

The Gospel – To the Jew First

Last lesson, we saw from the Old Testament how the righteousness of God is provided to man. We know that there is none righteous. We know that no one can do enough good to be deemed right in the eyes of God. We know that avoidance of sin does not pay for the sins previously committed, and we know that sin will continue no matter one's will or commitment not to sin.

The forgiveness of sin and the provision of righteousness are a gift of God. Examples of this are found in Noah, Abraham, David, and Isaiah. The provision of this gift is given to those who believe in the Lord. But what did they believe? To believe in the Lord indicates not only the "who" but the "what." What was it that these men believed?

After the fall in Genesis 3:1-6, the Lord pronounced judgment. Not only did the Lord give a sentence, but He also promised a provision. This is the nature of what is believed. But what is most interesting is that the "what" is also a "who." In Genesis 3:15, we have the first instance of this promise. This promise is not without its controversy. The understanding of this verse is contested. But let us examine it carefully and see what it has to say.

Genesis 3:15 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."

As has been asked by many before, is this, in fact, Messianic or not? Is this judgment on the snake and judgment of Satan? Is the seed of the woman a promise of Messiah? Is this, in fact, the protoevangelium? Or, have evangelicals read into this passage?

First, we must consider the context. What is the purpose of the first three chapters of Genesis? Is it just to develop a sense of awe and wonder at the creator? Is it only to establish the Lord as omnipotent? Genesis is written to the second generation Israelites who are entering the Promised Land, about to conquer it, and are in need of a new world view. Prior to this, they knew of the Lord but needed to understand their purpose.

Chapters 1-2 demonstrate that God's creation was good, very good — it was suitable for man; there was no danger, work, hardship, strife, war, or evil. Chapter 3 is the revelation of how sin came into creation. Man brought sin into God's sinless creation; it was good then we broke it. Right after the sin, the account of God seeking Adam and Eve is recounted. Is this just good story telling or is it representative of something?

After the fall, Adam and Eve hid from God and He sought them. Notice that they did not run home and tell God what happened and, even when confronted, they still put the blame on another.

In the pronouncement of judgment, God deals with the serpent, then the woman, then the man. What needs to also be highlighted is that "in the midst of judgment, there is provision for salvation" is present in Genesis as well as the rest of the Bible.

A few observations of the judgments in Genesis 3:

1. The judgment against "the serpent" and the woman are personal and also involve their lineage
2. The judgment against the man is more harsh
 - a. It was his responsibility
 - b. He listened to his wife instead of leading her to obey God
 - c. He is judged to work (toil) for his substance
 - d. Creation itself is judged because of his sin
 - e. Death (a sacrifice) occurred to cover their sin
 - f. They were removed from the garden (tree of life — grace)

LCV of verse 15 – And hatred I will put between you and between the woman and between your seed and between her seed; he, he will bruise you, head, and you, you will bruise him, heel.

The natural reading deals with the fact that there will be a descendant of the woman and the descendant of the serpent that will end in a final confrontation. Initial observations:

1. The personal pronouns refer back to each corresponding "seed"
2. Hatred/enmity indicates that there will be strife to the end (not fear)
3. Bruise is the same word in the same tense and mood in both uses (heel/head)

Last week we saw that there are three main interpretations of this passage: Natural, Symbolic, Individual (non-messianic). We are not going to spend any time on these views but instead are going to focus on why the Individual Messianic one is correct.

First, in Genesis and the rest of the Bible, "In the midst of judgment, there is provision for salvation."

1. Genesis 4:9-15 – Cain expected provision in the pronouncement of judgment
2. Genesis 6:13,18 – But Noah – God provided for Noah
3. Genesis 11:1-10; 12:1-9 – Out of the judgment of Babel, God called out Abram
4. Conclusion – God set up and continued a way of salvation in the midst of each judgment

Next is the pronouncement of judgment against the serpent, but then God pronounces judgment against the force behind it. This is similar to Ezekiel 28:1-10 then 28:11-19. This best explains the idea of the judgment of Genesis 3:15.

Now, there is no specific shift in 3:14-15 from the serpent to Satan, but there is only one it could have been. Who else but Satan could have spoken to Eve in that manner?

The Hebrew word for enmity (hatred), “אִיְבָהָ” *’ēvāh*,” is a moral concept. Animals cannot have a moral hatred. This hatred is specific, the seed.

The verb for “bruise” is “שָׁחַף” *shûph*” and is 2nd Person, Masculine Singular and then 3rd Person Masculine Singular. The singular verb supports the understanding that this is not corporate or a group (of descendants) but a single person.

Seed can be collective or it can be specific. But there is clear evidence that the promise of seed was understood to be specific to Adam and Eve and was passed down.

1. Genesis 4:1 – I have acquired man with YHWH
 - a. The preposition “אֶת” *’eth*” (with, possession, rights or responsibilities being transferred)
 - b. “with YHWH” may be “for” or “on behalf of”
 - c. She thought that she had given birth to the “seed”
 - d. Genesis 4:25 – She transfers seed to another
2. Genesis 5:28-29 – Lamech was looking for one to be the deliverer
3. Genesis 15:3-5 – Abraham looking for one that would be seed
4. Genesis 17:6-7,16 – Promises of seed are repeated to Abraham and Sarah
5. Genesis 35:11-12 – Promise made to Jacob
6. Genesis 49:9-11 – The scepter until Shiloh comes – One who will rule
7. 2nd Samuel 7:12-16 – Promise of a singular King that would have an everlasting kingdom

Looking again at “bruise” “שָׁחַף” *shûph*,” outside of Genesis 3:15, this verb is only used twice (Job 9:17; 139:11). The idea is to overtake, fall upon. Because of these two passages, the concept of this word varies (consume, crush, snap at, strike, beat at). In all the references, the verb indicates death. Now the striking of the heel is normally thought of as a wound, but in context, this could be where the strike occurs not its effectiveness.

The way this reads is that the two opposing forces kill each other, the Seed of the woman dies but also delivers a killing blow to the seed of the serpent.

Genesis 3:15 –

1. Exegetical Understanding
2. The Context of Genesis 1-6
3. Understanding the Salvation Concepts in the Midst of Judgment
4. Seeing that the Persons in Genesis (and David) Understand the Messianic Hope

We must conclude that, immediately after the fall, we have the promise of one (Messiah) who would finalize the battle and deal with the seed of Satan (the anti-Messiah). The promise of the One is clear from the beginning, within moments of the fall. God did not have to contemplate to plan out the redemption program.

The timing is not established, the method is not established, only that it would occur. It does not establish the virgin birth but it does establish the fact that the Messiah would be the seed of the woman (not the man). This is an important point Paul brings up in Galatians 4:4-5. From the onset, the genealogies follow the seed of the men. Genesis 5 and Genesis 11 and Matthew 1 follow the line of men but Jesus followed that line until His birth where there was no man involved (Matthew 1:16 – "whom" is in the Singular Feminine).

What is often overlooked is that the Seed is prophesied from the beginning to be destined to die. But even though He dies he still gives a death blow to the seed of the serpent.

Looking into the fulfillment aspect of Genesis 3:15, we can see that death is, in fact, the result. Satan's strike to the One was a death blow. Humanly, Jesus died, he was buried, but he was raised bodily. The blow to the head of the seed of the serpent did not occur at the cross but is a prophecy yet to be fulfilled (1st Corinthians 15:20-22,50-56; Revelation 20:1-3,7-10).

What have we learned so far concerning the Gospel in the Hebrew Scriptures?

1. Forgiveness and Righteousness are Provided by God Without Cost to the Believer
2. Genesis 3:15 Establishes the Promise
 - a. This is a Judgment Against Satan
 - b. This is a Provision For Humanity
 - c. This is an Individual Person not a Group (Messiah)
 - d. Would Descend Through Humanity but as the Seed of the Woman
 - e. The Battle Would Result in Death Blows to Each Other
3. The Reign of Messiah vs the Sacrifice of Messiah