**‘What in the World Happened? Considering Genesis 3’**

The troubled world we live in today finds its explanation in part in Genesis 3. Here questions regarding the origin of sin, death, pain, and suffering are answered. Yet more questions are raised. Questions such as: ‘Why is there a serpent in God’s garden?’ ‘Is it a real serpent or something other than a serpent?’ ‘If it isn’t a “real” serpent, what is it?’ We can answer the first questions about the origins of sin, death, pain, and suffering with ease. The questions we have about the serpent are more difficult. They are answered with information gathered from Isaiah, Ezekiel, the Gospels, and the Book of Revelation. We begin with Genesis 3:1-7.

***3 Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, “Indeed, has God said, ‘You shall not eat from any tree of the garden’?” 2The woman said to the serpent, “From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; 3but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, ‘You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die.’” 4The serpent said to the woman, “You surely will not die! 5For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” 6When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate. 7Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings.***

We first must know this: The Hebrew word for serpent is ***n-ch-sh***.                Dr. Michael Heiser writes, ***“The pivotal character of Genesis 3 is the serpent. The Hebrew word translated serpent is nachash. The word is both plain and elastic.***

***“The most straightforward meaning is the one virtually all translators and interpreters opt for: serpent. When the Hebrew root letters n-ch-sh is a noun, then that’s the meaning.***

***“But n-ch-sh are also the consonants of a verb. If we changed the vowels to a verbal form (recall that Hebrew originally had no vowels), we would have nochesh, which means “the diviner.” Divination refers to communication with the supernatural world….We can see that element in the story….since there are immediate clues in the story that the serpent is more than a mere snake.”*** [[1]](http://yourbibleblog.com/2016/11/%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn1)

We are told in the text that the serpent was a creature of God’s making. Furthermore, we are told that it ***“was more crafty than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made.”*** The serpent in the text seems to be a typical serpent, BUT it speaks of things that no ordinary snake would know. The conclusion we must make is that a real serpent was being EXPLOITED by something/someone else.

But who exploited it and why? The answer to this question is that the one revealed in the Bible as the devil was the exploiter. The reason why he chose to exploit the crafty serpent was to bring down mankind, the crown of God’s creation.[[2]](http://yourbibleblog.com/2016/11/%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn2) But the devil is never specifically identified in Genesis 3. How, then, do we know that the devil is involved here? Where did he come from?

We have the following passages which yield some insight into the origin of the devil. These passages are Isaiah 14:12-14, Ezekiel 28:12-16, and Revelation 12:3-4:

***“How you have fallen from heaven, O star of the morning, son of the dawn! You have been cut down to the earth, You who have weakened the nations! 13“But you said in your heart, ‘I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God, And I will sit on the mount of assembly In the recesses of the north. 14‘I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.’*** Isaiah 14:12-14

***12“Son of man, take up a lamentation over the king of Tyre and say to him, ‘Thus says the Lord God, “You had the seal of perfection, Full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. 13“You were in Eden, the garden of God; Every precious stone was your covering: The ruby, the topaz and the diamond; The beryl, the onyx and the jasper; The lapis lazuli, the turquoise and the emerald; And the gold, the workmanship of your settings and sockets, Was in you. On the day that you were created They were prepared. 14“You were the anointed cherub who covers, And I placed you there. You were on the holy mountain of God; You walked in the midst of the stones of fire. 15“You were blameless in your ways From the day you were created Until unrighteousness was found in you. 16“By the abundance of your trade You were internally filled with violence, And you sinned; Therefore I have cast you as profane From the mountain of God. And I have destroyed you, O covering cherub, From the midst of the stones of fire.*** Ezekiel 28:12-16

***3Then another sign appeared in heaven: and behold, a great red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads were seven diadems. 4And his tail swept away a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth.*** Revelation 12:2-4

The one we call the devil had been part of God’s “very good” creation. He had been a splendid covering cherub (angel) of great beauty. He WAS in Eden, the garden of God. He DID walk in the midst of the stones of fire on God’s holy mountain. He HAD the seal of perfection. He WAS full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. He WAS blameless from the day of his creation UNTIL UNRIGHTEOUSNESS WAS FOUND IN HIM.

What had he said regarding himself? He wanted to be like God and have all of the honor and worship and praise God had. This was a sin against God, which God dealt with by casting him from the mountain of God. It was THIS rebel, the devil, who Jesus described as ***“a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him”*** [[3]](http://yourbibleblog.com/2016/11/%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn3) who was in God’s beautiful garden. He was the one speaking to the woman through the highly crafty serpent.

Having given some thought as to how and when the devil had become the devil; we now turn to the next question: ***‘Why was he in God’s garden?’*** The best answer to this question is: He wanted to bring down the ones who bore the image and likeness of God. He wanted to bring down the ones who had been given rule and reign over the earth and its creatures. He saw this as his first step in mounting a new offensive against God. His heart’s desire hadn’t changed. He still wanted to bring God down.

Now that we know where the devil/deceiver came from and why he is in God’s garden we can move on to further consider Genesis 3.

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[[1]](http://yourbibleblog.com/2016/11/%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftnref1) Michael S. Heiser, *The Unseen Realm*, (Bellingham: Lexham, 2015), 87.

[[2]](http://yourbibleblog.com/2016/11/%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftnref2) The phrase “crown of God’s creation” isn’t found in the Bible. It is, however, used to convey the uniqueness of mankind. Mankind was the pinnacle of God’s creation, the only creature created in the “image” and according to the “likeness” of God.

[[3]](http://yourbibleblog.com/2016/11/%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftnref3) John 8:44a