

“THE FIRST TEMPTATION”

[BUT NOT THE LAST!]

Genesis 3:1-3

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INTRODUCTION

A. The Uniqueness of this Account of the Fall

- We have no parallel account found among the traditions of ancient races and peoples.
- All the Evils of the human race are connected with the Temptation and Fall of Adam and Eve.

B. The Unexpectedness of the Fall of Man

Man had every advantage:

- A **beautiful world** with **wonderful food**
- Made in **God’s image**
- Holding a **position of authority**
- Proper **companionship**
- Daily **fellowship with God** who taught man truth
- True **freedom of the will**—it had not yet been compromised!
- There was no reason for dissatisfaction; no reason for rebellion!
- **MAN’S HISTORY IN ONE OF CONTINUAL FAILURE**

C. The Importance of this Account of Man’s Fall

1. The Prohibition—2:17: An expression of God’s sovereignty, authority, wisdom, goodness, justice, holiness, and truth.

2. The Transgression—3:6:

- An Assault upon God’s majesty
- A repudiation of His sovereignty
- A doubt of His goodness
- A dispute of His wisdom
- An ignoring of His justice
- A challenge of His holiness
- A contradiction of His veracity.

D. The Reason for the Temptation

1. Otherwise, man’s obedience would have been mechanical if forced.
2. True love must be by choice.
3. Love must be tested.
4. God made adequate provisions for man’s victory over the testing.

YOU MUST NOT LISTEN TO SATAN, BUT MUST TOTALLY TRUST IN YOUR LOVING GOD.

I. QUESTIONS ABOUT THE SERPENT

A. Who was behind the serpent? [Satan was indwelling and speaking through the serpent.]

- This fact is not really revealed in the OT.
- In Rabbinical writings, the prince of evil spirits is called the “old serpent” or “the serpent.”
- The apocryphal book of wisdom mentions that Satan brought sin into the world (2:23-24).
- Jesus stated that Satan is a “liar and the father of lies” (Jn. 8:44).
- Paul said that Satan disguises himself (II Cor. 11:14) and that he deceived Eve (II Cor. 11:3).
- Paul also states that Satan, as a serpent, will be crushed under our feet (Rom. 16:20).
- John states that the Devil is the origin of sin—I Jn. 3:8.
- John also calls him “the serpent of old” in Rev. 12:9; 20:2.

B. How could Satan use an animal?

1. A connection between Heaven and Earth was set up by creation.
 2. A position was given to spirit beings concerning the Earth.
- C. Why did Satan use the serpent?
1. God had evidently limited Satan to a form of temptation that would not surpass the human capacity; he was not permitted to appear as an angelic being, and had to use an animal form.
 2. Moreover, Satan did not choose to attack with power or terror—then the assaulted ones would have fled to the arms of God, their protector.
 3. Satan appeared in the form of a subject animal that could not really hurt them.
 4. He used the serpent because of its cleverness—such is not true anymore; cf. Mt. 10:16.
 5. The serpent was one of God’s created beings (3:1); it was not evil in itself. Satan perverted this particular one.
 6. The word translated “clever” or “crafty” often means “prudent” in the book of Proverbs.
 7. Satan’s use of the serpent turned cleverness into craftiness.
- D. What was the serpent like?
1. Could he speak by nature?
 - Hardly! Adam’s superiority, in part, consisted in his speech and in his ability to name the animals.
 - Speech implies reason.
 - There was no reason for Eve to be frightened in a sinless world; there was every reason for her to be curious—just as she was in this case.
 2. Was the serpent **upright**?
 - Most likely.
 - He was called a “beast [undomesticated] of the field” in 3:1, not a “creeping thing.”
 - His curse was that he would “crawl on his belly” (3:14).
 - The structures in a snake’s body have been interpreted by evolutionists as “vestigial limbs.”
- E. Why did Moses not mention Satan as the real tempter?
1. He gives a faithful account of the actual, observable events.
 2. He prevents the notion that man is blameless for his fall; a dreadful tempter did not make the Fall necessary.
 3. Man heeded the words of a mere creature!

II. THE QUESTION BY THE SERPENT (2)

- A. The Direction of the Question—to the woman.
1. God had talked with Adam in 2:16-17.
 2. Adam was the representative head of the entire race of men.
 3. Adam could more easily be overcome through the one whom he loved.
- B. The Subtlety of the Question
1. Satan concealed the real issues
 - He never really asked for disobedience.
 - He never questioned God’s sovereign right to rule.
 - He never investigated the reality of the threat of death, or of God’s power to execute it.
 2. He uses the same methods against us!
- C. The Fairness of the Question—Man’s capability of recognizing and refuting the temptation.
1. Man was made to have dominion over the beasts—not to take advice from them!
 2. A speaking beast must have suggested the approach of an evil spirit [Pember, 128].
 3. Adam was already familiar with the nature of beasts—he had named them.
- D. The Form of the Question: “indeed that” —“is it” can be supplied; woman’s reply shows it to be a question.
1. The question throws the woman off guard by the assumed ignorance of the serpent.
 2. The question seeks to stir up vanity in the woman by giving her the chance to correct and instruct him.

- “Every tree” in the original; not “any tree.” The latter would have been too great an exaggeration and could have aroused resentment in the woman.
 - Still, the question was intended to be an overstatement when only 1 tree was forbidden.
3. The question uses the name “Elohim”, not Yahweh.
 - Satan knew nothing of God’s grace and truth and faithfulness.
 - Also, the name represents “God” as distant.
 4. The question raises doubt
 - Has God really made the prohibition?
 - After all, Eve did not directly hear it.
 5. The question hints at God’s harshness and caprice in His restraint upon Adam and Eve.
 6. God’s generous goodness is suspicious.
 7. **The mocking tone** of Satan’s question is a technique still used by Satan and his followers.
 - A mocking superior condescension: “Oh, you poor thing; do you really believe the Bible?”

III. THE ANSWER OF THE WOMAN (vv. 2-3)

- A. She only partially refuted the Tempter: “From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat.”
 1. She had no reason to be suspicious of God’s goodness; she knew of such, and all creation testified to the goodness of God.
 2. She had a clear word from God; God only restricted one tree: “But from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden....”
- B. She minimized the emphasis upon the Goodness of God in His original command.
 1. He said they could **freely eat** from **any tree**.
 2. Already she begins to lose sight of God’s goodness.
 - Cf. Jonah—God gave him Ninevah, yet he complained at the gourd.
 - Cf. Haman—riches and splendor, yet bitter at Mordecai’s success.
 - Ourselves—more money, less heat, less trouble, more possessions, etc.
- C. She adds “neither touch it.” [whether God may have said this or not, is not the issue]
 - The emphasis is upon the harshness or maybe the unreasonableness of the prohibition.
 - She had not fallen yet, but was getting ripe!
 - Such is obvious by Satan’s continued efforts.
- D. She is Vague concerning the results of disobedience.
 1. Note that she fails to use the full name of the tree—“tree of the knowledge of good and evil.”
 - Simply calls it the “tree in the middle of the garden.
 - The problem of knowing evil by experiencing it is not even mentioned.
 2. She says “lest you die” instead of the actual words of God: “**You shall surely die**” (2:17).

CONCLUSION

Eve was in **great danger**; yet, she does not seem to realize it!

Her answers betray a certain carelessness with the facts, and some questions about the importance of truth and obedience.

Satan was ready to “draw in the net.” She was almost snared. Next message we see how he does so.

Satan was on His way to becoming a master deceiver. He **has been a liar from the beginning!**

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