

The Lamb Wins

Genesis 3:14-15

I mentioned a few weeks ago that the whole Bible story can be put into three parts, three headings, three overall events. The whole history of mankind can be defined by those three things as well. There is, first of all, creation. That's where the Bible begins,

Gen. 1:1 "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."

Then, secondly, the second major event of history, and the second great event in the Bible, is the fall. Adam and Eve sinned against God, eating the fruit of the one tree forbidden to them. And upon eating, they died, just as God had promised. So there is creation, then the fall, and then, the judgment. Right? After man sinned against God, the rest of the Bible is simply a description and declaration of his judgment upon sinful man. Well, no, of course not, but at the rest of the Old Testament is the story of God's judgment, many would think or believe. So the popular thinking is that the rest of the Old Testament is a revelation of the Old Testament God of wrath, a God who pours out his wrath not only upon the nations of the world but even the nation of Israel herself. And then, finally, in a quite a dramatic shift of emphasis, finally, in the New Testament, we have God revealing his grace and goodness through Jesus.

I dare say that many people in our culture and in our community might hear that description and think to themselves, "that seems just about right." But it is completely wrong. The third part of the story of mankind, that which follows his fall into sin, is not simply the pronouncement of God's judgment. Rather, the third part of the story is the promise of redemption, by which we fallen creatures can escape from God's judgment. That third part of the story doesn't begin in the New Testament with the birth

of Jesus as it is recorded in the gospels. Rather, that story of redemption is declared and presented to us immediately after the fall. The first promise of the gospel does not come from the lips of Jesus. It doesn't even come from the lips of any of the Old Testament prophets or even from Moses. That first promise of the gospel comes from God himself, recorded for us in our text this morning, Genesis 3:15, the curse God spoke upon the serpent as the very embodiment of Satan himself,

v.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."

That's it. That's the promise.

Now, we have to admit that if God had chosen at this point to inflict death upon all mankind, death without redemption, without salvation, he could have done so and still be just. He could not be accused of evil or unrighteousness even if he determined to end life for mankind, for that is what he had promised. That was the warning.

Gen. 2:17 "...but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."

From our perspective, the judgment of death could have been the end of the story. Justice would have been satisfied. But God had another purpose, a purpose underlying the whole of his work of creation. His purpose was to show forth his own glory, and the greatest evidence of that glory would be his work of redemption. And when I use the word redemption, I mean the same thing as when I use the word salvation. They are synonyms, with redemption having the specific emphasis upon the need to purchase or buy back those condemned to death. So God's purpose in creation was to display his glory in the redemption of fallen men, not merely in their condemnation.

So right away, immediately, in the very declaration of his judgment and curse upon Satan following the sin of man, God promises salvation by a redeemer. And that promise is what is so consistently identified as the covenant of grace. Thus in the words of our shorter catechism, answering question 20, “Did God leave all mankind to perish in the estate of sin and misery?,” we read these words, that “God having, out of his mere good pleasure, from all eternity, elected some to everlasting life, did enter into a covenant of grace, to deliver them out of the estate of sin and misery, and to bring them into an estate of salvation by a redeemer.”

So this is the inauguration of the covenant of grace, here in Genesis 3:15. This is God’s first promise of salvation by a redeemer, the first promise of redemption and of deliverance. The first promise of Jesus, identified here as the seed of the woman, the descendant or seed of the woman. In other words, the redeemer whom God would provide for the sin of man would himself be a man, a descendant of Eve, born of a woman. So Galatians 4:4 has a direct connection to our short text this morning,

Gal. 4:4 “But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, 5 to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.”

But before we focus on that promise more directly, let me note first the context of the promise, which is, in fact, God’s curse upon Satan.

I. GOD’S RESPONSE TO SIN IS HIS CURSE UPON SATAN.

v.14

Just a couple words of introduction. God is not cursing a snake, he is cursing the Devil. He is cursing Satan, the ruling of the fallen angels who I have identified in previous weeks.

Jude 6 “And the angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day.”

That final judgment upon Satan is described further in,

Rev. 12:9 “So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. 10 Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, “Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down.”

So please don’t think these words in Genesis 3 refer merely to the humiliation of a snake whose existence is reduced to crawling on its belly. The words are directed at Satan himself, whom the Apostle Paul would later call “the prince of the power of the air.” And Satan bears much guilt, not only for the rebellion of his own fall into sin, the details of which are not found in Scripture, but he is also guilty for his temptation presented to Adam and Eve. They will bear their own curse and judgment, which we will see in the coming two weeks, but first comes the curse upon Satan. And it is,

A. A curse of Satan’s humiliating restraint.

The actual effect of the curse upon the actual animal we call a snake is symbolic, representative, of the actual curse upon Satan himself. So the words are meaningful. These are words which speak of humiliating restraint. “On your belly you shall go, And you shall eat dust All the days of your life.”

So did serpents or snakes walk uprightly before this time? Lots of time and energy has been given to that question, most of which is speculation. So “maybe”, I would answer. Yet I certainly don’t know for sure, and I wouldn’t dare speak definitively where the Bible is silent. But maybe the curse included some specific form of deprivation, even the loss of something we could call legs. Or maybe it was simply a declaration of the permanent status of crawling to which the snake was consigned by this curse. But this is what we do know, one way or the other—it was a curse of humiliation. A curse of restraint. Surely we see the advancement and preference given to those animals who are able to walk, on all fours and even then on two legs, as we human beings do. The snake, who represented the Devil at this point, would be forever restrained to crawl upon the ground in humiliation. And subjugation—subject to dominance. This was most certainly,

B. A curse of God’s overwhelming dominance.

God’s power, God’s authority is what stands out in this curse. The serpent, who had embodied Satan would not even have the stature of the cattle of the field nor any other of the beasts, despite all the power that the fallen, evil angels might have had. By God’s judgment, the serpent would not have the strength nor might to eat in the ordinary way of other predators among the animal kingdom. God would subject them to utter and complete servitude.

v.14 “So the LORD God said to the serpent: “Because you have done this, You are cursed more than all cattle, And more than every beast of the field; On your belly you shall go, And you shall eat dust All the days of your life.”

It is also worth noting the symbolism of this domination of the serpent in terms of God’s judgment upon the wicked and believing nations who were the enemies of Old Testament Israel. So we read in,

Micah 7:16 “The nations shall see and be ashamed of all their might; They shall put their hand over their mouth; Their ears shall be deaf. 17 They shall lick the dust like a serpent; They shall crawl from their holes like snakes of the earth. They shall be afraid of the LORD our God, And shall fear because of You.”

You get the idea, I think. God’s judgment upon wickedness, and upon the evil one himself, is a judgment of overwhelming dominance. He is God who rules all the nations. He is God who rules Satan himself, which this curse in Genesis 3 makes so plain and obvious.

I should note that that prophecy in Micah that I just read is followed immediately by a promise of the gospel, just as we see in our text in Genesis 3, so even as that curse is pronounced by the prophet, he continues,

Micah 7:18 “Who is a God like You, Pardoning iniquity And passing over the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He does not retain His anger forever, Because He delights in mercy. 19 He will again have compassion on us, And will subdue our iniquities. You will cast all our sins Into the depths of the sea.”

One more thing, though, about this curse in Genesis 3 before I move on to the promise of salvation. It is,

C. A curse of the never-ending absence of conquering peace.

v.15a “And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed.”

Enmity. Warfare. Constant and ongoing conflict, which Satan will never win. He will never succeed. He will not triumph. He will not conquer. He will not reign in peace over a conquered foe. There will be enmity. God will put enmity between Satan and

those whom he will forever seek to deceive and destroy. So he is a roaring lion, and we are warned!

1 Peter 5:8 “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.”

But the point is that though we should beware of him, he will not succeed! Peter continues,

1 Peter 5:9 “Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world. 10 But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you.”

Similarly, James 4:7 “Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. 8 Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.”

That is the curse the devil will always endure, to his everlasting frustration. “Resist the devil and he will flee from you.” That’s is an encouragement any Christian can have, so that the fullness of what we might call demon possession is not really possible for the person who has Christ! Rather, “Resist the devil and he will flee from you.”

This curse in Genesis 3:15 means that Satan is never without restraint and never free from the bounds which God imposes upon him. And in this age, with Christ’s first coming, we can ever rightly say that he is bound! I believe that the biblical reference to the thousand years during which Satan is bound refers to this current age, an entire age in which Satan is restrained from deceiving the nations any more. The nations belong to Jesus, to his followers, those who are the seed of the woman, and Satan is restrained. He has no power or ability to obtain a conquering

peace in this world even in this age. As John describes it,

Rev. 20:1 “Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. 2 He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; 3 and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished.”

Further, in Jesus’ words, speaking about his conquering power and the power of the gospel in this world, we read in,

Mat. 12:28 “But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you. 29 Or how can one enter a strong man’s house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house.”

Jesus has bound the strong man and is now plundering his house...in others, saving God’s people from the kingdom of darkness. All of that is part of the curse upon Satan. But there is so much more! There is this first promise of the gospel. And so we see that,

II. GOD’S RESPONSE TO SIN IS HIS PROMISE OF SALVATION BY A REDEEMER.

v.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.”

Let’s unpack all of that just a bit. This enmity, this ongoing warfare between Satan and God’s people will find a focal point. This warfare is not simply between Eve and a snake. This conflict extends to the ultimate battle and the ultimate war that involves Satan himself, identified here as the seed of the serpent, and the one who is identified as the seed of the woman. One particular

descendant of the woman. On climactic descendant of the woman, one who alone will have the power and authority of God himself in order to bring a final and complete end and judgment to Satan.

A. God identifies a particular descendant of the woman.

And most assuredly, the reference is to Jesus. I have already made note of that from,

Gal. 4:4 “But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.”

The important point is this, that Satan will have an arch enemy. That arch enemy will clearly have the power of God; indeed, that arch enemy will be God himself! But God says that that arch enemy will also be a man, the seed of the woman. Satan’s arch enemy will be both God and man, so here, right in Genesis 3, the incarnation of Jesus is being proclaimed. The second person of the Trinity would become man. The triumphant king who reigns on the throne of God and from there defeats Satan is also a man. The only possible reference is to Jesus. And so we read,

John 1:1 “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. 4 In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. 14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”

The word became flesh. The archenemy of the devil would be God and man, joined together in the person of Jesus Christ. So God’s response to the sin of man was a promise of Jesus! Do

you see why we call that the covenant of grace?

And notice carefully. The seed of the woman will suffer. v.15 “...And you shall bruise His heel.”

With those words,

B. God identifies the suffering of Jesus.

I believe those words refer to the suffering of Jesus as a man, most especially the brutal suffering he endured upon the cross. Satan was able to claim some measure of success, or at least, so he thought. He could at least claim credit for those who would betray Jesus unto death. We’re told explicitly,

Luke 22:1 “Now the Feast of Unleavened Bread drew near, which is called Passover. 2 And the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might kill Him, for they feared the people. 3 Then Satan entered Judas, surnamed Iscariot, who was numbered among the twelve.”

Matthew adds these details,

Mat. 26:14 “Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests 15 and said, “What are you willing to give me if I deliver Him to you?” And they counted out to him thirty pieces of silver. 16 So from that time he sought opportunity to betray Him.”

And, John 13:2 “And supper being ended, the devil having already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon’s son, to betray Him, 3 Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come from God and was going to God, 4 rose from supper and laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself.”

So we can say that Satan was able to bruise the heel of Jesus; he was able to cause him suffering, even suffering unto

death. But an injury to your heel is not a moral injury, is it? Typically, you will recover from an injury to your heel. But the injury inflicted in the other direction is very different.

v.15 “He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel.”

The word translated “bruise” might well be translated crush. He will crush your head. That gives you the proper picture. The word does have reference to an overwhelming injury, the total and complete infliction of the injury. I don’t have to explain to you what that means regarding the mortality of such a head injury. It is fatal. To crush the head means to cause death. And so, while God identifies the suffering of Jesus,

C. God identifies the ultimate and eternal victory of Jesus.

The seed of the woman, Jesus, will crush the head of the Devil. It’s not a fair fight. The outcome is not in doubt. I read earlier from Revelation 12 about that great victory of Jesus, and I will read further in that chapter,

Rev. 12:9 “So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. 10 Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, “Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down. 11 And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death. 12 Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time.”

He knows he is doomed! And God had promised that doom all the way back in Genesis 3:15. So rather than simply condemn his fallen creatures under his judgment for their sins, God promises salvation, by the work of a redeemer, the seed of the woman herself. Jesus the redeemer will crush the head of Satan, he will kill him. He will destroy him in the final judgment that is still yet to come. And here are the words that describe that final victory of Jesus,

Rev. 19:11 “Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. 12 His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. 13 He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. 14 And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. 15 Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. 16 And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.”

Rev. 19:17 “Then I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the birds that fly in the midst of heaven, “Come and gather together for the supper of the great God, 18 that you may eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them, and the flesh of all people, free and slave, both small and great.” 19 And I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army. 20 Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. These two were

cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone. 21 And the rest were killed with the sword which proceeded from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse. And all the birds were filled with their flesh.”

Thus I can summarize the message of the whole Bible from Genesis 3:15 until the end of Revelation 22 with these words, “The lamb wins.” God promised it when he said to that serpent of old,

Gen. 3:15 “And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head...”

We need to hear that, and believe that, in a day and an age in which there so much rebellion and rejection of God in our culture. So much unbelief, and unimaginable immorality. But the seed of the woman will still crush the head of the seed of the serpent.

There is one more point to emphasize however, one more important thing about this coming victory of Jesus, we, his people, will join with him in that victory. Paul would put it this way, in a simple reference included in a benediction at the end of the book of Romans,

Romans 16:20 “And the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.”

You see, when Jesus returns, the saints who have died will return with him. And the saints who are still alive will be raised up to meet him in the air. And then, on that day, our great redeemer and king will come as a conquering general to crush the head of his enemy under his feet. And we who believe in Jesus will be with him. Because we are with Jesus, “the God of peace will crush Satan under [our] feet shortly.”

God promised it, way back in Genesis 3:15. God did not leave Adam and Eve and all their descendants to die under his curse. Rather, he promised to those who would trust in Jesus to “deliver them out of the estate of sin and misery, and to bring them into an estate of salvation by a redeemer.”

That is the promise I preach to you this morning, the declaration of a redeemer, a savior, whose name is Jesus. And if you would believe in him, if you would trust in him for your salvation, then this promise is for you. So when Paul and Silas were asked by the Philippian jailer, “What must I do to be saved?”, the answer was clear. It is my answer today, and the only reasonable conclusion to this declaration of God’s promise of salvation. This is the answer, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved.”