

*Genesis 3:14-15***PREFACE**

Just as in English, the Hebrew *zerah* (“seed”) has both a collective and an individual meaning: it can refer to *generations* that proceed, or a specific *individual* that proceeds. Last week we looked at the *collective* side of this curious passage in Genesis 3—that is, the word “seed” interpreted in the plural when applied to the serpent’s seed—Satan’s demons and human followers—and the first woman’s seed—the literal generations that would follow, but also (within the context of v15) those who would follow Christ rather than Satan.

Sidebar: How do we know the serpent is actually Satan? It is hinted at in several passages in the NT, but the explicit association is in Revelation 12.

Read Revelation 12:9.

Let’s read again the passage scholars have dubbed the *protoevangelium*—that is, the “first gospel.”

Read Genesis 3:14-15.

We see right off that something odd is going on here. Technically—and traditionally—we refer to the *man’s* seed and the woman’s egg. But the first man is nowhere found in this passage; it is addressed to the serpent, and is all about the serpent and the woman. Adam is not addressed until v17; here it is all about the woman—*as if the man has no part in it.*

Why the apparent isolation of the woman from the man in this prophetic passage? [Please turn to Matthew 1.](#) I don’t need to tell anyone in this room that Jesus the Christ was born from a virgin—that is, without the help of a human man. But I just love how this is hinted at in the genealogy of Christ that opens Matthew’s gospel. From v2 through the first half of v16 it consists of a long list of fathers begetting sons. But see how v16 ends:

Jacob was the father of Joseph **the husband of Mary, by whom Jesus was born, who is called the Messiah.**

Not father, but husband. Jesus was not Joseph’s seed, but, in human terms, only the woman’s.

THREE CONFLICTS

In v15 the Lord God sets up three conflicts that come as the result of the serpent’s treachery.

- The first is immediate;
- the second will begin in the near future and continue so long as Satan wields power on earth;
- and the third will take place at some future date(s).

Although it is not stated here (because God is still addressing only the serpent), we know that these conflicts will come about not just because of the serpent’s behavior, but because of the rebellion of the man and the woman.

First Conflict

Walter Kaiser points out that every instance of the word translated “enmity” in the OT expresses “person-to-person hostility”—in the words of William Wilson’s venerable *Old Testament Word Studies*, “[not just] aversion, [but] a desire and endeavor to injure.” Someone at enmity with another “seeks to injure, and delights in the accomplishment of it.”

Sidebar: So let’s skip ahead for a moment and bring it home: Does Satan delight in ruining Christians? Would you, a Christian, be delighted to see Satan forever vanquished and destroyed? Our answer of “Yes!” to both of these reflects the enmity that still exists between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman.

So the “genesis” (as it were) of this hostility would occur immediately. Whatever niceties had transpired earlier between the serpent and the woman were now at an end. Now they were mortal enemies. And this hostility would be passed down to those who would follow each of them—which brings us to the second conflict.

Second Conflict

This enmity would be played out “between your [\[the serpent’s\]](#) seed and her [\[the woman’s\]](#) seed.” We know this also refers to an individual because of the pronouns that follow:

**“He shall bruise you on the head,
And you shall bruise him on the heel.”**

So this enmity will exist between Satan (and his seed) and a human, male descendant of the first woman.

Third Conflict

[\[If your version of this passage is not presented in poetic form, refer to the handout.\]](#) Note the shift that takes place at the fourth line of the verse. The third line speaks of enmity between the (multiple) seed of the serpent and (at least multiple) seed of the woman. But suddenly in the fourth and fifth lines the Lord God shifts to the individual on both sides of this enmity. It is no longer the “seed” of the serpent, but the serpent himself: “*He shall bruise you on the head.*” And it is no longer the multiple generations, but one, individual male seed. Now it is *mano a mano*—one on one.

The third conflict, described by the last two lines of v15, represents a final cosmic battle in which the serpent [\[Satan\]](#) will receive a crushing, fatal blow by the seed. The *intent* of the blows exchanged are the same; the word translated “bruise” or “crush” is the same in each line. But the *results* of the blows are dramatically different. The one delivered by Satan (“you shall bruise/crush him on the heel”) results in injury; the one delivered by the seed (“He shall bruise/crush you on the head”) results in death—or, more accurately, “rendered powerless” ([Hebrews 2: 14](#)).

Now we see that this is far more than just a declaration of universal hostility between humans and evil. One individual man, a descendant of the first woman, will ultimately defeat the evil one: Satan. And now we see—for the first time in Scripture—the Messiah, the Christ.

Early Jewish commentators recognized this. William Varner cites the rabbinic commentary on Genesis, *Bereshit Rabba* 23, which reads, “Eve had respect to that seed which is coming from another place. And who is this? This is Messiah the King.”

And you shall bruise him on the heel

Let’s consider the last line first. What does this mean? Ultimately it means that in the process of defeating Satan, the Messiah will pay a physical price. He will be wounded. Here is the introduction of the Messiah as *suffering servant*—a role for the Redeemer that most Jews reject. In the Torah, the second half of v15 remains in the plural:

And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; they shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise their heel.

But then, that is not our interpretation of the text. [As we turn to Isaiah 53](#), keep in mind the voice of our passage in Genesis 3. Don’t forget that it was the Lord God who declared this situation into existence. It was Father God Himself who prophesied that the Anointed One would pay a heavy price for being the Redeemer.

Read Isaiah 53.

The Lord God “was pleased” to do this to His Son—not that He enjoyed it, but it was His doing; He wished for it to happen. But in another sense it is the serpent who did it, for it was *his* doing in the garden of Eden that inaugurated man’s sin nature, and it was that sin that made the Christ’s sacrifice necessary.

He shall bruise you on the head

The last time we were together I believe I mentioned the biblical concept of “Now; not Yet.”

- For example, our sanctification: when we come to Christ we are, in a moment, sanctified; a completed act. Yet in another sense our sanctification is an ongoing process that will continue until the moment we cross the threshold of heaven.
- Or take the anointing of David as King of Israel: As a youth he was anointed by Samuel; at that moment he was the king. Yet Saul remained in that office and David did not ascend to the throne until Saul’s death—about 15 years later.

We have a similar situation with the fulfillment of the prophecy regarding the serpent’s end: “He shall bruise (crush) you on the head.”

Read Hebrews 2:14-15.

After the first anointing of David as king of Israel, King Saul remained on the throne, but he was a defeated, paranoid man. King David was ascendant; King Saul was descendant.

The death and resurrection of Christ Jesus rendered Satan *ultimately* powerless; the serpent was defeated. Yet he remained—and remains—at work, doing his best against the people of God. His doom is certain—but not yet.

The ultimate, final crushing of Satan is yet future—but certain. And the script has already been written. We can read it for ourselves in Revelation 20. First Satan himself will be removed:

Read Revelation 20:7-10.

Then, at the final judgment of the great white throne, Satan's kingdom—death and Hades—will receive the same end.

Read Revelation 20:13-15.

Notice that Satan is not killed, but crushed—rendered ineffective. Immortality is a fact for everyone, even Satan. He will not be killed, but along with everyone else whose name is not in the book of life he will live forever in the "lake of fire."

CONCLUSION

So, what does this verse, this *protoevangelium*, tell us about the Messiah?

- His birth will be **unique**. He will be (in human terms) not the seed of a man, but of a woman alone.
- He will be **supernatural**. The Messiah will ultimately vanquish Satan—an angelic, supernatural being. Mere human flesh cannot do this, only another supernatural being of superior power than that of Satan. Because the Messiah will have this capability, His deity is implied.
- At the same time, He will be of the **human race**. He will be flesh; He will enter this world in the same way of every other human being: a pregnant woman will give birth to Him. He will not suddenly appear out of thin air; He will not float down from the clouds or an alien spaceship; He will be *born*.

So the Messiah will be like no other: the unique God/Man.

Let's close with a passage from the prophet Jeremiah.

Read Jeremiah 23:5-6.

v5: LORD = Yahweh

v5: a descendant of David—i.e., a King in the flesh, a rightful human descendant of David

v6: LORD = Yahweh