



"The devil can cite Scripture for his purpose."
—William Shakespeare

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Did Eve Really Speak to a Snake?

In [Revelation 20:2](#), the apostle John relates what he saw in a vision: "[An angel] laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and [Satan](#), and bound him for a thousand years." "[T]hat serpent of old" recalls a familiar Bible character, of whom we read in [Genesis 3:1](#): "Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD [God](#) had made."

Referring to Satan as a serpent is an example of a figure of speech. The Bible uses many figures of speech within its pages, but only two are of interest on this subject: euphemisms and metaphors. A *euphemism* is a word or phrase used in place of something that the speaker does not wish to name directly. Compared to a euphemism, which seeks to disguise or avoid its subject, a *metaphor* generally seeks to reinforce it or make it more vivid.

No ancient, physical snake is still running errands for Satan. Referring to Satan as a serpent is a metaphor. [Genesis 3:1](#) asserts that serpents are the most "cunning" or "subtle" (*Strong's Exhaustive Concordance* #6175) of God's creatures, meaning they are sly, crafty, and shrewd. Satan's cunning reveals itself in how he frames his question to Eve, in his knowledge of

God's command, and his seeming ability to probe God's mind and intent. God calls him a "serpent" because it invokes in our minds an understanding of how our [adversary](#) works.

Satan approaches Eve, the weaker link, rather than Adam because she did not receive the prohibition against eating the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil directly from God, and Adam may not have relayed the information to her with sufficient accuracy or firmness. The serpent subtly softens the severity of God's "command" ([Genesis 2:16-17](#); [3:11](#)), replacing it with the more generic "said" ([Genesis 3:1](#)). He deliberately misquotes God so she cannot give a simple yes-or-no answer, drawing her into a conversation that focuses on the forbidden tree, which he never mentions. Satan emphatically contradicts what God said in [Genesis 2:17](#), telling her she will not die. He also ascribes self-serving motives to God, undermining His credibility in her eyes.

Satan's identification as "that serpent of old" in [Revelation 20:2](#) leads to the conclusion that the Devil himself tempted Eve in Genesis 3. To support this conclusion further, the Hebrew word rendered "*serpent*" in [Genesis 3:1](#) is *nhš* (from a root meaning "to shine"), "*shining one*." In Chaldee, a related language, it means "copper" or "brass" due to its shiny appearance. In [Numbers 21:9](#), it is also translated as "serpent": "So [Moses](#) made a bronze serpent [*nhš*]."

The apostle Paul writes in [II Corinthians 11:14](#), "Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light." As created, Satan was a magnificent creature, shining with brilliant light. Ezekiel 28 describes him as a singularly impressive being, the likes of which we, unlike Eve, have never had to contend with face to face. That, coupled with her innocence, made Eve an easy mark for beguilement.

Also, as a snake's vocal talent is limited to hissing, making one appear to speak would have required a significant miracle. The Bible makes no claims that Satan can do miracles of this nature. Perhaps we should consider what Paul says in [II Corinthians 11:3](#): "But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ." The simpler explanation is best.

The evidence indicates that Eve was not taken in by a snake but by a glorious, shining angel. Referring to Satan as a serpent no more made him a snake than it did when Jacob likened his son, Dan, to a serpent in [Genesis 49:17](#)! Jacob also called Judah "a lion's whelp" in verse 9 and Issachar "a strong donkey" in verse 14. [Jesus](#) called Herod a fox in [Luke 13:32](#). All these are mere descriptors of character or personality.

How do we explain [Genesis 3:14](#)? "So the LORD God said to the serpent, 'Because you have done this, you are cursed more than all cattle, and more than every beast of the field; on your belly you shall go, and you shall eat dust all the days of your life.'" This is another metaphor designed to emphasize Satan's fate: humiliation and defeat. Forcing a man to crawl on his belly in the dust is the ultimate humiliation ([Psalm 44:24-25](#)) and the absolute subjection ([Psalm 72:8-9](#)). Satan will receive his just deserts in due time:

Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; you corrupted your [wisdom](#) for the sake of your splendor; I cast you to the ground, I laid you before kings, that they might gaze at you. You defiled your sanctuaries by the multitude of your iniquities, by the iniquity of your trading; therefore I brought fire from your midst; it devoured you, and I turned you to ashes upon the earth in the sight of all who saw you. All who knew you among the peoples are astonished at you; you have become a horror, and shall be no more forever. ([Ezekiel 28:17-19](#))

In [Genesis 3:15](#), God uses more figures of speech: "I will make you and the woman hate each other; her offspring and yours will always be enemies. Her offspring will crush your head, and you will bite her offspring's heel" (*Good News Bible*). He describes a spiritual struggle in physical language. As an angel, Satan does not have a flesh-and-blood head to be crushed, but he does have ambitions, purposes, and schemes, which God will utterly defeat, destroying him in the Lake of Fire ([Revelation 20:10](#)).

"You will bite her offspring's heel" is a deliberate understatement to show that Christ's suffering, which was extreme, will be short-lived. Yes, Satan killed Jesus, but it was the supreme boomerang shot, as doing so sealed his own fate. [Hebrews 2:14](#) reads, "Inasmuch then as the children have partaken

of flesh and blood, He himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil."

So, did Eve really speak to a snake? No, she conversed with Satan, who possesses all the attributes of a snake.

The temptation of the first Adam succeeded because, under Satan's sly questioning, Eve misrepresented what God said three times. She omitted the word "freely" ([Genesis 2:16](#); [3:2](#)), added the words "nor shall you touch it" ([Genesis 2:17](#); [3:3](#)), and altered the certainty of "you shalt surely die" into a possibility, "lest you die" (same verses). Jesus defeated the temptation of the last Adam by quoting Scripture accurately (Matthew 4; Luke 4). Three times He answered the Tempter with "It is written" and quoted the appropriate biblical verses verbatim.

While God has granted sweeping abilities to Satan to deceive and wide latitude to do so, those called out of [this world](#) have the means to resist him ([James 4:7](#); [I Peter 5:9](#)). Satan's primary sphere of activity is in spiritual areas. He concentrates on the churches and universities where he twists and hides God's truths. He knows that if he is successful, man's carnal, deceitful heart ([Jeremiah 17:9](#)) will take him to the depths of depravity without his help.

However, never one to miss an opportunity, he looks for weaknesses in our spiritual armor. So, as Peter warns in [I Peter 5:8](#), "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." The resources we need to resist Satan come directly from God, obtained through constant prayer, fasting, and Bible study. Stay engaged!

- Mike Fuhrer

From the Archives: Featured Sermon

[The Cunning of Satan](#)

by Kim Myers

We are in a lifelong battle with Satan every second of each day. All enticements to sin start in man's mind, beginning with attitudes. This battle commences at our baptism and does not cease until we are resurrected as Spirit being—or until we give up and yield to our carnal nature, marinated in Satan's foul attitudes. The process of being taken over by sin usually takes place over a lengthy period of time as we allow Satan's deceptive words to corrode our attitudes, permanently warping our character. Satan, in the first rebellion, took his time, probably persuading one angel at a time until he had a cadre of like-minds, poisoned with Satan's pride and discontent. As Satan corrupted other angels with words (all of the company of demons were at one time pure angelic beings), Satan also attempts to corrupt God's called-out ones with persuasive words. Satan corrupted our original parents with words; Satan may have fostered the final effect over a long period of time, but when doubt, lust, and pride were activated in Eve, her resistance became attenuated until it broke apart. As the Second Adam, Jesus Christ resisted the persuasive words of Satan with the words of Holy Scriptures, we must employ scripture in the same way, counteracting the lust of the flesh and the pride of life. As we approach the end times, we must continually guard against deception, especially since some of Satan's ministers are able to convincingly perform miracles. We are warned to cling to the faith once delivered, guarding against destructive heresies. We are in this work together, surrounded by both wheat and tares. Because Satan will attack us when and where we are the most vulnerable, we need to know God's words inside and out, being instant in prayer, continually "cracking the Book" for wisdom, counsel and godly insight, as well as to gain ammunition against the deadly spiritua

From the Archives: Featured Article

[Stalked by Satan](#)

by Mike Ford

Peter describes Satan as "like a roaring lion." What made him make this comparison? Mike Ford shows that Peter's choice of predator is a very apt analogy of our Adversary.

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