

## Sermon 4, The Bible's Thesis Statement: The Woman's Seed Conquers the Serpent, Genesis 3:15

Excellent source (by far the best I consulted: John L. Ronning, [\*The Curse on the Serpent \(Genesis 3:15\) in Biblical Theology and Hermeneutics\*](#) (Ph.D. Diss., Westminster Theological Seminary, 1997).

“The same process of reinterpretation of the creation mandate spoken of in Psalm 8 which makes Jesus the Son of Man and progenitor of the righteous seed suggests the following as the final interpretation, and solution to the riddle: “I will put enmity between you and Christ, and between your offspring and his offspring; he will strike you on the head, and you will strike him on the heel.” In other words, as the curse is given in the Garden of Eden, God shifts from speaking of the figurehead in v. 15b, to the true head in v. 15d, much as he shifts from speaking to the figurehead snake in v. 14 to the father of the wicked in v. 15. Because of the disagreement in gender, “He” was taken as referring back to “seed,” whereas I would view it as referring back to the one whom Eve represents as figurehead, Christ.” --Ronning

“But Gen 3:15 for those in Old Testament times was not simply connected with future anticipation, but rather it was foundational in the establishment of Old Testament theology, and was part of Israel's common experience, both on a national and individual level. No passage says overtly, “thus was fulfilled the curse on the serpent in the drowning of the wicked in Noah's flood” or “in the drowning of the Egyptians at the crossing of the Red Sea,” or “in the conquest of Canaan,” or even, “in the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus.” Neither does any passage say, “thus the enmity predicted in the curse on the serpent was manifested between Cain and Abel.” Then again, no passage says overtly, “thus was fulfilled Nathan's prediction of a sword being in David's house” (2 Sam 12:10), but it does not take a hermeneutical genius to see the fulfillment of that prediction beginning in the next chapter.” — Ronning

“But it is not only rationalists who have missed the connection between Gen 3:15 and Genesis 4, but also Lutherans, Roman Catholics, and others who have insisted on the strictly individual and christological interpretation of the woman's seed, whether from a desire to see the fullness of the Gospel revealed to Adam and Eve, or a desire to see a reference to the mother of Jesus predicted in Gen 3:15” — Ronning

“Another key step in the interpretation of Gen 3:15 is recognizing the connection between the serpent of the temptation and the internationally known serpent-dragon figure called Leviathan or Rahab, the evil (or twisted, or primeval) serpent, the crooked serpent, the many headed dragon who lives in the “sea.” While the connection is not obvious, the celebration of the crossing of the Red Sea as the slaying of this serpent-dragon in Isa 51:9-10, combined with the narrative of the event which portrays the Egyptians as the serpent's seed is a sufficient clue.” — Ronning

“The woman’s seed is not brought about by childbirth, but by the creative process of God, a birth from above.” — Ronning

“Our overcoming the serpent-dragon is not found in killing his offspring (though involvement in just wars might require this), but rather in keeping the commandments of God, and maintaining the testimony of Jesus even to death (as Cyprian said, even if he did not know that this was the meaning of Revelation 12; see p. 13, “the helmeted serpent was both crushed and conquered,” because Celerinus did not deny the faith under torture).” — Ronning

**Proposition:** Genesis 3:15 calls us to read the entire Bible as the story of God-given enmity between Satan and his seed on the one hand and Christ and His seed on the other.

- I. The Prelude: God’s Judgment on the Snake, v. 14
  - A. The Snake Is Uniquely Cursed, v. 14a-b
  - B. The Snake Is Humiliated, v. 14c
  - C. The Snake Is Beaten, v. 14d
- II. The Promise: God’s Judgment on Satan, v. 15
  - A. God Will Make Satan an Enemy, v. 15a
  - B. Satan and the Woman Will Be Enemies, v. 15b
  - C. Satan’s Seed and the Church Will Be Enemies, v. 15c
  - D. Christ Will Definitively Defeat Satan, v. 15d
  - E. Satan Will Injure Christ, v. 15e

Brothers and sisters, we are still examining the Bible’s Big Picture. Three weeks ago we saw that Scripture is the record of God’s dealings with His people, and that right at the center of all those transactions is Jesus Christ the Mediator. Then, over the last two weeks, we saw that Christ’s mission could be summarized as to kill the dragon and get the girl, while His people’s mission could be summarized as coming to dwell in His presence. Those three were topical sermons. Starting today, we return to textual sermons. We will look together at Biblical Theology in 10 key texts across Genesis, Exodus, Chronicles, John, and Revelation. The first of these key texts is Genesis 3:15, the *protoevangelion* or first Gospel proclamation, made by God to the human couple immediately after their fall into sin. We considered this promise briefly two weeks ago, but today we will begin to look at it in detail. What I hope to show you is this: Genesis 3:15 calls us to read the Bible as the story of God-given enmity between Christ’s seed and Satan’s seed.

**I. The Prelude: God’s Judgment on the Snake, v. 14**

We have just heard the words of Adam accusing Eve and Eve accusing the serpent. The serpent, having no one to accuse, simply hears God’s sentence. The sentence is a curse. A curse on the lips of God is not merely a wish that bad things might happen to the party cursed. It is an effective way of speaking evil into the existence of the cursed thing. When God curses you, something very bad happens to you. Your life is powerfully changed for the worse.

### **A. The Snake Is Uniquely Cursed, v. 14a-b**

What is the substance of the curse here? First of all, the snake is uniquely cursed. When God curses it “above all cattle,” the idea is that the snake is cursed more than any other animal, either wild or domesticated. Out of every animal on this planet, snakes have it the worst. How? Well, God spells it out in two ways.

### **B. The Snake Is Humiliated, v. 14c**

First, the snake is humiliated by slithering on its belly. As we know, that is how snakes move to this very day. As I mentioned a couple of weeks ago, I think it likely that the snake could fly before this point. But regardless of whether the snake moved this way before, now this kind of motion is cursed motion.

### **C. The Snake Is Beaten, v. 14d**

Further, the snake is beaten. It will survive by licking up the dust. In other places in the Old Testament, licking the dust is used to describe the behavior of conquered enemies. They have to bow down in front of the person who conquered them and show their humiliation by putting their tongues on the floor to lick up the dust.

This is the prologue; these are the visible judgments that fall upon the snake and that still encumber snakes to this very day. But that’s not where the curse ends. Verse 14 talks about the physical realities that will be part of snakes’ lives for the rest of history. But verse 15 clearly can’t be talking about that, because it envisions an indefinite amount of future time for both parties.

## **II. The Promise: God’s Judgment on Satan, v. 15**

You see, though this is formally a curse, it contains a promise. Let’s look at the elements of this promise. It really has five elements.

### **A. God Will Make Satan an Enemy, v. 15a**

Verse 15 begins, “I will put enmity.” This is God’s promise. He will make Satan into an enemy. As I mentioned a few weeks ago, this is astonishing because Satan and the woman just acted like they were friends. But God will intervene, and He will make Satan an enemy.

Where was God when the fall happened? He wasn’t in the narrative. He left Adam, Eve, and the Serpent to their own devices. But this little word “I” tells us that God will intervene to set things right after the fall. He let it happen for His own good purposes — but He will not leave the human race to sort it out on their own. He will take it upon Himself to fix the problem. That’s the first thing we see in this text.

### **B. Satan and the Woman Will Be Enemies, v. 15b**

What form will God’s solution take? It will involve making the woman and Satan enemies to each other. Now, Satan was already the woman’s enemy. He came into the garden as an enemy and he sought to make the first couple sin as an enemy. But God’s solution is to make the humans into Satan’s enemies. Notice, then, that God is not going to conquer Satan directly. Satan attacked God by and through God’s vicegerents on Earth. Now God is striking back at Satan, but He’s deputizing His people to do it.

Do you see the glory of this promise? God doesn't do everything for us. He honors us enough that He expects us to step up and fight Satan. God's solution to the problem of the Fall is to make human beings aware that Satan is their enemy and thus teach them to fight against Him. Already in the verse we see the beginning outline of the truth that it is by a man that Satan will ultimately and finally be conquered.

Do you believe this? That is, do you live as one who is Satan's enemy? One who will not listen to his enticements and will not have a friendly conversation with him? You can see in terms of the narrative that the immediate contrast is with the conversation Eve just had with Satan. He spoke to her, and she gave him a willing ear. They acted like friends. But God says that from this point forward, He will put enmity between the woman and Satan.

### **C. Satan's Seed and the Church Will Be Enemies, v. 15c**

That enmity will extend not only to Eve herself, though, but also to her seed. Again, this is a collective noun referring to those who come forth from the woman. Who is this? Well, it's clearly not every descendant of Eve. Cain turns out to be among Satan's seed, just as the Pharisees were in the time of Christ. Remember how John the Baptist called them a "brood of vipers"? That was a direct reference to their identity as the Serpent's seed. Jesus is even more direct when He tells them that they come from their father the Devil.

So Satan has a seed. He has offspring, metaphorical descendants. Who are the seed of the serpent? Everyone who is from below, everyone who is of the darkness, everyone who refuses to be friends with Jesus Christ — these are the seed of the serpent. Ultimately, this verse divides humanity into two groups, the serpent's seed and the woman's seed.

In this pairing, we can clearly see that the serpent's seed are not actually his physical descendants. Rather, they are those that metaphorically trace their lineage to the talking snake in the Garden of Eden and, behind the snake, to Satan himself. This leads us to expect to find a "real" progenitor of the woman's seed standing behind the woman. After all, in one sense every human being is from Eve's seed. Yet clearly many humans are of the serpent's seed, not of the seed of the woman (which is the serpent's great enemy!). Thus, behind Eve stands — what? Who? The Lord Jesus Christ. God promised Him a seed before time began, and every person who is at enmity with the Devil is one of Jesus' seed. Again, if you are a believer, you are not physically descended from Christ any more than wicked people (say, crooked cops) are physically descended from Satan. But you are spiritually descended from Him, just as crooked cops are spiritually descended from the Devil.

So the church, which is Christ's seed, will be at war with Satan and his seed throughout history. When you read the Bible, you should expect to see accounts of the conflict between these two seeds.

### **D. Christ Will Definitely Defeat Satan, v. 15d**

The narrative suddenly introduces a new character, a "He." He is the climatic member of the woman's seed who will bruise Satan's head. "He" is the Lord Jesus Christ, as the events of later history prove. Did Satan know this at the time? Maybe not. Eve apparently didn't; at the

beginning of chapter 4, she seems to think that Cain is the promised seed. But as you can see, the promise was clear enough even to the first auditors. One of the woman's seed, one who came from her, would crush the serpent's head. Isn't it interesting that all four Gospels tell us that Christ was crucified at Golgotha, the place of a skull? That He literally pierced a head when His cross was placed into the ground? Or notice Psalm 110, which says that Christ will strike through heads over the wide earth. He is the head-crusher. He will defeat the dragon. Already the fact that a human being to come would definitively defeat Satan would have been clear to Adam and Eve. Even in their pain, they certainly knew that God had just promised them a way of escape, a savior who would undo the serpent's ravages.

**E. Satan Will Injure Christ, v. 15e**

Yet that victory would not come without cost. Christ would indeed suffer the bruising of His heel. What that meant probably puzzled Adam and Eve for many long years. But the event showed what God meant. Christ was hurt. He was crucified. Satan killed Him, and yet that death amounted to nothing more than a flesh wound in the heel.

Can you rejoice in this promise? Can you live as one who has conquered Satan through the work of your living head, the Lord Jesus Christ? You can. You should. You must. Don't give in to Satan. Don't join his seed. Pursue holiness. Amen.