

PREFACE

Please turn to John 5.

The Jewish leaders were looking for a way to kill Jesus. They had a number of reasons to hate Him—for one thing, He was healing on the Sabbath. But at the top of the list was that Jesus had as much as made Himself equal with God by referring to Him as His Father. He had told them,

“My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working.” (John 5:17b)

Jesus then launched into an extended treatise on His relationship with the Father, concluding with the condemnation,

“You do not have His word abiding in you, for you do not believe Him whom He sent.” (John 5:38)

Jesus not only does not back down, but He then says something perhaps even more scandalous.

Read John 5:39-47.

Is it any wonder the Jewish leaders wanted to kill Jesus? Here, in one sitting, Jesus publicly claimed that He was the Son of God, and that Moses, about 1,400 years earlier, wrote about Him—which suggests that Jesus somehow stands outside of time itself.

His point is clear: *You guys put great stock in Moses—he’s your guy, and you claim to live by the five books he wrote. So how come you don’t believe what he wrote about me?*

SEED: GENESIS 3:14-15

We now begin the delightful process of seeking out, discovering, and weaving together the many references and occurrences of the Christ in the writings of Moses and other OT writers. It would do us little good to just plow through the references from Genesis forward, since they would be in no cogent order. What we’ll do instead is organize them by topic—beginning with **Lineage**—that is, the “line” from which the Messiah would (and did) come—followed by **Life**—birth to death, and in-between.

Last week I referred to the entirety of the OT as the “first gospel.” We are going to begin this journey with a brief but dramatic passage in Genesis 3 that scholars have long referred to as the *protoevangelium*—that is, the “first gospel.”

Although this extended passage makes for a splendid study in itself, we will pass over everything that leads up to this moment—the deceit of Satan, the sin of eating the fruit, the buck-passing, the resulting shame—and focus on just two verses.

Read Genesis 3:14-15.

Sidebar: I'll be honest: I still can't decide if this passage should be filed under Lineage or Life. So we will look at it in-depth in this session, then revisit it briefly when we consider the *life* of the Messiah.

The prophecy lying within the seemingly vague v15, in the context of denouncing "the serpent" that tempted "the woman" [she will not be named Eve until 3:20], is in fact, as Walter C. Kaiser puts it, "the root from which the tree of the OT promise of a Messiah grew." Charles Briggs called it "the germ of promise which unfolds in the history of redemption." What is truly remarkable is that in this tiny, enigmatic passage we have played out for us "the entire history of humanity"—from the first humans to the time of final judgment!

It is almost imperative, then, that we begin here, all the way back to when humanity itself was still in its infancy. Even here, in the early moments of creation, we discover the Messiah; we discover the Christ. Professor Marcus Dods writes in his commentary that, "It is in vain to think of exhausting this narrative." And in my brief relationship with it I would wholeheartedly concur. With a remarkably few words is opened a Pandora's Box of imagery, of mankind's history, of future events. One tries *in vain* to nail down a simple, linear thread; with almost every word the mind shoots off in myriad directions.

The Serpent

First we need to identify this one called "the serpent." Let's not just go with what we think we know already; let's see what facts we can glean from the text.

- The serpent is no mere reptile; when we read vv1-5, it is clear that this is no simple beast.
Read Genesis 3:1-5.
This is a being of clear, intelligent speech, and a knowledge that surpasses that of the man and woman. He speaks as if he has access to the very mind of God—or at least the supernatural world. (Kaiser)
- The serpent is individualized—identified in the Hebrew with the second person, masculine singular pronoun ("he").
- We should not draw too many hard conclusions regarding his shape or posture. That the Lord God declared he would henceforth crawl on his "belly" and eat dust are less about his shape and means of locomotion than a vivid picture of his certain and utter defeat. In Micah the prophet uses similar imagery to describe the enemies of the Lord:

Nations will see and be ashamed Of all their might. They will put their hand on their mouth, Their ears will be deaf. They will lick the dust like a serpent, Like reptiles of the earth. They will come trembling out of their fortresses; To the Lord our God they will come in dread And they will be afraid before You. (Micah 7:16-17)

- He is identified as the serpent of the final conflict, for a future male descendant of the woman will strike him with a crushing (i.e., fatal) blow to the head. [bruise = snap at; figurative to overwhelm; break, bruise, cover]

We are in the habit of associating events in Eden with *man's* fall—where Adam's fall became mankind's congenital disease: our sin nature. But it is just as true that Eden represents the "fall" of Satan, the evil one. His initial fall was when the Lord God booted Him from the heights of heaven, but here we see the serpent—whether Satan incarnate, or a representative of him—dramatically reduced in stature and station. Consider a passage in Ezekiel that describes his original appearance—this one that Isaiah describes as the "star of the morning, son of the dawn!" (Isaiah 14:12) and Ezekiel as having "the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty." (Ezekiel 28:12)

Read Ezekiel 28:13-14.

And now?

Cursed are you more than all cattle,
And more than every beast of the field;
On your belly you will go,
And dust you will eat
All the days of your life; (Genesis 3:14)

The Two Seeds

Two "seeds" (or "offspring"^{niv, esv}) are mentioned in v15: the serpent's seed, and the woman's seed.

Read v15a.

Just as in English, the word "seed" [Hebrew: *zerah*] has both a collective and an individual meaning: it can refer to *generations* that proceed, or a specific *individual* that proceeds.

The Lord God declares in v15 that, beginning that moment in the garden, there would be hatred, hostility between the woman and the serpent. Beyond that, however, in the future there would be hostility between the serpent's "seed" and the woman's "seed."

The seed of the serpent might include Satan's supernatural minions—the demons—who harass and torment humanity in his name. The woman's seed could, in one sense, include every human being that would come after her. But of course there is more here than that—and here is where the mind shoots off in a hundred different directions.

Still thinking collectively, I think this verse reveals the first cosmic consequence of Man's fall—the first consequence of the first sin. From this point on, human beings would be born at war with God—born, as it were, Satan's seed. Each of us is born in a sinful, depraved state, on the side of Satan (whether we realize it or not). So if the woman and the serpent are in opposition to each other, then here the woman's seed could be those who belong to God in Christ. Thus, the seed of each are at enmity with the other: those who belong to God, and those who remain with Satan.

So look at what we have here: Before us in this scene are the two "root-stocks," as it were, of two races. As Kaiser puts it,

Clearly the term "seed" is a generic term for the entire race that came from the woman on the one hand, while the "seed" of the serpent embraces all the evil race derived from him.

From this point on, man will grapple with evil—both in terms of his congenital, sinful nature, and in terms of a regenerated individual's personal battles with the flesh and the depraved society in which he still dwells. The perennial struggles with sin that we all endure find their root in this cataclysmic moment in the garden of Eden. And the earth still groans from it.

Up to now we have interpreted the woman's seed as collective, referring to generations of descendants; but in our next session we will pull it back to the individual. Already we see a clue: that phrase, "her seed." Why does it say the *woman's* seed when, in procreation, it is normally the male seed and the woman's egg? Adam's curse is not mentioned until v17; here it is all about the woman—*as if the man has no part in it.*

This is where we will begin next week.

Genesis 3:11-16

11 And He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?"

12 The man said, "The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate."

13 Then the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" And the woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

14 The Lord God said to the serpent,
"Because you have done this,
Cursed are you more than all cattle,
And more than every beast of the field;
**On your belly you will go,
And dust you will eat
All the days of your life;**

15 And I will put enmity
Between you and the woman,
And between your seed and **her seed;**
**He shall bruise you on the head,
And you shall bruise him on the heel."**

16 To the woman He said,
"I will greatly multiply
Your pain in childbirth,
In pain you will bring forth children;
Yet your desire will be for your husband,
And he will rule over you."

The Edenic Prediction

*on your belly,
eating dust = total defeat*

NOTE: The October 5 issue of *Reflections by the Pond* (#728) offers additional perspective on this session's topic. Get your copy at DLAMPEL.COM.

Galatians 4:4

But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, **born of a woman**, born under the Law,

Galatians 3:16

Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, "And to seeds," as referring to many, **but rather to one, "And to your seed," that is, Christ.**

Hebrews 2:14

14 Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, **that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil,**
15 and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives.

Romans 16:20

The God of peace will soon **crush Satan under your feet.**
The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you.

Revelation 12:9-11

9 **And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.**

10 Then I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "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 brethren has been thrown down, he who accuses them before our God day and night.**

11 "And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even when faced with death."

Revelation 20:14

Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire.
This is the second death, the lake of fire.