
Lesson 8 — THE NACHASH



"Then the LORD God said to the woman, 'What is this that you have done?' The woman said, 'The serpent deceived me, and I ate.'"

[Genesis 3:13]

Only three chapters into the Biblical narrative and already a rebel emerges on the scene. Where Genesis 2 ends with the first man and his bride dwelling with God in paradise, Genesis 3 opens with a mysterious character named the serpent — or in Hebrew the **nachash**. This serpent subtly interjects himself in between Adam and Eve, preying on their weakness, and ultimately comes between man and His Maker. It is evident that the *nachash* is not a friend but an adversary of God and His people. The serpent deceives man and leads him into temptation. He temporarily derails God's divine plan for mankind, introduces evil to the world, brings a curse down upon the earth, and ultimately subverts man's God-given authority on earth, becoming the "ruler" of this world.

The serpent's deliberate attack was devastating on so many levels, leaving death and destruction in its wake.

But the obvious question at this point in the story should be ... *"Who is the nachash anyway and what is he doing in the Garden to begin with?"*

A brief recap is in order ... we have established that the Most High God — King and Creator of the universe — spoke everything into existence by the power of His word. God created the heavens and the earth and everything in them in 6 days, and on the 7th Day He rested. More specifically the Scriptures reveal that the divine agent of creation was God the Son — Jesus Christ — who created all things, visible and invisible. At some point prior to the creation of man on day 6, God created the heavenly host — aka the morning stars or spiritual sons of God.

*"He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. **16**For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. **17**And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. " [Colossians 1:15-17]*

In the same way that God has tasked mankind to do His will on earth, He also has invited His heavenly council of divine sons to carry out His perfect will in the heavens. The eternal purpose for both the physical and the spiritual sons of God is the same.

To Know and Love the One True God and His Son Jesus Christ and to abide with Him forever.

As a matter of fact, that is precisely what Eden was meant to be — the holy space wherein God and man could meet face to face — where both God’s heavenly and human sons communed. Eden was heaven on earth, and yet it doesn’t take long for something to go terribly wrong. Paradise is lost. Man is expelled from the Garden, cast out of God’s presence, and destined to die. What went wrong? Who is to blame? *Enter the serpent...*

Just Another Day in Paradise

Classical art and imagery has been quite successful in influencing the way most people read and visualize the Garden scene in Genesis 3. Nearly every picture looks the same ... a slithering snake wrapped around the tree whispering lies into the ear of the woman, who is beholding the fruit. Many choose to interpret the Garden scene as purely symbolic, pointing to the absurdity of a talking snake. Are we to believe that Eve casually is having a conversation with a literal snake? After all, God did cause Balaam’s donkey to speak. Or, is there something more than meets the eye?

Genesis 3:1 does use comparative language to contrast the serpent with the other “*beasts of the field,*” but as we look more closely, perhaps the Scripture was drawing another distinction altogether. The serpent is described as more cunning and crafty than the animals. In other words, he was no mere beast. He was different from and superior to the animals. The serpent was clearly an intelligent being full of divine knowledge. He proves to be in many ways more superior to man. As far as in appearance, the *nachash* was more radiantly beautiful than all the creatures of God. Doesn’t sound much like a “snake” to me.

Fortunately, we have the broader context of the Bible and the subtle nuances of the Hebrew language to provide a more comprehensive picture of the true nature of the *nachash*.

All in a Name

The Hebrew word for serpent — *nachash* — provides some very interesting clues about the nature of the serpent. *Nachash*, like many English words, can be used in different grammatical forms. As a noun, it means serpent, or snake, but that’s just the beginning.

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- ❖ **VERB** — *Nachash*, when used as a verb, means to practice **divination** [see Strong's entry 5172]. This is significant on so many levels. Divination is the act of using occult rituals and magic arts to acquire secret, divine knowledge through demonic channels. God forbids all forms of divination and witchcraft and sentenced all diviners to death under the law [see *Deuteronomy 18:9-22*]. Divination is at the heart of idolatry and unbelief because it is the willful worship of and spiritual union with other gods. It should come as no surprise that the serpent challenged the authority of God's word and tempted Eve with the desire to acquire divine knowledge independently of God. Jesus would later say of the devil ... "*When he lies, he speaks his native language, because he is a liar and the father of lies*" [John 8:44].
 - ❖ **ADJECTIVE** — *Nachash*, when used as an adjective, can mean to **shine brightly** like glowing copper or brass [see Strong's entry 5174]. One of the universal descriptions of divine beings is that they are radiant in appearance and bright as the sun. Furthermore, both the Old and New Testament describe Satan as a shining one. He is called "*morning star, son of the dawn*" [Isaiah 14:12] and masquerades as an "*angel of light*" [2 Corinthians 11:14]. Furthermore, Ezekiel provides more key details about the serpent's brilliant appearance, saying, "*You were the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of God. Every kind of precious stone adorned you ... Your mountings and settings were crafted in gold, prepared on the day of your creation*" [Ezekiel 28:12-13].
 - ❖ **NOUN** — When used as a noun, *nachash* often refers to the reptile kind, but it is clear this serpent figure in the Garden is supernatural in origin. Another piece to the puzzle is provided by Isaiah when describing a vision of Yahweh on His heavenly throne. Isaiah uses a rare term — **seraphim** — to describe the heavenly throne guardians surrounding the LORD [Isaiah 6]. These mystical beings are called "*cherubim*" by Ezekiel and "*living creatures*" in the book of Revelation, but most scholars agree that they all refer to the same class of divine beings. The significant connection to the word seraphim, however, is in the Hebrew meaning. Seraphim literally means "**fiery serpent**" [see Strong's entry 8314]. The seraphim are light-bearing, heavenly throne guardians that have serpent-like features. All things considered, the complete picture of the *nachash* is beginning to emerge.

When Adam and Eve met the *nachash* in the Garden, they were not having a conversation with a tree snake. They encountered a beautifully radiant, supernatural being — a divine son of God. The *nachash* most likely by nature was a seraphim tasked with guarding the holy space surrounding God's throne in Eden. Adam and Eve were not surprised to encounter the serpent in the Garden. He was not out of place. He was right at home in Eden. The problem, however, is that at some point the *nachash* lost his way, rebelled against the Most High, and became *the Satan*!

Divine Rebellion

What we can deduce so far that one of God's divine princes — a high-ranking member of the heavenly host — committed high treason against the Most High God and sought to steal, kill and destroy all that was true and good on earth, including mankind. This is the first divine rebellion in Scripture but not the last. As we search the broader context of Scripture, we discover that the *Nachash* becomes the lead adversary and arch enemy of God.

Search the following passages to build a Biblical profile of the *Serpent*.

- ❖ How is the serpent identified in Revelation 12:7-10? _____

- ❖ How does Satan interact with the LORD in Job 1:6-12, 2:1-8? _____

- ❖ How is Satan described in Luke 4:5-8? _____

- ❖ How is Satan described in Ephesians 2:1-2? _____

- ❖ What can we discover from 2 Corinthians 4:1-4? _____

- ❖ How is Satan portrayed in Matthew 13:18-19, 36-43? _____

- ❖ What can we learn from Matthew 12:24-26? _____

- ❖ How does Jesus regard the devil in John 8:44? _____

- ❖ What does 1 Peter 5:8-9 and John 10:10 tell us about Satan? _____

- ❖ What do we learn from 1 John 3:8-10? _____

- ❖ What can we discover about the devil's fate in Matthew 25:41? _____

The Fall of Satan

Although Satan has not acted alone in his rebellion, he certainly possesses a unique status of authority and superiority as the prince ruler both of the underworld and the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. In other words, Satan is the original divine rebel, eventually persuading other divine princes to follow in his path. As a result, the Scriptures give special attention to the fall of Satan. With one willful choice, Satan forever sealed his fate.

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- ❖ Read Isaiah 14:12-20. How do we know this passage is describing a supernatural prince, not just a mortal king? What is found at the heart of Satan's rebellion?

 - ❖ Read Ezekiel 28:12-19. Why should this passage be associated with Satan's fall? What additional clues are provided? What details stand out to you in this passage?

 - ❖ Read Luke 10:17-20. Describe the passage. How did Jesus connect the fall of Satan with kingdom warfare?

 - ❖ Read Genesis 3:1-7. Why did Satan initially approach Eve instead of Adam? Why did God place the tree of knowledge of good and evil in the midst of the Garden to begin with? What happened to Adam and Eve the moment they broke God's command?

 - ❖ Compare Genesis 3:6 with 1 John 2:15-17. What does it tell us about temptation?

 - ❖ Read Genesis 3:14 — What language does God use to communicate the curse of the serpent? In what ways does Genesis 3:14 parallel Isaiah 14:12-19 and Ezekiel 28:14-19?