

Genesis 3:15 — I Will Put Enmity Between Thee and the Woman

The Proto-Gospel Addressed to the Serpent, No Adamic Covenant, Seed of the Woman, Virgin Birth Implied, and Seth as Abel's Resurrection Type

Scripture Reading: Genesis 3:14–21; Hebrews 2:14; Revelation 12:1–5

“And 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.” (Genesis 3:15)

“Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.” (Hebrews 2:14)

Addressed to the Serpent, Not to Man: A Critical Distinction

It is common to speak of Genesis 3:15 as a promise made to Adam and Eve, or as the covenant of grace in its first form, or as the Adamic covenant. All of these formulations are wrong. The verse is addressed to the serpent. God is speaking to the serpent, not to the fallen man. Adam and Eve are standing by, listening. They are, at this moment, lost. God has not made any promises to fallen man. There are warnings about where fallen man will end up, but the notion that God here makes a covenant with fallen Adam — the so-called Adamic covenant of the covenant theologians — has no basis in the text.

God's promises begin with Abraham. Galatians 3 makes this precise: the covenant was confirmed before of God in Christ, and the law, which came 430 years after, cannot disannul it. Abraham is where the covenant of promise begins. Genesis 3:15 is not the proto-statement of a covenant; it is an announcement made to the enemy. J.N. Darby's notes on this passage are careful to distinguish: this is not a covenant with man; it is a declaration of what God will do, addressed to the adversary, in the hearing of the fallen pair.

C.I. Scofield's label, the Adamic covenant, which he says regulates man between Adam and Noah, is equally without scriptural foundation. There is nothing in the text that constitutes a covenant. The word covenant does not appear. The structure of a covenant — parties, terms, ratification — is not present. What is present is God's sovereign declaration of what he intends to do with the enemy of his creature.

Overheard by Faith: Adam Lays Hold of What God Said

Though this announcement was not addressed to Adam, Adam heard it. And there is evidence later in the chapter that faith began to work in his soul as he listened. In verse 20, Adam called his wife's name Eve — life, living — because she was the mother of all living. This was an act of faith. Adam heard what God said to the serpent about the seed of the woman who would crush the serpent's head, and he reached out and laid hold of it. He had not yet heard God speak to him directly about any future good. But what God said to the serpent was light. The entrance of his word gives light. Faith, which God had planted, found something to rest on in the hearing of that word addressed to the enemy, and Adam named his wife accordingly.

No Benefit in Satan's Suggestion: Enmity Is the Result

The serpent had implied in chapter 3 that God was withholding something good from Adam and Eve, that if they followed his suggestion there would be some benefit. If that were so, Eve would have been forever grateful to the serpent for the tip. The serpent would have been her favourite creature, cherished as a benefactor. The fact that God places enmity between the woman and the serpent is God's own verdict on the outcome of what Satan suggested. There was no benefit. What came of it was enmity, not gratitude. God overruled the result so that even the fallen woman instinctively recoils from the creature who deceived her. That is the answer to the serpent's claim that he was doing mankind a favour.

The Seed of the Woman: Christ and the Virgin Birth Implied

The phrase seed of the woman is notable in itself. In biblical usage, seed is typically traced through the father. To speak of the seed of the woman is to signal something anomalous, something that departs from the normal line of generation. It implies that the coming one will not be born of a man's seed, that the regular process of procreation which transmits the Adamic nature will be bypassed. This is why Christ could come in flesh without being constituted a sinner: he was not born by natural generation. The Holy Spirit overshadowed Mary; the holy thing born was the seed of the woman, not the seed of a fallen man. The virgin birth is implied here before it is anywhere explicitly declared.

Hebrews 2:14 ties the two sides of verse 15 together: forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same, that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil. The seed of the woman took flesh and blood — not sinful flesh, but the likeness of sinful flesh, as Romans 8:3 says — and through death crushed the head of the one who had the power of death. The bruising of the heel and the crushing of the head are both in Hebrews 2:14: the seed is bruised through death, and through that very death the serpent's head is crushed.

He Shall Crush Thy Head: Not Bruising but Finality

J.N. Darby's translation gives crush for what the King James renders bruise. The distinction is important. A bruise is not terminal. The heel of the seed was bruised — the Lord Jesus suffered, died, went into the depths — but it was not terminal. He rose victorious. But what is done to the head of the serpent is crushing: final, complete, decisive. The work on the cross sealed this, though its full execution awaits the lake of fire. One is temporary suffering that results in resurrection; the other is absolute and permanent defeat.

This also shows the inadequacy of the expression that the fall bruised man, or that the law bruised man. Neither did. The fall was not a bruising — it was far more drastic than that. The law came and sin revived and I died (Romans 7). The law did not bruise; it brought in the sentence of death. Only the seed of the woman was bruised, and only by being bruised in the heel did he crush the serpent's head.

The Seed of the Serpent: Reprobation Considered

I will put enmity between thy seed and her seed. There is a seed of the serpent. John 8:44 — ye are of your father the devil — and Matthew 13:38 — the tares are the sons of the evil one — point to it. But does this mean that God has decreed certain persons to be the seed of the serpent, as the doctrine of reprobation would have it?

The answer is no. All men are lost. They do not need to be specially decreed into lostness; lostness is the natural condition of fallen man, descended from the fallen head. God in sovereign grace reaches down and stops certain of them, brings them to himself, constitutes them the seed of the woman by union with the great seed. Those whom he does not so reach remain in the condition they were already in — the natural outcome of the fall. There is no positive divine act making them children of the devil; there is simply the absence of the divine act of

grace that would have made them otherwise.

The verse says that hell was prepared for the devil and his angels. It does not say it was prepared for the devil, his angels, and his seed, as if the seed were a decreed category. The seed of the serpent ends up there, but they go there as fallen men, not as a specially ordained class. The enmity is between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent, and the distinction is real — but the seed of the serpent are simply lost men, as all men were before grace intervened.

Seth: Abel's Resurrection Type and the Carrying of the Seed

The seed of the woman was carried through history in a traceable line that the enemy repeatedly tried to cut off. Cain killed Abel. Eve named her next son Seth — appointed, she said, for God has appointed me another seed instead of Abel, whom Cain slew (Genesis 4:25). The word seed. Eve recognised that Abel was not the promised seed because he was dead, and Cain was not the seed because he was the murderer. Seth was another seed — and this pattern of the first man killing the second, and the second rising again in a type, is already here. If Cain killing Abel is the first man killing the second, Seth is the appointed replacement, pointing to Christ in resurrection.

The enmity continued down through the line of the seed. The flood came; the promise was carried through Noah. Through Shem to Abraham. Through Isaac, not Ishmael. Through Jacob, not Esau. At every point the enemy attempted to cut off the line. In Revelation 12 the dragon stood before the sun-clad woman to devour her child as soon as it was born. The human instrument was Herod with his massacre of the innocents. In Gethsemane, Satan entered Judas to make sure the deed was done. At every attempt the seed survived until the moment of its apparent defeat, which was in fact its victory. He bruised the heel; the heel crushed the head.

Christ Always Brings Something Higher: Eden Not Restored but Transcended

The way to the tree of life in Eden is barred by cherubim and a flaming sword. It is not going to be recovered. God never restores to the original; he always brings in something higher. What man lost in Eden, Christ takes up and glorifies into something far exceeding what the garden contained. We will not be innocent as Adam was innocent; we will be holy as Christ is holy, in resurrected and glorified humanity. The tree of life in the midst of the garden points to Christ; the tree of life in the midst of the paradise of God in Revelation 22 is Christ in his millennial fullness, bearing twelve fruits, its leaves for the healing of the nations. The one who is the seed of the woman is the same one who is the tree of life. He makes everything good, and immeasurably better than it was when it was lost.

It shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.