

Satan

A Biography

¹ Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made.

Genesis 3:1a ESV

A Talking Snake in the Garden?

Someone said, “Christianity: The belief that some invisible cosmic Jewish Zombie who was his own father can make you live forever if you symbolically eat his flesh and telepathically tell him that you accept him as your master, so he can remove an evil force from your soul that is present in humanity because a rib-woman was convinced by a talking snake to eat from a magical tree.” Ridicule. There are some people who simply hate the Bible and deliberately choose to mock whatever it teaches, putting it in the worst possible light so that they can prove to themselves how preposterous and even dangerous to reality it is to believe it.

A skeptical blogger gives a similar, yet slightly different assessment saying, “All the problems in the world are because a woman ate from a magic tree after having a conversation with a friendly talking snake. And the cow jumped over the moon.” In this case, it isn’t as much a problem of deliberate distortion as it is simple incredulity. It just sounds too outlandish to be taken as anything other than a nursery rhyme. Therefore, it must be pure fiction.

Today we are looking at the first half of the first verse of Genesis 3. It presents us with something that English translations call a “serpent” or a “snake.” There is no question but that in this story, this being talks to the woman named Eve. This is a strange thing to be sure, but it is not unprecedented in Bible for an animal to speak. It happens on one other occasion. This is the story of Balaam’s donkey. However, it needs to be pointed out that in that story it explicitly tells us that the donkey talked because the Angel of the LORD opened its mouth (Num 22:28). In

other words, it was not viewed as normal that donkeys talked. Rather, it is said to be a [miracle](#).

Since the Reformation, the most popular explanation of this talking snake may be that somehow Satan did what the Angel of the LORD was able to do with the donkey—open its mouth so that it spoke, perhaps through a form of possession. For example, [Martin Luther](#) said, “[Let us, therefore, establish in the first place that the serpent is a real serpent, but one that has been entered and taken over by Satan, who is speaking through the serpent.](#)”¹ This seems to be Calvin’s view as well when he says that the “[serpent was merely the mouthpiece of the devil.](#)”² It should be pointed out, however, that nowhere in the entire Bible does it say this. Furthermore, in reading this story we get nothing but the sense that when the serpent talks that it is anything other than normal. Think about Eve and her reaction to a talking snake. It doesn’t seem to bother her in the slightest. It is like serpents talk to her every day. Of course they do!

For this reason, some have said that what happened here is that God [originally created snakes with the ability to speak](#) like humans. Furthermore, some have also suggested, based on the language of the curse of the serpent, that they were also created with legs and feet, for it says, “[Because you have done this, Cursed are you more than all cattle, And more than every beast of the field; On your belly shall you go, And dust shall you eat All the days of your life](#)” ([Gen 3:14](#) NAS). Again, I simply want to note that the Bible never says that snakes had legs and feet. In fact, I believe the Bible never actually says that snakes have ever spoken a word, at least not in a human tongue. Maybe in Harry Potter’s world, but not in the world of the Bible.

You say, “[How can you possibly say that snakes never talked? It says so right here. You admitted it yourself less than two minutes ago.](#)” Actually, I never admitted that snakes talked. I admitted that English translations of a Hebrew word call this a snake, and I admitted that this creature did talk. But I never said that snakes talk. Today, we are going to look at this talking “snake.” In fact, I’m going to give you a mini-biography of him, telling you about his [identity](#) and [origins](#), his [fall \(character, authority, and curse\)](#), his [appearance](#), his [job](#), and most of all, [his end](#). Some of these things can be discovered by looking at his [names](#), for he has many of them in the Bible.

¹ Martin Luther, Sermon on Genesis 3:14, in *Luther’s Works, Vol. 1: Lectures on Genesis: Chapters 1-5*, ed. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald, and Helmut T. Lehmann, vol. 1 (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1999), 185.

² Calvin, Commentary on Genesis 3:1.

But first, there seem to be two extremes people have towards the being in view here. One is pure **disbelief**. This creature doesn't really exist at all. He is a figment of the fertile imagination of ancient, superstitious peoples. People who take this view usually laugh and scorn the very concept of him even as they do the concept of God. Never mind that the entire world knows of a serpent at the beginning of their origin stories. No matter where you go, there is serpent worship in almost identical forms.³ The other extreme is one of paralyzing **fear**. One should never talk about him. Like **Lord Voldemort**, he is "**He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named**."

I'm not really sure how most Reformed people view him, because on the one hand, we know he is real, but on the other we don't talk about him very much. Maybe it is fear, maybe it is superstition, maybe they think if they talk about him that spooks will come in their house, or maybe it is not wanting to be associated with Charasmatics, who seem to be the only people days willing to talk about him. All I know is that the Bible talks about him quite a bit. It really is vital to think properly about our ancient foe, to know what he is like, what kind of a being he is, what kind of power he has over people, and what power constrains him. That is what I hope to do with this biography. I hope you will find hope in the midst of such a great force of evil in this world. With that, let's go to our text.

The Identity of the Serpent

A Beast of the Field?

Let's figure out the **identity** of this serpent. The first thing I want to do is read the verse as it appears in the **ESV**. "**Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made.**" Now from the **NAS**, "**Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made.**" Do you hear the difference? Let me do it again, with the same two ideas from two more translations. First, the **Tanakh**, "**Now the serpent was the shrewdest of all the wild beasts that the LORD God had made.**" Now the **NIV**, "**Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made.**" Did you hear it that time? Let me do it one more time with two more translations. First, the **RSV**, "**Now the serpent was more subtle than any other wild creature that**

³ See John Bathurst Deane, *The Worship of the Serpent Traced Throughout the World* (London: J. G. & F. Rivington, 1833).

<http://books.google.com/books?id=FuAWAAAAYAAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=deane+serpent&hl=en&sa=X&ei=TGWTUoGNKYXUoATHm4GYDA&ved=0CDsQ6AEwAg#v=onepage&q=deane%20serpent&f=false>

the LORD God had made.” Now the KJV, “Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made.”

What is the different between the first set and the second set? The first is summarized by Duncan Heaster, “It is a literal snake. The serpent is ‘a beast of the field.’”⁴ Many, even OT scholars, take this view. This assumption is seen in the use of the word “other” in the ESV. He is more crafty than any *other* beast of the field, meaning that he is also one of the beasts of the field. This is a fascinating translation, for this reason: There is no word for “other” in the Hebrew text. It simply isn’t clear from the language that the serpent has to be one of the beasts of the field. It is just assumed.

As I will explain, I do not believe that the “snake” was from the field at all. He was more crafty than the beasts of the field, but was not himself a beast of the field. But if this is true, why would there be a comparison with the beasts in the first place? I think there are a couple of reasons. The first is that Moses is explaining to us that this person entering the garden is more shrewd and crafty than any creature that has been introduced in the story up to this point. Adam had not met his match back in ch. 2 when he named the animals. But now he and his wife are in trouble.

The second reason has to do with word plays going on in the story. You have Adam (‘*adam*) the man (*ha-‘adam*) being made from the ground (*ha-‘adamah*). You have the beasts or “living things” (the *chayyia*) and the woman Eve (*Chawwah*) who is the mother of all “living” (*chay*). You have the beasts being made from the ground (‘*adamah*). You have Eve’s being “deceived” (*nasha*) by the “serpent” (*nachash*). The point of the wordplays is to help you remember the story and to impress upon you the intricate plot being told.

After the close of the biblical canon, another wordplay arose as the Bible was bring translated into Aramaic, the language Jesus spoke. The wordplay is between Eve (*Chawa*) and the serpent (*chwh*⁵, *chyny*⁶). Then, due in no small part to the misogyny (hated or dislike of women) in the ancient world, the wheels started

⁴ Duncan Heaster, “The Real Devil A Biblical Exploration,” <http://www.realdevil.info/5-2.htm>

⁵ This word () is found in 1Q23 in a fragment of the book of giants. Two articles on this are Sergey Minov, “Serpentine’ Eve in Syriac Christian Literature of Late Antiquity,” in D. V. Arbel and A. A. Orlov (eds.), *With Letters of Light: Studies in the Dead Sea Scrolls, Early Jewish Apocalypticism, Magic, and Mysticism in Honor of Rachel Elijior* (Ekstasis 2Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 22010): 92-114.<http://www.michaelsheiser.com/PaleoBabble/Minov%20Serpentine%20Eve%20in%20Syriac%20Christian%20Literature%20of%20Late%20Antiquity.pdf>; Scott C. Layton, Remarks on the Canaanite Origin of Eve, *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 59 (1997): 22-32, <http://www.michaelsheiser.com/PaleoBabble/Layton%20Remarks%20on%20Canaanite%20Origin%20of%20Eve.pdf>

⁶ This is the word () used to translate “serpent” into Aramaic in Pseudo-Jonathan.

coming off. Suddenly, some were arguing that Eve actually meant “snake,” because after all, the words were basically identical. Perhaps you have run into this idea. It doesn’t. It means “life,” as [Genesis 3:20](#) clearly tells us.

Others took it further, inventing sexual connotations in the word “deceive,” thus creating what is today known as the Serpent Seed doctrine that Cain’s father is literally, biologically the devil. Not only is the word “deceive” never used sexually in the entire OT,⁷ the view is explicitly against [Genesis 4:1](#) which says that Adam is his father. We find these ideas in the very [earliest church](#) and then on into [Gnosticism](#) and strange Rabbinical teachings, and much (though not all) of the time, they are there simply to disparage women or to get Adam off the hook for as much of the Fall as possible. Both ideas are being taught today by popular teachers on television, and they need to be denounced as unbiblical and harmful speculations.

So how could we know that this is not an actual snake? We know from the word being used for it. The word is *nachash*. The form has the definite article in front of it, so it is “[the nachash](#).” The word is in a singular form. Given the context, I believe this means it refers to [one specific nachash](#). In other words, it isn’t referring to all snakes.⁸

But the [meaning](#) of the word is even more interesting. It can be used as a [noun](#), a [verb](#), or an [adjective](#). As a noun, it means “[serpent](#)” or “[snake](#)” ([Ex 4:3](#)) or “[divination](#)” or “[omens](#)” ([Num 24:1](#); [Deut 18:10](#)). As a verb it means “[one who practices divination](#)” such as a witch or sorcerer ([Gen 30:27](#); [Gen 44:5](#); [II Kings 21:6](#)). As an adjective, it means “[shining](#)” or “[shining bronze](#)” (see below).

You can use adjectives in the place of nouns. They are called [substantival adjectives](#) as in the movie title “[The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly](#).” If this is a substantival adjectively, and you put “the” in front of it, you would have the translation “[The Shining One](#).” This is a perfectly legitimate translation of the word, even though few have seen it.

What would it mean that he is a Shining One? This refers to his [heavenly origins](#). There is a fascinating passage in [Numbers 21:1-9](#). It tells of a time when

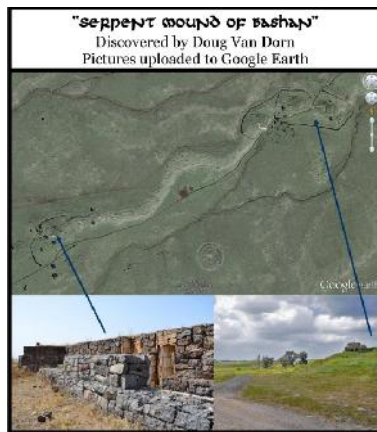
⁷ See Heiser’s screenshot: <http://michaelsheiser.com/PaleoBabble/2011/12/the-serpent-and-eve-nonsense-where-the-idea-comes-from-and-does-not-come-from/>

⁸ *A point of grammar*. It is certainly not conclusive that just because *nachash* is singular in form that it must refer only to one *nachash*. For example, throughout the story, the “beasts” are also singular in form. Even in this verse, “beast” (living creature) is singular in form. However, two points can be made. First, “beast” is modified by “any” (*kol*), so that it clearly means more than one in the context. Second, the *nachash* is said to be “he” later in the verse: “He (3rd person masc. singular) said to the woman.” Third, there is a plural for of this word that could have been used, but wasn’t. It is translated “serpents” (*hannuchashim*) in [Numbers 21:6](#) (a relevant passage for identifying who our character is) and [Jeremiah 8:17](#) (*nəchashim*).

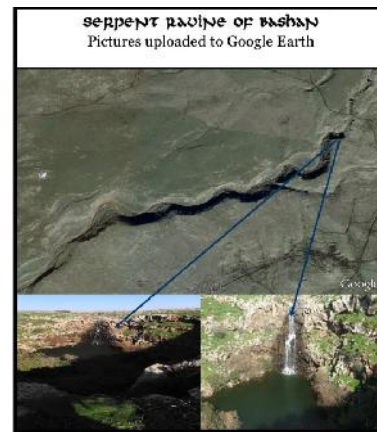
God sent “fiery serpents” to bite the people for their rebellion. Many of them died. But God commanded Moses to build a bronze serpent so that anyone who looked to it might live. The words “bronze serpent” are *nchsh nchsht* (pronounced *nechash nechoshet*). This bronze serpent was meant to emulate the things that were biting the people. They are called “fiery serpents” or *hanechashim haseraphim*. The word “fiery” is *seraphim*. *Nachash* and *seraphim* are used interchangeably in the story.⁹

What is a *seraphim*? It is a bright, shining, fiery angelic being. Isaiah describes them as, “Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew” (Isa 6:2). Throughout the Bible, angelic beings are described as being fiery or shining or luminescent (Dan 10:6; Ezek 1:14-16, 21ff.; 10:9; Rev 1:14-15). In Isaiah 14:12, Lucifer in the Latin has the Hebrew name *Helel-ben-Shachar* or literally, “Shining One son of Dawn.” This is the exact same idea in our translation of *nachash*. That is because they are talking about the same person. In the Ezekiel parallel, the guardian cherubim of Eden is walking amidst the “stones of fire” (Ezek 28:14, 16). Curiously, in the Numbers story, *seraphim* becomes a different word for a “snake.”

Another word for “snake” in Hebrew is “*Bashan*” (*bsn*, Deut 33:22). Bashan is the whole area north and east of the Sea of Galilee known today as the Golan Heights. In the middle of it there is an ancient ravine that looks strikingly like it was accentuated by someone to look like a serpent, and there is also a mound that I call the serpent mound that certainly appears to be manmade. The whole place was known by the Canaanites as the Place of the Serpent.



The mound sits .2 mile from Gilgal Refaim (Wheel of Giants), perhaps the oldest structure in Israel. The left picture is a modern war bunker. The right picture depicts the height of the mound. It is 10-12 or more ft. high.



The ravine’s head is photographed in the two pictures below. They form a pool with a waterfall.

⁹ Literally it says the LORD sent *seraphim nachashim* (vs. 6). The people begged God to remove the *nachashim* (vs. 7). God told Moses to build a *seraphim* (vs. 8). So Moses built a *seraphim nachashim* (vs. 9) and anyone who looked at the *nachash* lived (vs. 9).

Satan's Appearance

A last word in Hebrew for “snake” is *tannin*. The word in Greek is *drakon* and we get “dragon.” Dragons, of course, are always pictured as flying serpentine like creatures with scales. They are reptiles, just like snakes. Given all of this, would it surprise you learn that *nachash* and *tannin* are used along with the word Leviathan (*lvytn*) to refer to the same creature? “In that day the LORD with his hard and great and strong sword will punish Leviathan the fleeing serpent (*nachash*), Leviathan the twisting serpent (*nachash*), and he will slay the dragon (*tannin*) that is in the sea” (Isa 27:1). Leviathan is one of the creature God made in Genesis 1, and he resembles the sea monster found in the myths of creation stories of Babylon and others places. In the Bible, he comes to personify our creature.¹⁰

Would it surprise you to learn that the NT takes this verse and adds two more names to it? “He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years” (Rev 20:2; also 12:9). We will look at the meanings of the words *satan* and devil below, but first, listen to the description of “the Devil” from an ancient Jewish book called the *Apocalypse of Abraham*. It describes the Devil (23:6. He is given the name Azazel from Lev 16:8-10) as being behind the tree of knowledge, “standing (something) like a dragon in form, but having hands and feet like a man’s, on his back six wings on the right and six on the left” (23:7). A seraphim.

Isn’t it interesting that the word *nachash* can describe everything from a serpent to divination (this is used to cross over into the spirit world to get them to do our bidding) to shining seraphim? This one word does a lot of work. What is amazing to me is that I think everyone knows that Satan is in the story of the Garden of Eden. Most seem to think he possess a literal serpent. Few seem to realize is that he is actually identified—in the story of Genesis 3—as a shining serpentine seraphim creature who was trying to bewitch her with lies.

Thanks to pop-culture, this has all become far too cartoonish in our minds, and I think this has only harmed us, as it takes the story out of the realm of the real and puts it into the realm of the fairy tale and make-believe. It think we would all be wise to get rid of those pictures in our minds we grew up with of a snake dangling from a tree, or a little guy in a red suit with a funny mustache, and

¹⁰ *Going Deeper*. Leviathan means “the twisting serpent.” Since ancient times, the Milky Way Galaxy has been seen as a serpent biting its tail. The symbol of the ouroboros is ancient and universal and is a reflection of the cosmos that exists outside the earth. As stars represent heavenly beings in the Bible, this idea of Satan being somehow related to all the stars is fascinating, and deserves many pages of treatment. I’ve dealt with this a little in my Michael vs. the Dragon book.

understand that here before our first parents was a mighty angelic being, talking to them face to face.

One more description will be helpful. This is of the beings known in Daniel as the Watchers (Nebuchadnezzar saw Watchers in [Daniel 4:13, 23](#)). It comes from the Dead Sea Scrolls in a very strange book called the Testament of Amram (Amram is Moses' father). “[One] of them was terr[i]fying in his appearance, [like a serpent, [his] cl[oa]k many-colored yet very dark. . . [And I looked again], and . . . in his appearance, his visage like a viper . . .” (*Test Amram, Q543 Frag Bi: 9-14*).¹¹ Throughout history up to this very day, people have described serpentine beings that interact with our race. They have been worshiped in every culture on the planet. Tens of millions of people around the world today believe that these are space aliens flying around in UFOs. I believe they are [fallen angelic principalities](#) just like Satan and they have been busy deceiving humanity, making themselves into something that they are not for thousands of years, able to change with us, showing themselves in ways that fit our culture and sensibilities, dreams and fears. The Bible tells the truth about them. Genesis 3 tells us their agenda and character, at least of those who fell into sin.

Satan's Character

Let's look more at the [character](#) of the serpent. [Genesis 3:1](#) says that the *nachash* was more “[crafty](#).” This word can be used positively or negatively. In some places it refers to prudence ([Prov 12:16](#)), a virtue to be cultivated. In our story, the sense is definitely not positive. It refers to cunning and crafty shrewdness (see [Job 5:12, 15](#)) gained through guile and deceit. It also happens to be related to the word for “naked” in the previous verse ([Gen 2:25](#); “[shrewd](#)” vs. “[nude](#)”), thus creating yet another word-play in the story. They are naked in innocence; the *nachash* is crafty and shrewd.¹² This makes them that much more susceptible to his wiles, because everything looks normal, just like them. But he isn't.

The NT only once identifies the person in the Garden itself. Paul reiterates what our verse says, “[But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his](#)

¹¹ See [Robert H. Eiseman](#) and [Michael Owen Wise](#), *The Dead Sea Scrolls Uncovered* (New York: Penguin Books, 1993), 164. Also 1 Enoch 20:7, “Gabriel, one of the holy angels, who is over Paradise and the serpents/dragons and the Cherubim.”

¹² “The nudity of Adam and Eve and the disclaimer that they felt no shame is meant to convey the idyllic state of humanity. The man and the woman are as innocent as vulnerable as in their childlike naivete, but it is precisely this vulnerable state of primeval humanity that the wise serpent attacks. In this sense, then, the nakedness of Adam and Eve was susceptible to exploitation by the dark wisdom of the intruder, so that the link between 2:25 and 3: 1

seems to imply more than merely a neat conjunctive literary device.” Martin Emmrich, “The Temptation Narrative of Genesis 3:1-6: A Prelude to the Pentateuch and the History of Israel,” *Evangelical Quarterly* 73:1 (2001), 12. http://www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/eq/2001-1_003.pdf

cunning...” (2 Cor 11:3). Then a few verses later, he identifies this serpent as “Satan” (11:14). He has other names that tell you more about his character. In the original languages he is called “accuser” (*Satan*), “assailer” (*Rahab*), “angry” (*Azazel*), “hostility” (*Mastemah*), “treacherous” (*Belial/Beliar*), “twisting one” (*Leviathan*), and “wrathful” (*Habi*). He is the “evil one,” “lawless,” a “liar,” “murderer,” and a “thief.”

Satan’s Origins

So what is he doing here? The answer to this begins by remembering where we are. This is the Garden of Eden, the palace and dwelling of God, the mountain of God (Ezek 28:14, 16), by the seat of gods in the heart of the seas (Ezek 28:2). This is the place of the original heavenly divine council. Job 15:7-8 tells us that Adam was able to listen in on the council. “Are you the first man who was born? Or were you brought forth before the hills? Have you listened in the council of God? And do you limit wisdom to yourself?”¹³ The idea is that Adam was at the council. This is where he got his wisdom from (wisdom that didn’t seem to help him very much). Job doesn’t have even this amount of wisdom, so what makes Job think he’s so smart?

Ezekiel tells us he was the mighty guardian cherubim of Eden (Ezek 28:16). He was created blameless in his ways (15). He was glorious and full of unsurpassing beauty (17), until suddenly, unrighteousness was found in him (Ezek 28:15). He corrupted his wisdom because of his splendor (17).

Isaiah says he was the bright morning star, son of the dawn (Isa 14:12). The idea seems to be that he was the greatest of God’s heavenly creation, the perfect counterpart in heaven to mankind on earth. He was given a mighty throne. But he wanted to ascend into heaven to raise his own throne above the stars of God (13). He said, “I will sit on the mount of assembly in the recesses of the north. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High (*El Elyon*)” (13-14).

When we combine the ideas of him wanting to sit at the head of divine council from Isaiah with the fact that Adam is put in the divine council in Job, suddenly, a motive for his own fall begins to emerge. This is actually the only

¹³ More than one conservative commentary (WBC, NICOT, NIVAC) suggest that this refers to a lost (or perhaps mesopotamian) myth of a different man than Adam, a man more like “wisdom” in Proverbs 8 (“before the hills” metaphor being the connective phrase here), or the seven great sages of the pre-flood world (called Apkallu). The reason is that Eliphaz says that this man was “born” rather than being “made” as Adam was. However, “born” could just be poetic. Plus, what sense would it make that this pre-Adamite man was “born?” Born from whom? The Targum uses the term “firstborn” like Jesus. This would fit the idea better, but it isn’t what the Hebrew says. I see no reason to think that anyone other than Adam is in view.

motive I've ever read that makes any sense to me of why Satan would be so angry with humanity to do this to us. It is a very old idea, found before the time that the NT was written (see [Life of Adam and Eve 14-15](#); [ApocSedr 4:4-5:2](#); [3 Baruch 4:8](#)).

Basically, [Adam is paraded before Satan](#) by the LORD and Satan is told that he must bow to Adam. This infuriates Satan who refuses to do, thinking to himself, "I am the height of creation, and this lowly creature is made of dust. I deserve the throne, not him."¹⁴ At this moment Satan's pride rises, and he falls from grace into sin.

The idea that the first Adam was created as the pinnacle of creation who was to rule this earth is certainly biblical, right there in the Genesis story. The idea that Satan was told to bow to him, at least in his realm on the earth seems to me to have support from [Hebrews 1:5-6](#) with the second Adam, God's son who becomes a man. It says, "[Let all God's angels worship him.](#)" Of course, Jesus should be worshiped because he is God. But the point of the verse in Hebrews is that he has become a man ([1:2](#)), and as the perfect man who made purification of sins ([1:3](#)), sits down at the right hand of Majesty, "[having become better than angels](#)" ([1:4](#)). Therefore he must be worshiped by the angels for this reason. If Jesus is reclaiming for humanity what Adam lost, the parallel makes sense, and the idea that Satan was jealous of Adam fits, though we must always remember that it was God's plan all along [to exalt the Second Adam](#), the firstborn of all creation, the one who brought all else into existence to begin with. God has graciously re-established this glory for Christians who will one day judge (i.e. rule over) angels ([1 Cor 6:3](#)). No wonder Satan rages so greatly against mankind.

Satan's Job

Just here, I wish to introduce you to the "[job description](#)" of Satan as we have it in the Bible. For what the serpent does as a job is directly related to us, and it is not good because he is fallen and wicked. We will look at the word "Satan" first.

Technically, at least in the OT, "satan" is a [title or a role or a job or function](#), not a proper name. For instance, believe it or not, the Angel of the LORD (the preincarnate Word of God) is called the satan in the story of Balaam. "[But God's anger was kindled because he went, and the angel of the LORD took his stand in](#)

¹⁴ *Going further.* If you watch the movie Thor, it tells a story very similar to this. Thor and Loki are brothers, the sons of Odin, the high god. Loki believes he should be the rightful heir, but discovers that he is not actually the son of Odin, but was adopted by him. Rather, he is a son of evil giants. Thor gets the throne, and Loki, in rage rebels in an attempt to steal the throne from his adopted brother. All ancient peoples have memories of the first things, but they pervert them and distort them, especially in their failure to recognize Christ. But Christ was revealed specially to Israel, because he was their God, and it was through them that he would conquer Satan and win the nations.

the way as his adversary (*sa an*).¹⁵ Now he was riding on the donkey, and his two servants were with him” (Num 22:22). So, more than one person could be an adversary.

Job is the most famous place in the OT where the adversary comes up. He comes into the divine council with the sons of God. The scene is very much like a courtroom, with God as the Judge. Viewed this way, the *satan* (*ha-satan*) is like a prosecuting attorney. Or, better, like a “cope on the beat” (“Officer Satan,” if you will). His job is to check on the misbehavior of human beings, moving to and fro about the earth and to report it to the Captain in the precinct.

You may have noticed that in the story of Job, it is God who instigates the discussion on Job, saying, “Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one like him, blameless in all his ways.” The *satan* answers that this is because God has protected him from evil. God then gives the *satan* permission to do things to Job to test Job. But, the *satan* does nothing without the permission of God. He basically carries out God’s will for Job’s life.

In Genesis, Satan is probably both carrying out God’s will and not carrying it out. I speak here of the will of decree vs. the will of the law. He carries out the will of decree, because the serpent is clearly here to test the first couple, even as the *satan* does in Job 1-2. There is no way to suppose that this all happened apart from God’s knowledge and will. It may or may not be the case in another sense though. In Job, you can only assume that there is guile in the *satan*’s heart. There may not be any, it depends on if it is really referring to the person we know as Satan.¹⁶ In Genesis 3, there is no question that the *nachash*, the serpent-seraphim-shining one is evil. In this, Satan is not carrying out God’s motives, even if he is carrying out his decreed test. For God is not evil, but Satan clearly has evil motives and actions in the story.

Satan has one more job description I’ll bring up here. This is found by understanding the term “devil” (Gk: *diabolos* or *el diablo* in Spanish). “Devil” means “falsely accuse” or “slander.” Like Satan, the word can refer to someone other than the actual Devil, such as the “evil gossips” in 1 Tim 3:11; Tit 2:3, or as person at “enmity” or an “adversary” (Ps 108:6 LXX) or an “accuser” (Luke 16:1). Thus, “devil” really refers to a function even though it becomes a proper name for the serpent of Eden in the NT.

¹⁵ The LXX have ἐὲν ἄνδρῳ (endiaballein). It means to accuse falsely. The root word is ἄνδρῳ (diabolos) or “devil.”

¹⁶ An interesting article on this is Lowell K. Handy, “The Authorization of Divine Power and the Guilt of God in the Book of Job: Useful Ugaritic Parallels,” *JOT* 60 (1993): 107-118.

The chief task of the Devil is **to accuse the saints before God**. This is really his courtroom function when the divine council meets. Here he acts like the prosecuting attorney before the heavenly court. Both of these names are found in Revelation 12:9 where he is “the devil and satan” or the *slanderer* and *adversary*. As G K. Beale notices, both of these ideas are found in Genesis 3, even though neither word is used. “His claims that God’s command to Adam and Eve in Gen. 2:16–17 is not true (Gen. 3:1, 4) and that God has deceptive motives in forbidding them to eat of the tree (Gen. 3:4–5).” This is clearly adversarial. He then “slander[s] the character of God, and the serpent utilizes this slander to deceive the woman and the man in Gen. 3:13.”¹⁷

Beale brings up one last thing that Satan does, and with this I will close today. It is the idea of deceiving. Revelation 12:9-10, “And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world-- he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.” Satan held the whole world under his deception, and it began in Eden. Remember, “Eve was the one deceived” (2 Cor 11:3) as Paul puts it (notice the wordplay in English with Eve and deceive). Later on at the Tower of Babel moving on into Abraham, we will learn how serious this deception was, for it held the whole world in its grip.

Satan’s Defeat

This was so serious that unless God himself performed a miracle, no one would be saved. All were in darkness. All were lost and without hope in the world. In God’s plan, however, this deception would not last forever. Satan never held ultimate power, and God is the only High King of this world. Notice, then in the parallel to Revelation 12:9 that we find something called the “binding of Satan” in Revelation 20:2ff.

Rev 12:9	Rev 20:2-3
And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world — he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.	And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years ... so that he might not deceive the nations

¹⁷ G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: a Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, Cumbria: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1999), 656.

any longer, until the thousand years were ended. After that he must be released for a little while.

The binding of Satan is said to do one thing: It prevents Satan from deceiving the nations any long. It is not an absolute binding, but more like a house arrest (and earth is his house!). There are two things that, because of Christ, Satan is unable to do at the present time. He cannot deceive the nations any longer. That is, he no longer has legal rights to the nations, because Jesus conquered him at the cross. As Jesus put it in the passage that is directly parallel to Revelation 20, he “bound” the “strongman” (Matt 12:29).

Now, Satan is still deceiving the nations, but he cannot continue to do so when the gospel is presented to them. For you see, the Gospel of Jesus Christ is the power of God unto salvation. It carries the very power of God to transfer a person out of the kingdom of darkness and into the kingdom of light. The Word does this, and the Word alone, by the power of the Holy Spirit. So when the proclamation comes that Christ has conquered the devil, the devil cannot stop Christ from taking a person unto himself.

Oh, how we need to recapture the gospel in these dark days where people are perishing in unbelief and sin. Only the gospel can save them, but the gospel can save you. So believe upon the Lord Jesus and come out of darkness, out of the kingdom of the devil. As long as God allows the gospel to go forth, and until the restrainer is taken away, we have this hope. But then Satan will be allowed for a short time to deceive the nations again and to prepare his minions for a final battle against Christ and his church, a battle that will take place on Mt. Megiddo, Armageddon, the great and final cosmic mountain. And he will be crushed underfoot by the Lord Jesus who will appear in his great and glorious Second Coming, riding on the white horse, the one who comes to conquer and make right.

In light of this, the other thing Satan cannot do now is accuse us before the throne of heaven. Those justified in Christ have an advocate in heaven who pleads his own blood on their behalf. Thus, Revelation 12:10 says, “Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God.” What a glorious hope for humanity that was so frail, because of a Second Adam who was so brave and has won a new Eve as his glorious bride and has defeated the ancient serpent, Satan and the devil, the dragon of old who rages and roars, but cannot harm us in heaven, cannot accuse us any longer, and

whose fate is sealed unto the day of judgment. Do not be found to be in his kingdom, or you will be thrown into the lake of fire with him. But come out and know the light and glory of Christ.