

105 THE ANCIENT SERPENT—PART TWO

Introduction: Because our interpretation of the ancient serpent in Preterist Paper #104 does not follow traditional tracks, the purpose of this paper is to offer more scriptural evidence for its stated position: the serpent in the garden in Genesis three symbolizes the carnal human nature.

1. Tradition blames “Satan” for the fall, but the New Testament blames Adam without mentioning “Satan.”

- A. “For since death came by man [Adam]...” I Cor 15:21
- B. “For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive.” I Cor 15:22
- C. “Sin entered into the world through one man, and death through sin; and so death passed to all men...” Rom 5:12
- D. “By the trespass of the one the many died.” Rom 5:15
- E. “By the trespass of the one, death reigned through the one.” Rom 5:17
- F. “So then as through one trespass, all men were condemned.” Rom 5:18
- G. “Through the one man’s disobedience many were made sinners.” Rom 5:19

2. Tradition blames a fallen angel, “Satan” for sin, but the Bible blames human beings.

A. Yahweh’s declaration to the serpent displays the human predicament.

Yahweh said, “Enmity I will put between you [the serpent] and the woman.” Gen 3:15

B. Paul explained the war within himself: the law of sin (serpent nature) vs law of the mind.

“So this is the principle I have discovered: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God’s law. But I see another law at work in my body, warring against the law of my mind and holding me captive to the law of sin that dwells within me.” Rom 7:21-23

C. The war within: deeds of the body (serpent nature) vs being led by the Spirit.

“If by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.” Rom 8:13-14

D. The war within: desires of the flesh (serpent nature) vs walking by the Spirit.

“So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the flesh craves what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are opposed to each other, so that you do not do what you want.” Gal 5:16-17

E. The war within: acts of the flesh (serpent nature) vs fruit of the Spirit.

“The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity, and debauchery; idolatry and sorcery; hatred, discord, jealousy, and rage; rivalries, divisions, factions, and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Against such things there is no law.” Gal 5:19-23

F. The war within: conceit, provocation, envy (serpent nature) vs live by the Spirit and walk by the Spirit.

“Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us walk in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying one another.” Gal 5:24-26

G. The war within: cursing others (serpent nature) vs blessing our Lord.

“With the tongue we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God’s likeness. Out of the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, this should not be! Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? My brothers, can a fig tree grow olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water.” James 3:9-12

H. The war within: self-deception (serpent nature) vs truth, forgiveness, cleansing.

“If we should say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we should confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous, that He may forgive us our sins and may cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we should say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us.” I Jn 1:8-10

I. The war within: love of the world (serpent nature) vs love of the Father.

“Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone should love the world, the love of the Father is not in him, because all that is in the world, the desire of the flesh and the desire of the eyes and the vaunting of life, is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away, and its desire; but the one doing the will of God remains forever.” I Jn 2:15-17

3. The humiliating curse on the serpent of “eating dust” (Gen 3:14) fell on mankind.

- A. “Before him the desert dwellers will bow down, and his enemies will lick the dust.” Ps 72:9
- B. “And kings will be your foster fathers, and their queens your nursing mothers; facedown to the earth they will bow low to you, and they will lick up the dust of your feet. And you will know that I am YHWH.” Isa 49:23
- C. “They will lick the dust like a snake, like the crawling things of the earth; they will come trembling from their enclosures to YHWH our God they will tremble, and they will be afraid of You.” Micah 7:17

4. The curse of humiliation given to the serpent (Gen 3:14) fell on Adam and Eve.

A. Guilt, disgrace: "And they heard the voice of YHWH God walking about in the garden in the breeze of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the face of YHWH God in the midst of the trees of the garden." Gen 3:8

B. Fear, shame, degradation: And he [Adam] said, "Your voice I heard in the garden, and I was afraid because I am naked, and I hid myself." Gen 3:10

C. Multiplication of debasement with denial, blame, separation: "The man said, 'The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave to me from the tree, and I ate.' The woman said, 'The serpent deceived me...'" Gen 3:12-13

5. How did "Satan" know of Yahweh's private instruction to Adam not to eat of the tree?

This question brings up a common belief regarding the superhuman enemy of God, "Satan." It appears most people believe that "Satan" is omniscient (all knowing) and omnipresent (everywhere). To them, "Satan" is not a discrete angel subject to space and time, but an autonomous deity with similar powers as Yahweh. This is dualism not monotheism.

6. If "Satan" is the serpent in the Garden and responsible for all the misery in the world, why is the Bible silent regarding this villain by name in Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings, 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Malachi? And why are there so many references to people as serpents?

7. The Serpent in the Garden story is an allegory.

Allegory is an intricate and layered story akin to the parable. Parables are a less complex subset of allegory. Both elicit a quest for meanings hidden beneath the literal surface account. These devices help us understand difficult concepts using relatable context. Allegories are used liberally in the Bible. The word "Adam" means "man" or "humanity" in Hebrew and is derived from the word "adamah," which means "earth" or "soil." The word "Eve" means "life-giver." These names contribute to the understanding that Genesis 3 is an allegory, in addition to the talking snake.

8. Examples of allegories in the Bible (not exhaustive)

A. The account of Melchizedek is an allegory for Jesus, the eternal high priest. Gen 14:17-20, Heb 7:1-28

B. The allegory of trees seeking a king is about morally indiscriminate Israel. Judges 9:7-15

C. The allegory of the vine from Egypt symbolizes Israel's once flourishing and now broken state. Ps 80:8-19

D. The allegory of the two eagles represents Judah's King breaking an oath given in the name of Yahweh. Eze 17:1-24

E. The allegory of two harlot women symbolizes Samaria and Jerusalem. Eze 23:1-49

F. The allegory of the prodigal son is a picture of Israel who had spent the Father's wealth and was given an opportunity for repentance. The hardened self-deceived older son is also instructive. Lk 15:11-32

G. The allegory of the sheep and Good Shepherd depicts believers and Jesus. Jn 10:1-18

H. Paul allegorized the Genesis story of Sarah and Hagar to represent two covenants. These historical figures are given a symbolic meaning. Gal 4:21-31

9. The fallen angel story is extra-biblical mythology.

The fallen angel story is not found anywhere in scripture. Those who see it in Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28 are indulging in eisegesis, i.e. reading something into the text that isn't there. These two passages refer to the earthly, human kings of Babylon and Tyre, who were following their serpent natures, thinking themselves to be as God. (The serpent said, "You will be like God." Gen 3:4). Please see P.P. #69 and #70 for exegesis regarding these two accounts.

Closing thoughts: The closer we draw to the Light of Christ, the more evident our serpent nature becomes. Contrary to dispiriting us, it liberates. Confession and repentance frees up the "space" within us to invite more of God's presence into His temple, giving peace and security that passes understanding.

Preterist Papers—studies concerning "Satan"

"The Serpent in the Garden was not Satan" #59

"Problems with the Idea of Satan in the O.T." #60

"Problems with the Word Satan in the New Testament" #61

"Satan in Job" #62

"Did the Devil Tempt Jesus?" #63

"A Study of 'Satan' by Francis Beffert" #64

"Are there Wicked Angels in Jude?" #65

"Ruler of this World is not Satan" #66

"Are there Evil Powers in Heaven?" #67

"War in Heaven — Rev 12" #68

"Lucifer was not a Fallen Angel" #69

"Beautiful Fallen Angel" #70

"Council of Gods or Men?" #71

"Angels Kept in Eternal Chains" #72

"Casting Out Demons" #73

"The Nephilim" P.P. #74

"Inquiry into Heiser's Unseen Realm" #89

"The Dragon of Revelation" #93

"The Ancient Serpent" #104

Recommended: "The Real Devil" by Duncan Heaster. This book is available on line (but not in print).