

Some Little-Known Prophecies of Christmas: Part 1—Genesis 3:15

By PAUL J. SCHARF

It was certainly one of the most momentous days in the history of the Earth.

It began like every day before it had—every day they had known since “the beginning” (Gen. 1:1). It began in holiness—in perfection.

But, soon enough, they faced something they had not encountered before—something for which they did not even have a category. We know it as temptation.

The Apostle Paul tells us that the first man had some insight that his wife did not yet possess. We find in 1 Tim. 2:14 that, “Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression.”

We infer from this passage that when Adam ate “fruit” (Gen. 3:2, 3, 6) off the one prohibited tree he did so knowingly and willfully—refusing to allow Eve to descend without him into whatever consequences would follow.

Following their disobedience, at first, there may have been little change in terms of their physical health or the beauty of their surroundings. Yet they surely understood that, on another level, things would now be vastly different, as we detect from Gen. 3:7-8. The discussion that follows, in verses 9-13, shows that the perfect marital unity which they had previously enjoyed was now severed, as well.

But it was out of such misery, before the end of that signal day near the inauguration of history, that God first revealed something that He had planned from eternity past (see Eph. 1:4; 1 Pet. 1:20): the first promise of a Savior.

For this season of Advent, I would like to draw our attention to some of the little-known prophecies of Christmas by means of a series of four devotional articles. These prophecies really shouldn't be little-known, but have, perhaps, become so once again in our age of Biblical illiteracy. I would like to bring them back to the center of our thinking—where they rightly belong, as we travel through this season, toward our Sunday Christmas.

I would especially hate to think that this prophecy with which we begin, Gen. 3:15, is little-known. After all, it is called the *protoevangelium*—which is a Latin term meaning “the first gospel.” It is at the root of our theology about man, sin, Satan, Christ and salvation. It is basic to our understanding of almost everything that would unfold in the rest of Holy Scripture.

So, I hope that I am wrong. I hope that everyone reading this column will react with a measure of disbelief, shouting: “Of course! Everyone knows about the

protoevangelium!" I hope that children are memorizing Gen. 3:15 all across the nation right now as they prepare to voice it in unison on Christmas Eve, or at a Sunday afternoon Christmas play. I hope that choirs are learning cantatas with the words of that ancient promise embedded into them.

I certainly hope for that—yet somehow fear that the true answer is mercifully hidden. I wonder how many people in our churches could even open their Bibles to this first promise of deliverance—to say nothing of pronouncing the word *protoevangelium*.

The truth is that Gen. 3:15 is so simple that any child old enough to communicate could hear it and believe. Yet it is so profound that no one could ever exhaust the depths of its meaning, for it references the eternal Son of God stepping into time. The omnipotent One suffers; the infinite One dies. But in His death, we find life. The adversary is overcome; the curse is overturned; perfection is restored.

I wonder if Adam and Eve thought that all of this would happen imminently—perhaps even that very night. They did not yet begin to comprehend the ramifications that their actions would have on all of history, or how detailed God's plan for redemption would become (see Rom. 5:12-21; 16:20; 1 Cor. 15:20-49; 2 Cor. 11:3; Rev. 12:7-17; 20:2).

There were still more consequences for sin that would be announced and enacted in Gen. 3:16-24. But at least Adam and Eve could face them with the confidence that came from trusting the promise unveiled in verse 15:

And I will put enmity
Between you and the woman,
And between your seed and her Seed;
He shall bruise your head,
And you shall bruise His heel.

And so, whether it is familiar to us or not, it is good that we begin our Advent season by meditating upon that promise once again, as well.

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