

**PROPHETIC ASSURANCE OF REDEMPTION FIRST PROCLAIMED
OR
THE “FIRST GOSPEL”
Gen.3:15
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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The sin and fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden brought about the penalty of physical death upon them as well as spiritual death; it also resulted in the physical death sentence upon all mankind, Gen.2:15-18; 3:1-6,19b,22-24; Rom.5:12,18a,19a; 1Cor.15:21a,22a.
2. Immediately following the sin and condemnation of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, the first ray of hope for redemption from the condemnation of sin, and even redemption from the sentence of physical death for mankind, was prophetically announced in Gen.3:15, where God said to the serpent: “I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.”
 - a. Some translations render it “strike” for both; some, “crush” for the one, and “bite” for the other.
3. Gen.3:15 is truly fascinating, prophetically providing the very first biblical glimpse of God’s plan or scheme of human redemption, focusing ultimately upon the final trusting of Satan, “that old serpent...which deceiveth the whole world” (rev.12:9), into the eternal fires of hell (Rev.20:10).
4. Gen.3:15 essentially signifies the concept of “first gospel proclamation”
 - a. “Gospel” means: “good news; glad tidings.” – Vine, II, 167.
 - b. “In the N.T. I denotes the good tidings of the kingdom of God and of salvation through Christ, to be received by faith, on the basis of his expiatory (atoning) death, burial, resurrection, and ascension,Ac.15:7; 20:24; 1Pet.4:17,” Vine, II, 167.
 - c. Gal.3:8, referring to God’s promise to Abraham in Gen.12:3 says: “And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith ***preached before*** the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed.”
 - (1) “**Preached before**” in Gal.3:8 is from the Gr. term PROEUANGELIZOMAI (), which is essentially the concept signified by Gen.3:15.
 - (2) It means:

- (a) “To announce glad tidings beforehand,” Vine, II, 168.
 - (b) “To announce glad news in advance,” Strong, 4283.
- 5. Gen.3:15 precedes Gal.3:8 by many years and since what is said in Gal.3:8 regarding the gospel preached before in the promise to Abraham to be accomplished through the seed of Abraham, who is Jesus Christ, who is the seed of woman; it is essentially what is said earlier in Gen.3:15 through the seed of woman.
- 6. For this reason Gen.3:15 has been called the “first gospel,” and the English word Protevangeli-on is used to describe it, which is from the Gr. protos, “first,” and evangelion, “gospel”... The annunciation of the Savior in the Garden of Eden, after the fall; also called proto-gospel.” As defined by Web. Unab. Dict.
- 7. In light of this we shall consider Gen.3:15 as the “First Gospel,” and/or Prophetic Assurance of Redemption First Proclaimed.

II. DISCUSSION

A. THE BIBLICAL BACKGROUND OF GEN.3:15.

- 1. The passage is the result of an interview in the garden of Eden between God, Adam and Eve, and, finally, the treacherous, beguiling serpent.
 - a. When confronted with his transgression, Adam blamed Eve (ultimately, he put the responsibility upon God himself – “the woman you gave me”).
 - b. even similarly rationalized, charging that “the serpent beguiled me.”
- 2. That this “serpent” was a vehicle of Satan is beyond dispute.
 - a. Paul says that the “serpent beguiled Eve,” and, in the same context, argues that “Satan fashions himself into a messenger of light,” 2Cor.11:3,14; Cf. 1Tim.2:14.
 - b. Moreover, John’s references to Satan as “the old serpent...which deceiveth the whole world” (Rev.12:9; 20:2) are obvious allusions to the Genesis record.
 - c. So is that of Christ in Jno.8:44. Cf. 1Jno.3:8.

B. THE SPOKESMAN OF GEN.3:15.

- 1. Moses designates the speaker as “Jehovah (Lord, KJV) God,” V.14.

- a. The Hebrew term in the first instance is **Yahweh (Jehovah)**, a designation of the self-existing Creator (Cf. Exo.3:14), who will form a special redemptive, covenant relationship with the nation of Israel.
- b. The second title is “God” (**Elohim**).
 - (1) Though the etymology of the term is obscure, it likely derives from a root meaning “strong.”
 - (2) The name appears to be used mainly of God’s right to govern his world and mankind. (Gordon Clark, *Wycliffe Dictionary of Theology*, Eds., Everett Harrison, Geoffrey Bromiley, Carl Henry (Peabody, MA. 1999).
- 2. The combined use of these names lends great force to the utterance that follows as we discuss

C. THE COMPONENTS OF THE TEXT.

- 1. The 1st component is **The Serpent**.
 - a. Jehovah’s remarks in Gen.3:15 are addressed to the serpent immediately, though to Satan ultimately. Cf. Rom.16:20.
 - b. While modernists dismiss the clear import of the biblical record, alleging that “Satan” is but a “personification of the self-accusing conscience of Israel,” both Testaments treat him as the personal, arch-enemy of Almighty God. -- (G.B. Gray, IV. 4298, “Satan,” *Encyclopedia Biblica*, Cheyne & Black, eds. (London: A. & C. Black).
 - c. He is the one responsible for the physical death penalty upon mankind, Rom.5:12; 1Cor.15:21a,22a; Jno.8:44.
 - d. Following his malicious deed in the Garden of Eden, this “curse” from Jehovah God previews the devil’s horrible destiny.
- 2. The 2nd component is **The Woman**.
 - a. The “woman” of the context is, of course, Eve, the mother of all living. But the main focus is not upon her; rather it is upon her “seed” (to be discussed later).
 - b. On the other hand, while there is mention of the serpent’s “seed,” the primary thrust is toward the destruction of the malignant force working through the serpent (Satan), rather than upon this enemy’s “seed” (though certainly they will share his fate, Mt.25:41).
- 3. The 3rd component is **The Enmity**.

- a. The term “enmity” denotes a disposition of hostility, whether between individuals (Num.35:21,22), or between bodies of people (Ezek.25:15; 35:5).
 - b. Between what parties is there “enmity,” as suggested in this text?
 - (1) While some see it as an abiding antipathy between humans and snakes, clearly the scope moves far beyond such a trite explanation.
 - (2) Here the language denotes the initial spirit of antagonism between Eve and her adversary (her destroyer), together with the suggestion that there would be a spiritual hostility developing between the woman’s seed, Christ (along with his people). and Satan and his followers.
 - (3) This concept is well illustrated in the parable of the tares, Mt.13:24-30,36-43; Cf. 1Jno.3:10.
 - (4) Certainly the Book of Revelation illustrates it to the fullest.
4. The 4th component is **Jehovah’s Action**.
- a. The text represents Jehovah as saying, “I will put enmity...”
 - b. How is the origin of this hostility to be attributed to God, who is an absolutely holy Being, Isa.6:3; Rev.4:8?
 - (1) There are two components.
 - (a) First, there is a standard of truth and righteousness which proceeds from the very nature of deity.
 - (b) Second, rational individuals are creatures of moral responsibility. When men (or spirit beings, e.g., angels) exercise their volition, and rebel against the Creator, enmity is bound to result.
 - (2) God, then, is the Author of the enmity *only in the sense that he makes demands upon responsible beings* – which frequently they choose to ignore. Cf. Exo.7:3ff.
5. The 5th component is **The Woman’s Seed**.
- a. Who is the woman’s seed? Is it simply her descendants? Or is Christ involved?
 - b. An affirmative answer to the first question is not plausible, creditable or admissible.
 - c. Clearly, the seed promise of this entire book (see Gen.12:3; 22:18; Cf. Gal.3:8,16) finds its complete fulfillment in Jesus Christ, the Savior, who, in the fullness of time, was “born of woman,” Gal.4:4. Cf. Isa.7:14; Mt.1:18-25.
6. The 6th component is **The Conflict**.

- a. In the common version, KJV, etc., the term “bruise” is twice found.
 - (1) Satan bruises the Seed’s heel; the woman’s Seed bruises the serpent’s head.
 - (2) Some translators prefer to render the first instance as “bruise” or “strike at”, while rendering the latter term by “crush”.
- b. Whatever the exact meaning of the verb, the picture seems to be clear.
 - (1) To bruise the head is a picture of fatal and final destruction.
 - (2) To bruise the heel is a picture of damage, which is neither fatal nor final.
- c. In the final analysis, the complete biblical picture reveals the full significance of the terms.
 - (1) Christ’s death for human sin was, in effect, a “wound” rendered by Satan – bruising his heel as it were.
 - (2) But the Lord’s resurrection, exaltation, and final victory will totally destroy the devil and his revolting efforts – bruise or crush his head, Rom.16:20; 1Cor.15:24-26; Col.2:15; 2Tim.1:10; Heb.2:14; 1Jno.3:8; Rev.19,20.

D. FINALLY, CONSIDER SOME OF THE GREAT TRUTHS TAUGHT IN GEN.3:15.

- 1. There is the fact that Satan is a real enemy, and a formidable opponent.
 - a. He lied to Eve, and he cause the sentence of physical death to be passed upon all mankind, Rom.5:12; 1Cor.15:21a,22a.; Jno.8:44.
 - b. He is the ever-tempting one (Mt.4:3 – a present tense participle) who, as our adversary, continuously is on the prowl for those whom he may devour, 1Pet.5:8,9; Rev.12:9.
 - c. Nothing could please him more than for liberal theologians to dismiss him as a mythological metaphor.
- 2. Allegations that the “serpent story” is a mere legend, are based upon anti-supernatural presuppositions.
 - a. The God who fashioned all creatures certainly could, for a special occasion, empower a serpent to speak – just as was the case with Balaam’s donkey, Num.22:28.
 - b. The inspired Apostle Paul in 2Cor.11:3 viewed the episode in Gen.3 as strictly historical, as real. Cf. 1Tim.2:14.

3. Gen.3:15 is a preview of the incarnate Christ.
 - a. The expression “seed of woman” implies humanity.
 - b. The virgin would conceive and bear a son (Isa.7:14); indeed, a child would be born, a son given (Isa.9:6).
 - c. The Apostle John, of course, notes that the eternal Word “became flesh” and dwelt among the human family, Jno.1:14.
 - d. Mt.1:18-25 records the virgin birth of Jesus Christ in fulfillment of Isa.7:14.
 - e. Thus we have the fulfillment of the prophecy of the incarnate Christ of Gen.3:15 – the “first gospel”.
 - f. There are tremendous reasons for the necessity of the Redeemer being human – not the least of which is the fact that a spirit-being cannot die a physical death, which was necessary to atone for sin, which Jesus had to do and did “that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil,” Heb.2:14. Cf. Rom.3:20-26.
4. The allusion to the woman’s seed being “bruised” unquestionably looks to the suffering of Jesus Christ on behalf of the sins of humanity.
 - a. In Isa.53, there is a vivid portrait of Jehovah’s abused servant – the Christ. Cf. Lk.22:37; Ac.8:32-35.
 - b. Twice the prophet speaks of the promised Messiah being “bruised” (daka) and wounded as an offering for sin, 53:5,10.
 - c. The death of Jesus, planned even before the foundation of the world (1Pet.1:19,20), was previewed in this miniature gospel of Gen.3:15, and enlarged upon throughout the Bible.
 - d. This symbolic prophesy of the death of Christ is in conflict with certain dispensational allegations, namely, that the Lord’s death was not a part of Heaven’s original plan; but was, in fact, an after-thought.
 - (1) S. D. Gordon, in his book **Quiet Talks about Jesus**, wrote: “It can be said at once that His dying was not God’s own plan. It was conceived somewhere else and yielded to by God..” (Quoted in: Millennial Studies, p. 71, by Geo. Murray (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House). Cf. Ac.2:23; Rom.3:20-26.
5. The fact that only Christ’s “heel” (in contrast to the serpent’s “head”) was to be injured, obviously alludes to the Lord’s resurrection from the dead.
 - a. Jesus’ death would terminate the divine mission. Cf. Mt.16:18; Ac.2: 2:36.

6. The allusion to the serpent's "seed" ominously predicts that many of those of the human family would choose to be aligned with Satan, rather than with the Son of God. Of which Gen.3:15; Lk.10:18; the Book of Rev. if proof positive.
 - a. This stands in bold relief to the modern notion that all men basically are good, and are, therefore, perfectly at liberty to pursue the course of their own interests in life – and that with Heaven's approval.
 - b. Gen.3:15 contradicts universalism.
7. The prophecy reveals that the glorious cause of the woman's "Seed" will prevail ultimately.
 - a. Satan and his forces will be crushed.
 - b. As Paul has written, in words designed to encourage the saints in the great imperial city of Rome: "And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly," Rom.16:20.
 - (1) Observe the expression, "**your** feet."
 - (2) The redeemed will partake of Christ's triumph! Rev.19:14.
 - (3) Note: Though Paul's prophecy may refer to a situation more immediate than remote, the term "shortly" does not necessarily demand chronological proximity. Rather, "the phrase means 'swiftly.' As with a swift stamping of the feet one crushes a snake's head..." Lenski, 922. The Interpretation of Romans.
 - (4) Vine, III, 241: "lit. in or with swiftness, with speed. With speed is probably the meaning."
 - c. As noted earlier, Satan's dreaded destiny is graphically set forth in the concluding book of the Bible, where Christ and his brethren are victorious.

III. CONCLUSION

1. So, Gen.3:15 – the "first gospel" – is a grand depository of rich, prophetic information.
2. In capsulated format, it highlights the origin of human rebellion.
3. But it does not leave the drama hanging; rather, the glorious triumph of the woman's seed is previewed.
4. The "rest of the story" is depicted in the book of Revelation.
5. This little text truly is worthy of the designation "first gospel." It is the gospel, briefly sketched in an abbreviated form – which concept, in fact, has the endorsement of the N.T. in Gal.3:8.

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