signet of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. **Ezekiel 28:12 (ESV)***

*You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone was your covering... **Ezekiel 28:13 (ESV)***

*You were an anointed guardian cherub. I placed you; you were on the holy mountain of God; in the midst of the stones of fire you walked. **Ezekiel 28:14 (ESV)***

*You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created, till unrighteousness was found in you. **Ezekiel 28:15 (ESV)***

*You were filled with violence in your midst, and you sinned... **Ezekiel 28:16 (ESV)***

*Your heart was proud because of your beauty... I cast you to the ground... **Ezekiel 28:17 (ESV)***

This part of the passage talks about someone who walked in Garden of Eden on the mountain of God, was an “anointed guardian cherub,” and was judged by God – cast to the “ground” or “earth” (it could even mean to “Sheol” or under the earth) for rebellion, violence, unrighteousness, and pride.

Some scholars have concluded this must be a description of Adam. But Adam is never described as being full of violence or even pride.

Neither was Adam, nor any human, ever described as a cherub. A cherub is not a chubby little cupid angel. A cherub is an elohim, a divine being. They appear in the bible as guardians to and around the throne of God. To get close to God you would have to pass through a wall of cherubim.

Whoever this passage is talking about, it cannot be the earthly Prince of Tyre, or a mere human being. So, **1. Who was in the Garden of Eden, 2. Was it a divine being, 3. Was cast down to or below the earth in judgment, and 4. Who was full of pride and violence?**

Well, the **most likely candidate** is that this passage is talking about **the divine serpent of Genesis 3** who deceived Adam and Eve. At one time the serpent appears to have a cherub throne guardian for God himself.

ISAIAH 14 AND THE SERPENT OF GENESIS 3

Isaiah 14 also begins with a taunt against a wicked earthly ruler, the King of Babylon. But like Ezekiel 28, the passage eventually shifts to a comparison, of sort, to the fall of this earthly king with the fall of a divine being.

*How you are fallen from heaven, O Day Star (Lucifer), son of Dawn! How you are cut down to the ground... **Isaiah 14:12 (ESV)***

*You said in your heart, 'I will ascend to heaven; above the stars of God I will set my throne on high; I will sit on the **mount of assembly** in the far reaches of the north...' **Isaiah 14:13 (ESV)***

*I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; **I will make myself like the Most High.**' **Isaiah 14:14 (ESV)***

*But you are brought down to Sheol to the far reaches of the pit. **Isaiah 14:15 (ESV)***

There is imagery here, like Ezekiel, that describe a divine being in the assembly (i.e., the Divine Council), enamored with his beauty, whose pride becomes his downfall.

His judgment includes being **brought down to Sheol** – or the underworld. A place the ancient Israelites understood as being under the ground, or in the depths of the earth.

We also see a reference to a “**Day Star**.” In the 4th century a Christian priest by the name of Jerome, translated the Greek version of the OT (Septuagint), into the Latin Vulgate version of the bible, he translated the phrase Day Star with the Latin word “**lucifer**,” or a derivation thereof. It was intended to be a description of the divine being referred to in this passage, not a proper name. But over time the divine being mentioned here in Isaiah 14 became known as Lucifer, who was then also connected to the divine being in Ezekiel 28, and the serpent of Genesis 3.

There is one more thing. In both Ezekiel’s and Isaiah’s accounts of this divine being there is language that **describes him as shining in some way**. Isaiah uses terms such as the shining one, day star, and morning star. Ezekiel describes him as being covered with precious stones that suggest the reflection of light.

What does this have to do with the serpent in the Garden? There is no mention in our English bible translations of the serpent of Genesis 3 as being a shining one... or is there?

THE NACHASH

The ancient Hebrew word that is translated as “serpent” in your bible is “**nachash**” (nah-kaash). The **most common translation** of the word into English is “**serpent**,” but the word nachash is not always that easy to translate.

Nachash is a word that can be used as either a **noun**, a **verb**, or an **adjective**. In ancient Hebrew it's not always obvious what the usage is because they don't use vowels in ancient Hebrew writing. Translators must take "educated guesses" by looking at the context of the passage and how the word is used elsewhere. **What does that mean for Genesis 3?**

We now know with certainty that the "serpent" of Genesis 3 is not just a snake. He is something more. When you take the insights from Genesis 3, Ezekiel 28, and Isaiah 14 you begin to see that the writer of Genesis used the word "nachash" because he wanted us to think about all its meanings (or translations), not just "serpent."

Each use of nachash (noun, verb, and adjective) describe different characteristics of this divine being in Genesis 3. Here's what the meanings of "nachash" look like side by side.

Nachash

Noun - Means a snake

Verb - Means diviner/deceiver, one with divine knowledge

Adjective - Means brazen, bronze, brass, or shiny

PUTTING THIS ALL TOGETHER WE GET A BETTER PICTURE OF THE SERPENT IN GENESIS 3

1. He is a Serpent

Not in a literal sense of an earthly snake, but certainly in some figurative and divine sense.

Adam and Eve knew that animals don't talk. It's reasonable to assume that if they came across a literal talking snake, they would be leery or at least surprised. But there is nothing like that here. All of which suggests the "serpent" was something more than just a ground crawling snake.

Serpents were often considered throne, deity, or national guardians (gods) in ancient cultures. For example, the Egyptian cobra goddess was considered a throne guardian for Pharaoh. Tutankhamen's (King Tut) famous golden head piece is stylized after the hooded head of a cobra.

When Moses was sent to deliver the Israelites from Egypt it may be no coincidence that the first supernatural encounter was between serpents. Aaron's rod turned into a serpent, then Pharaoh's magician and sorcerers turned their staffs into serpents. Aaron's serpent ate Pharaoh's serpents. God won. Could this have been garden imagery telling us the real battle was not Moses and Pharaoh or Israel and Egypt, but God and the serpent from the garden?

In Ezekiel 28 Satan is called a cherub. Ezekiel describes cherubs as having wings, human features, and the even the face of animals like a lion, or ox, or eagle. **Is it possible that the serpent in the garden was a fallen throne guardian cherub with serpentine features?** Keep in mind that serpents were originally part of God's "good" creation and would not have been viewed as evil by Adam and Eve.

Perhaps the term nachash is being used in Genesis 3 to tell us something of who this being once was (a serpentine cherub throne guardian) and to help us understand his form of judgment (on your belly like an actual snake).

The main point is that there is something serpentine about this divine being. Perhaps it's no coincidence that so many pagan cultures worship snake-like gods in some way.

2. He is a Deceiver and Accuser

In the Book of Job, a being appears before God's Divine Council in Heaven and is called "satan." Job does not use "satan" as a proper name for this divine being, but rather to describe his activity or his nature.

A "satan," (suh-taan) in Hebrew, is an accuser. In Job, when the word "satan" is used, it is used with the Hebrew word "ha." In Hebrew "ha satan" is translated as "the accuser."

The word "satan," can and is used in the Bible to describe divine beings, human beings, and even God himself at least once. Obviously, it can't mean that God is Satan.

The point is the term "satan" in Job just means someone who opposes or accuses. It may or may not be the Satan of the NT. The "satan" in Job could be the Satan of the NT or it could be another fallen elohim that is accusing Job before God. We just don't know.

Over the course of time terms like "satan," deceiver, devil, liar, dragon, etc. became ways to refer to this serpent in the Garden, and SATAN eventually became used as a proper name.

Deceiver is also an appropriate description for this rebel in the Garden because that is exactly what he is doing – deceiving Adam and Eve. After which, he will almost certainly accuse them before God of the sin he encouraged them to commit.

3. He is a Shining One

Throughout scripture divine beings are often described as shining, or glowing, or having some sort of bright appearance. This description of shining is also connected to one of the meanings of nachash. As nachash could refer to metals like brass, bronze, or copper that tend to shine or be reflective when polished.

Some have suggested that perhaps this rebel was clothed in some sort of metallic garment, or armor, or jewelry that reflected light. Some ancient, armored garments (called a "coat of mail") can actually look like serpentine scales.

Or it could be that he just had a shining or glowing appearance. For example, think of how the angels were described at the tomb on the day of Jesus' resurrection. Additionally, the Apostle Paul tells us that "Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light." (2 Corinthians 11:14). Could Paul be making a veiled reference to how the serpent appeared to Adam and Eve? Did he show up in the Garden of God disguised as an angel of light, hiding his true nature, to deceive Adam and Eve into thinking he was good and could be trusted?

There are other connections in the OT to the serpent, the idea of bronze, and his conflict with God. For example, the David and Goliath story was not just about the Philistines and Israelites; it was about who rules over heaven and earth: the serpent or Jehovah!

David “bruises” Goliath with a stone and Goliath falls on his face to eat dust, reminding us of God’s judgment pronounced against the serpent in Genesis 3.

Some believe Goliath’s “coat of mail” (1 Samuel 17) was serpentine in nature and the repeated use of the word bronze (derived from nachash) to describe Goliath’s weapons and armor all point to the serpent in the garden.

In other words, Goliath was a type of Satan or serpent, and David was a type of Messiah. The meek Israelite shepherd takes on the massive shining armored pagan warrior and destroys him.

All of this imagery is intended to remind us of supernatural nature of the world we live in and the where the real battles are fought – not with flesh and blood, but with principalities, powers, and spiritual wickedness in high places.

The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. 1
John 3:8b (ESV)

All three of these ideas’ – serpent, deceiver/accuser, and shining one all give us insight into this rebellion story and this leading divine rebel in the garden.

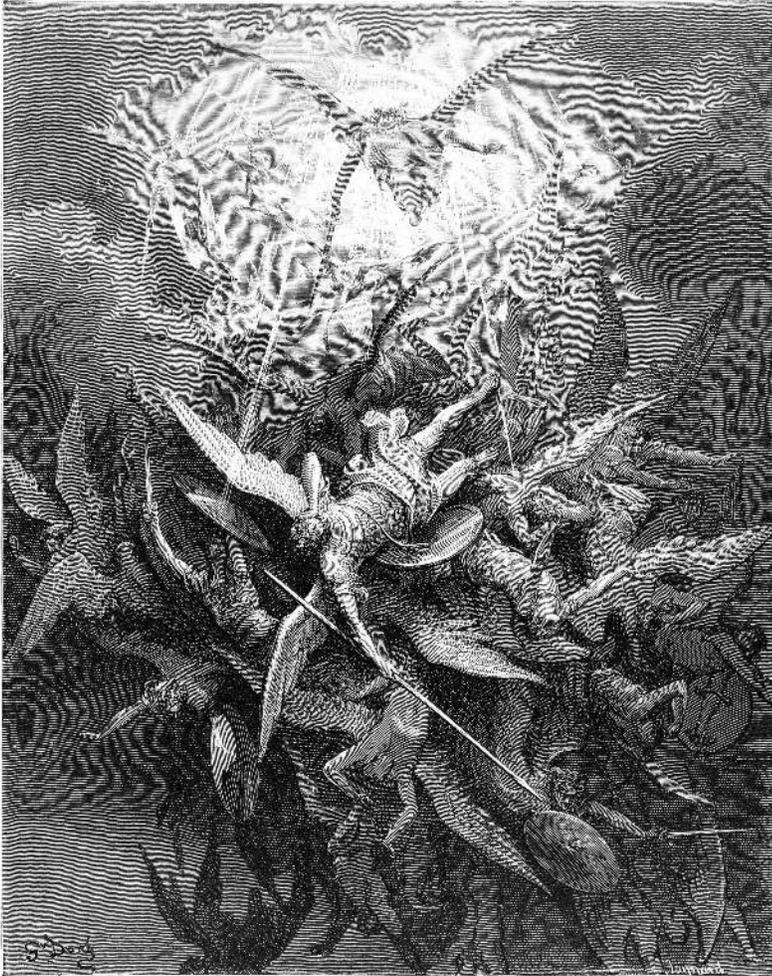
THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE REBELLION

And so, we have Adam and Eve in the Garden of God approached by this divine being. He deceives them into thinking they can be/have something more than they do if they disobey God.

Adam and Eve take the bait and the FALL of MANKIND happens. The result is the first combined divine and human rebellion.

God expels man from the garden and cuts him off from the Tree of Life. Without access to the Tree of Life eternal life is lost until God, as he promised at the fall, eventually brings a savior (Jesus) through mankind to crush the serpent and restore all things as God had intended them to be.

Food for Thought: If Adam and Eve were initially created by God to be eternal beings (i.e., live forever), why did the garden need a Tree of Life and why were they banned from the tree after the fall? Could it be that mankind's "eternal life" was always intended to be dependent on the life of God? Without access to God and his life, Adam and all of mankind would be subject to mortality. To say it another way, Adam and Eve were not created eternal, but as long they had access to the garden, God, and his Tree of Life they could live as such. God was and still is the only source of eternal life.



FOR FURTHER STUDY

For more detailed information on the topics presented in this study I recommend several books by various authors. Their material has been instrumental in putting this series together.

Dr. Michael Heiser, *Angels, Demons, The Unseen Realm, and Supernatural*.

John H. Walton, *The Lost World Series*, six volumes.

E. Theodore Mullen, Jr., *The Assembly of the Gods*.

Clinton E. Arnold, *Powers of Darkness*.