

The serpent

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[0 : 00] Let us turn again to the chapter that we read, the book of Genesis, chapter number 3, and again we'll carry on with our study of chapter 3 by looking again at verse number 1, the second part of verse number 1.

You remember that the last time we dealt with this verse, we saw how Moses, who wrote Genesis, begins the chapter by drawing our attention to a real live serpent.

There is no way at all that we can treat this in any other way, but that Moses wants us to know straight away that this is not a fairy story, this is not a symbolic tale of any kind, this was a real live serpent and what happened right through the chapter actually happened in the way that it is recorded in the Bible.

And he draws our attention in a very dramatic way to a real live serpent. And he tells us very quickly as well that this serpent was subtle. He introduces us right away to a craftiness, to a slyness, to a cunning, not wisdom, but a subtlety which doesn't normally belong to snakes.

It says that Moses is warning us straight away that things are not just normal in this chapter that he's going to relate to us.

[1 : 26] And as he puts us on our guard as to what is going to happen, we read that the serpent spoke. So that our suspicions, which have already been aroused, are fulfilled.

Because we know that we are shown without question that things are out of order, things are not right. This serpent was taking to itself something that did not belong to it, the gift of speech.

You see, the serpent was one of the animals that the Lord God had made, and had made after his own kind, the Bible tells us. And in the order of creation, snakes did not speak.

Man was made in the image of God. Man possessed the ability to think and to speak. He was given authority over all the animals. He named them.

We saw how by giving something or somebody a name, that he established his authority over them. And we saw how people, mankind, was not allowed to name the Lord Jesus Christ, because that would have established authority over them.

[2 : 33] That the name, thou shalt call his name Jesus, it was an order from heaven. And in the same way, Adam was given authority over all the living creatures and everything that was on the earth.

He was given the authority to name them. But here we have a serpent denying God's own order of creation. This serpent broke away from the mold that God had set, and it raises itself to equality with man.

It speaks. There's something wrong here. And Eve should have been on her guard immediately, the serpent spoke. So that's what we saw last week.

Now tonight we see, why does the serpent approach Eve? Why did the serpent not approach Adam, first of all? Why did he approach Eve first? Well this is a very, very difficult question to answer.

And we cannot be tremendously sure about the answer. We cannot be dogmatic about the answer. We cannot be tremendously sure about the reason why the serpent approached Eve first of all.

[3 : 39] But we must search the scriptures as we always must do when we have passages and things that we don't understand. We must search the whole of scripture to find other references in order that some light may be shone upon the difficult passage.

So we look to see, and Paul in his letter to Timothy, about the role of women, tells us, 1 Timothy 2, For Adam was first formed, then Eve, and Adam was not deceived.

But the woman being deceived was in the transgression. And then in his letter to the Corinthians, 1 Corinthians 11, verse 3, Paul is expressing his fear about the Corinthians being drawn away from the pure teaching of the gospel, being drawn away from the simplicity that is in Christ.

And he refers again to the serpent and Eve, and he says, As the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety. And then in the first epistle of Peter, Peter is exhorting his readers to family unity, 1 Peter 3, verse 7, and he says to husbands to give honor to the wife as unto the weaker vessel.

Now our own experience in life and our scriptural teaching tells us that women are not inferior to men. Woman was created in order to be a helpmate for man.

[5 : 06] She had to complement man. He was incomplete without her. God saw the condition and the state of man, and he knew that man was not complete.

And he made a woman to make his life complete. And yet, although she was not inferior to him, she was in a certain sense subordinate to man.

Was she more sensitive than man? Did she have a softer heart? Was she more in touch with the things of nature? Was she more sympathetic to animals?

Was her soul in actual closer tune with the things of nature? Well, these are only thoughts because we cannot really see. All we know is that the serpent, in his subtlety, approached Eve first.

He had worked it out. It wasn't a chance, random approach at all, and it just happened to be Eve that was closest to him. No, he waylaid Eve. In his subtlety, he came to Eve.

[6 : 17] There was something about Eve that made the serpent's subtlety say to the serpent, the woman is more suitable to approach than man.

Now, it seems to me that that's as far as we are meant to go. Because the Bible doesn't tell us anymore. It leaves us, and I think it would be dangerous to go further than that.

But what we can see quite definitely from it is how sin overthrows God's order of things. Where sin appears, it attacks God's own order.

It attacks the system laid down by God. It attacks the very arrangement that God lays down. You see, the woman had been created for Adam. The woman had been created to be Adam's help, to be his living companion, to be his living, loving companion.

The woman was created for man's good, but now the woman becomes man's instrument of his downfall.

[7 : 24] The instrument of man's downfall. Instead of being a help, she's a hindrance. She doesn't support him in his obedience to God, but she leads him astray.

You see how the devil turns the things the other way around, spoils the order of things, and does things against God's own desire. Adam and Eve had lived very, very happily in the Garden of Eden.

We don't know how long they had lived there. The Bible, again, doesn't tell us, so any guesses would be wrong. The Bible doesn't tell us. But we know that they did live happily to the glory of God and to their own enjoyment.

They lived in perfect bliss, in harmony with all around them, and at peace with God, in friendship with them. He walked in the Garden of Eden, until the serpent spoke to Eve.

For in the very way that the serpent spoke, in the way it frames the question, we immediately see that it's an enemy of God who is speaking.

[8 : 30] And here again we must stress that the question was verbalized. It wasn't that Eve was in tune with the thinking of animals.

The words were actually spoken. The words were actual words by the snake. Not just animal language that was understood by Eve, but uttered words that are recorded for us.

Yea, hath God said, ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden. You see, it's a question there that's so cunningly put that it immediately casts doubt on God's own goodness.

And not only does it cast doubt on God's own goodness, but it's in a disarming way almost saying, if I'm wrong, I'm willing to be corrected.

Please put me right. Please tell me. And what the serpent is saying is, is it really true that God wouldn't let you eat of all the trees in the garden? And it comes with a certain amount, as I say, of almost mock humility.

[9 : 41] Saying, if I'm wrong, tell me. It's a sly question, a very, very sly question, for it insinuates, and it immediately plants in the mind of anyone who's reading it carefully, the thought that God is being selfish.

That God is being unneedfully strict because there's all of those trees in the garden. And there's no need to restrict them to any. In not allowing Adam and Eve to eat from all the trees, surely God is being unnecessarily strict.

That's what the devil is insinuating and putting in Eve's mind. And although Eve was led to believe that this was her normal, innocent question about the state of affairs in the garden of Eden, would the questioner appear to be willing to be corrected if he's wrong, we can see quite clearly that the serpent already knows that the serpent is not searching for the truth of the matter.

It wasn't interested in the truth. All he was asking the question for was to give a false impression. The question was sly and the question was false.

all just geared to give Eve a wrong impression of what was going on. But how is this worked out?

[11 : 05] A serpent speaks that alerts us straight away that things are not what they ought to be. And when we hear the question that is asked, when we hear the question that the serpent asks, we can hear and see and recognize the power of evil.

The power of evil. Now we haven't come into contact with the power of evil yet. In the chapters up to now, the devil hasn't been mentioned, you'll notice. There's been no mention of Satan. He's not mentioned.

But it's clear to us from our reading of the whole Bible that here is Satan at what? Here is Satan first appearing. And the Bible doesn't mention his name. But it's very clear to us as we know the Bible that the evil thoughts which the serpent expresses comes from Satan himself.

And the fact that we don't read about the devil himself doesn't mean to say that the Bible didn't yet know about him. It is wrong to think that the devil only appeared later on.

Because we mustn't think that Moses didn't know about the devil when he wrote about Genesis. Because the Bible often reveals just tiny little bits of the truth to us and leads us on gradually until when we read the whole Bible and we get the whole picture and we search the whole scripture we get the full picture and the full revelation of God.

[12 : 31] You take the doctrine of the Trinity you would hardly be able to see it clearly in the Old Testament. But when you've got the New Testament and the Old Testament the Trinity is absolutely clear.

Father, Son and Holy Spirit. But it's very very slow in appearing. It's almost that God is revealing the truth to us bit by bit until finally his whole revelation is complete.

In a way we can't really understand you see that the serpent was used by Satan. The serpent was used by the devil. And that's what the Bible wants us to believe.

That's what the Bible means us to believe. We find that in the book of Revelation Satan himself is referred to by John who wrote the book of Revelation as a serpent.

Revelation 12 verse 9 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.

[13 : 36] The devil being referred to as a serpent. And again Revelation 20 verse 2 And he laid hold on the dragon that old serpent which is the devil and Satan and bound him a thousand years.

So our study of the whole of Scripture and we are in a very very blessed position that we have the whole of Scripture leaves us in no doubt whatsoever but that the serpent was used by Satan to tempt Eve.

And finally as well it's worth noticing that the serpent doesn't use the whole name the full name that is given to God in this chapter.

In this chapter God is referred to us the Lord God. But you'll notice that Satan refuses to say Lord. He will not call God Lord.

He says Yea hath God said He's willing to call him God but not Lord God. So that's the question that was asked Eve and next week we'll look at Eve's reply to the serpent's question if God allows us.

[14 : 48] Let us pray. Lord God of heaven and earth we praise thee for the way that thou hast revealed thine own truth to us.

The way that we have things that happened so many hundreds of years ago that we are able to see them now and read them and be able to understand them and know that thou dost wishest to know the way that thou hast dealt with man from the very beginning.

We give thee thanks for all the teaching and all the knowledge that we have and we pray that as we struggle through thine own word through our own lack of faith through our own unbelief through our own lack of knowledge that thou would shine down from heaven upon the written word and that it would become a living word to each one of us.

Give us we ask of thee an understanding and where we are not meant to understand we pray for an acceptance because thou hast said it. Be with each one of us we pray each one of us in different situations with different problems and different attacks from the devil.

We pray oh Lord God that thou would draw near to each one of us and build us up strong in the faith that we may know that all things work together for good to those who love the Lord.

[16 : 13] Help us then to go forward in the food knowledge that through the Lord Jesus Christ we are more than conquerors. Help us to overcome life. Help us to be conquerors so that we will be able to show the world that we belong to Christ.

Be with each one of us we pray throughout this coming week. Forgive us for all our sins. Be with those that have any problems problems that may be private to themselves and that appear to be insurmountable.

May they bring their burden to thee and we know that whoever comes to thee there will be no wise cast death. Be with those who are visiting with us we give thee thanks for them.

we give thee thanks for all the work that they have done for thee and we pray that thou would continue to bless them in their witness to the world. Remember the family and the loved ones we pray and remember those who are here for the first time.

We ask a blessing to rest upon them and may they find the word of God speaking clearly to them. We ask all this in Jesus' own name. Amen.