

2. The devil's character – he is

- **Powerful**

2. **Consider the character of the devil.** Although we must not be too interested in him, it is good to know what he is like.

The devil is powerful. He is bold. The snake is not afraid to approach Eve and attack God's perfect creation. Satan has power – although his power is less than God's and is under God's control. He has access to us. He can tempt. He has access to the world. ^{☞1}

- **Wicked**

The devil is characterised by wickedness. He has a hatred of God. He hates God's truth, and he hates God's creation. Nowadays he hates God's church. The devil's habit is to seek to spoil everything God does. He wants to ruin the human race, and he seeks to do so by enticing men and women to sin. He is not interested in us personally; he is only interested in ruining God's work. He attacks man not animals or angels. He is not concerned about attacking physical creation, except in order to get at man.

- **Deceitful**

The devil is characterised by deceit. He disguises himself and can appear as an angel of light ^{☞1}. It is generally difficult to see a snake when it is in its own environment. The snake is a master of camouflage. So the snake comes to Eve. It is pleasant, affable, chatty, seemingly concerned about Eve's welfare.

- **Resistible**

The devil is resistible. This is one piece of good news about him. He is resistible! Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

We might ask 'Where does the devil come from?' We do not know exactly. We can be sure God did not create any wicked creature, and we can be sure that there is nothing in this world that God did not create. So it must mean that the devil was created good but became evil.

- **Where did the devil come from?**

Sometimes Ezekiel 28:11–19 is thought to be about Satan. Strictly it is about the king of Tyre, but perhaps it is too extravagant to be just about the king of Tyre. This wicked king is described as being perfect ^{☞1}, an inhabitant of Eden^{☞2}, a cherub^{☞3}. He fell through pride^{☞4}. Some think this is a shadow of how Satan fell. They may be right^{☞5}.

^{☞1} see 1 John 5:19; John 12:31; 14:30; 2 Corinthians 4:4; 1 Peter 5:8; Ephesians 2:2

^{☞1} 2 Corinthians 11:13, 14

^{☞1} Ezekiel 28:12
^{☞2} Ezekiel 28:13
^{☞3} Ezekiel 28:14
^{☞4} Ezekiel 28:17

^{☞5} see Isaiah 14:12–13, for a similar passage; and 1 Timothy 3:6; John 8:44; Revelation 12:4, 7

3. The snake attacks the man and the woman at their weakest point

3. **The snake attacks the man and the woman at their weakest point.** 'The snake was more cunning ... It said to the woman...'. God had created man and had given him a task in the garden of God. The woman was created second and she came in to be a help corresponding to him. She was above the animals. No equal companion had been found for the man among the animals. She was a help 'corresponding to' him, equally in the image of God, taken from his rib and therefore made of the same stuff as the man. The snake speaks to her alone. Detached from the man she is out of her true position.

He attacks Eve not Adam ^{☞1}. Since Adam was Eve's head, Satan is approaching the couple via the one with less authority in this particular matter. I do not mean that a woman always has less authority than a man in dealing with Satan; I only mean that she is in a weaker position if in a crisis she acts without regard to her relationship with her husband. I am not being anti-feminist. Previous eras of human history have often treated women with tyranny, and I would not want to give such wickedness any support. Yet there is no

^{☞1} see 2 Corinthians 11:3; 1 Timothy 2:12, 13

- **Eve manoeuvred into a weak position**

doubt that Satan got Eve to function independently of Adam, and in doing that he was manoeuvring Eve into a position where she was at her weakest. Are men wiser than women? No, not at all! But if a woman steps out of her calling from God, she **becomes** vulnerable. And certainly there is no difficulty in interpreting Paul's words when he says '*it was the woman who was deceived*' ^{□2}.

^{□2} 1 Timothy 2:14

4. The snake attacks God's Word

- **Doubt**
- **Perversion**
- **Denial**

4. **The snake attacks God's Word.** His antagonism concentrates on opposition to God's Word. Here in Genesis 3 he used **doubt** ('*Did God really say...?*'). And he used **perversion of God's Word**, because he suggests Eve may not eat from any tree, but God gave permission to eat from every tree except one – Genesis 2:16–17! And he uses **denial** ('*You will not surely die*'). The Word of God is Satan's great foe. He loves to induce doubt, perversion and denial of the truth of God. This is precisely the way he attacked Jesus. Once again, when he attacked 'the last Adam', our Lord Jesus, he wanted to cause doubt ('*If you are the Son of God...*', Luke 4:3). Again he perverted God's Word ('*Throw yourself down . . . for it is written...*', Luke 4:9, 10). He used deceit ('*All this authority I will give you ... this has been delivered to me...*', Luke 4:6).

- **Satan draws our attention away from God's written Word**

This is precisely the way Satan will attack the churches. He will draw our attention away from God's written Word. In the modern world Satan has tried to suggest that human reason is adequate to find out the truth. Satan has persuaded large numbers to look to their own ability to heal the world's burdens and agonies. He persuades the churches to neglect God's Word and turn to things more 'exciting'. He spreads the idea that somehow God's Word is not comprehensible, that 'doctrine' is not important, that we can find our own way and work out, without God's Word, how God is leading us. And so the churches are left wanting to know the voice of the Spirit but having no written Word to check whether what claims to be from the Holy Spirit really is from the Holy Spirit. Others try their management techniques and their clever business methods. But it is all of little or no value in the church; the church does not operate in that way. Satan's aim is to rob us of the guidance of God's voice. The way to resist him is to ignore his devices and go back to listening to God's voice coming to us, mainly through Scripture, and always checked by Scripture. Only when we can say '*It is written!*' with authority will we be able to defeat him and strengthen God's kingdom.



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