

The Promise About Jesus

Genesis 3:15

Over the course of the next three weeks during the Christmas season our purpose is to focus on the person of Jesus.

Today we will consider the promise about Jesus. Next week we will consider the prophecies about Jesus.

Christmas Sunday we will consider the proclamations about Jesus.

Christmas Eve we will consider the purpose of Jesus.

In considering the promise about Jesus we have to go all the way back to near the beginning of time itself because that's when the promise is made. For that we start with the book of Genesis. Genesis 1:1 opens with a statement of clarity and certainty. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." God wanted there to be no ambiguity about the beginning. He was; He was there; and He created it all. From the tiny atoms made up of neurons and protons and electrons to the vastness and complexity of all that is in the universe He thought it, shaped it, brought it into existence and holds it all together. By the way you can't trust an atom because they make up everything.

At the end of the creation week God saw (v. 31) "everything He had made was very good." He thought of everything and could not improve on it.

Now whether it was hours or days or weeks or even months is unclear, but sometime after this crowning work of God in which He breathed into man the breath of life and he became a living soul the first couple faced a tremendous temptation the outcome of which would alter the condition or nature of God's creation for the duration of time itself. As a matter of fact it would have eternal ramifications.

God gave Adam one command: eat freely of any

herb, plant or tree in the garden except the one in the middle, the tree of knowledge of good and evil. One day Eve was milling about the garden. The serpent found her near the tree they were forbidden to eat. He posed a simply yet subtle question. Has God said? With it he cast doubt and suspicion in the mind of Eve about the goodness of God causing her to question whether God could be trusted. Not only can't we eat it, she said, we can't even touch it. She added to the restriction what God had not said. You have to wonder at this point if the serpent plucked a nice juicy piece of fruit from a low hanging branch and began to eat it without any apparent ill affect. Scripture says that when Eve saw it was good for food she took a bite and then gave some to Adam. Scripture then says that their eyes were opened and they realized they were naked. To cover up they sewed fig leaves together.

Now we aren't going to spend any time on this section other than just to mention it as a lead in to our passage today because we will look at this more in detail next year. Beginning in January will be in studying Genesis. I mention this section because it's important for what happens next and to the promise that is made by God.

Did Adam and Eve immediately ask the question: what have we done? Did they realize the gravity of their disobedient decision? They must have because they went and hid.

I would venture to say that at one time or another in our lives we know the feeling. We do something we shouldn't and automatically get that gut wrenching feeling it was a mistake. I think a lot of pets have it, well, except for cats and our dog Lucy. She has no remorse about getting up on the counter and grabbing a freshly made sandwich. Many dogs know they shouldn't and act like they know they were wrong. When you come into a room only to discover that the stuffing of your favorite pillow is now all over the living room or your pair of new shoes has been converted to open toe they slink to your side with head down and tail tucked.

Adam and Eve knew they were in the wrong and attempted to do something about it on their own and then hid so they wouldn't be discovered. It's the child who breaks the cookie jar when told not to get any cookies and then tries to cover it up by quickly exiting to another part of the house.

Now I want you to notice that the very person that could have helped them right away was the One they were trying to avoid.

God came down for a visit, not just because He was in the neighborhood, but because He knew what they had done. They needed to face the consequences of their wrong decision. Today some might call it a come to Jesus moment.

God is going to lay out the ramifications to all the involved parties. But that decision also affected everything in God's creation. Everything was going to change. To Adam, his responsibility would now come with hard work. Because of their sin, the plant world was now affected. It would produce weeds and thorns (vs. 17-18).

Romans 8:22 "We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth."

A couple of verses later Paul says that our bodies groan. I groaned a bit when I rolled out of bed this morning. We all feel the effects of sin as we age, our eyesight dims, our hearing isn't as acute, we get sick, contract diseases and will all die physically as part of the curse.

For Eve and all women descended from her, giving birth would be painful.

But for mankind the most significant affect was death to his soul. He was now subject to spiritual death because of just one sin of disobedience which was separation from God. Satan probably gleefully wrung his hands together believing that with an alliance of the descendants of mankind he could now overthrow God. You might think it strange to talk about a curse along with the Christmas story, but that's part of it and reason for it.

And so it is that we come to our verse this morning to discover the promise about Jesus. This verse has been called the *protevanglism* because it is the first gospel message. God had a plan that Satan and his angels were not privileged to know anything about when in eternity past God planned and now would put that plan into motion. It wouldn't happen for four thousand years but it is seen in a promise.

Let's read Genesis 3:15.

The first thing we notice is a promise of hostility.

I. A PROMISE OF HOSTILITY

Verse 14 helps us understand who this hostility is directed toward. God is speaking to the serpent and curses the serpent to a life of belly crawling. It was cursed above every other creature God made.

When we talk about the promise of hostility I draw your attention first to a ruthless serpent.

A. A Ruthless Serpent

Scofield indicates that the serpent may have been the most beautiful of the animals created because it is described as the most "subtle" of any beast in verse 1. Many of these species are striking in their color. They are beautiful to look at and grace that is evident as they move along the ground.

But I believe the word "subtle" lends itself more to the idea of being cunning or crafty or shrewd. For that is what they are. Its subtlety is seen, for example, in the King Cobra as it perches up and puffs out its head mesmerizing a potential prey before it strikes with deadly swiftness.

One of my roommates in college worked in the science lab. I happened to be in that area of the building one night and he took me into the lab to show me a rattle snake. The snake was quietly coiled up in the small glass tank. Its tell-tale

diamond back was beautiful to look at. The tail began to rattle. We bent down for a closer look and instantly the snake lunged with mouth open and fangs bared ready to strike one of us. Fortunately he hit the glass and venom trickled down the case. And that is exactly what Satan does. Somehow Satan embodied the serpent to entice Eve. The serpent is an apt creature to depict the shrewdness of Satan. Scripture describes him as a serpent. Reading Revelation 12:9, it says “The great serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray.”

But it wasn't just the land creature that God cursed here. The curse was also to the old serpent, Satan. He is a ruthless and cunning enemy. He makes us think that what is bad is good and what is good is bad. He will do anything to deceive and lie. John 8:44 “You (speaking of the Pharisees) belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.”

In Revelation 20:3 he is described as one who goes out to deceive the nations. He seeks someone to devour (I Peter 5:8) He ever and always lives to deceive you about the truth and about the trustworthiness of following God. He deceives you by claiming that your immediate happiness can be fulfilled if you just take it or do it. What God has forbidden he samples to show you that it's okay. He is a ruthless serpent.

In the curse God placed on the serpent, that old Satan, we see that it would be a relentless struggle.

B. A Relentless Struggle

Satan thought he could align mankind to help in his quest of overthrowing God, but God said there would always be a struggle. “And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your

offspring and hers.”

Now, yes, we have a natural hatred for snakes. We hate mosquitos and cockroaches and mice and rats. But there is a special hatred we have toward snakes. Whether we admit it or not, they are a reminder to us of the curse. The English word enmity comes from the root word enemy. It means the same in the Greek translation of the Old Testament. Jesus described Satan as our enemy.

In Matthew 13 Jesus tells the story of the wheat and the weeds. A farmer planted wheat and while everyone was asleep the enemy of the farmer planted weeds among the wheat. By the time both grew it was too late for the workers to pull the weeds otherwise they would also pull up the wheat. The farmer told the workers to leave it and they would be separated during the harvest. The crowd wanted an explanation of what Jesus meant so He told them that the farmer who planted the wheat was the Son of Man, referring to Himself. In verses 38-39 Jesus says: “The weeds are the sons of the evil one, and the enemy who sows them is the devil.”

The illustration pointed to judgment when the righteous would be separated from the unrighteous. The offspring of the enemy are those who reject the gospel. They are an enemy of God.

Romans 5:8, 10 describe all of mankind outside of Christ as an enemy. That hostility must be removed if there is to be reconciliation.

Colossians 1:21 puts it this way: “Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior.”

Everyone born has been an enemy of God, but when by grace through faith we trust Christ for salvation we become the offspring of the woman.

God's curse describes a great clash that will occur between the offspring of the serpent/Satan and the woman. That battle has been raging from the day of

the curse until now and will continue until Christ returns to claim His throne. It is a clash between good and evil, between the offspring of Satan who follow him and the offspring of the woman who follow God. The clash is seen in the murder of Abel by his brother Cain.

Between Joseph and his brothers

Between David and Goliath

Between Elijah and the false prophets of Baal

Between Jesus and the religious leaders

Between 5 missionary men and the Auca Indians of Ecuador when they were thrust threw with arrows

Between the new nature and the old nature

That clash can leave us in a fit of despair wondering if there is any hope. We look around and see all the casualties and cry out for deliverance because the enemy seems to be winning.

Listening in on this conversation between God and the serpent did Adam and Eve begin to despair?

They were now classified as an enemy of God because they had listened to and obeyed the voice of the serpent.

Did they feel utterly hopeless?

Did they despair and now realize what it meant that in the day they ate the fruit they would die?

Did they feel completely lost?

Yet in the middle of the curse there is a glimmer of hope in God's words. He gave them hope in the midst of that hostility. There would be a way to overcome. Oh, it wouldn't undo the earthly ramifications of their sin because they would still encounter the curse placed on them all the days of their lives as they labored to eke out a living. While there was no earthly hope to undo that part of the curse there was an eternal hope that came through the words of God. It was hope in a promise.

So, while we see a promise of hostility, there is also a promise of hope.

II. A PROMISE OF HOPE

Hope revives us, rekindles our energy, pushes us to

keep going.

It is a glass of water to a runner laboring in the heat. It is a visit from the doctor after surgery explaining that the broken hip was able to be mended without complications or the result of a heart attack requiring a bypass was successful.

In the bleakest of moments, hope springs eternal.

There is always something with which we can hold onto that prevails over the shadows of despair.

What God said gave Adam and Eve hope. It was a hope they would cling to, a hope they would have faith in. It was hope nestled neatly inside the words of a curse as God explained further what would happen to the serpent.

It was Satan's plot to upset the plans of God to have a people created to worship Him. It was his hope to overpower the Creator, but in this verse we see that Satan was sorely misguided and blinded by his own lust for power. In this curse we see first hope in the omnipotence of God.

A. Hope In The Omnipotence Of God

While there would be great hostility and struggle this verse implies that God's power and plans will always take place just as He said they would. He is all powerful and no matter how many battles Satan may think he can win, he will lose the war. In the middle of this hostility there would be a great battle between Satan and one of the offspring of the woman. "He will crush your head, and you will strike His heel."

Satan knew that someone from the seed of the woman would upset his plans for a complete overthrow so he started early to strike the heel. He had Cain murder Abel. God raised up another offspring in Seth.

He had everyone on earth reject God and live without a moral compass, everyone, that is, except

righteous Noah and his family.

The offspring became clearer when the promise was passed on to Abraham that through his heir all the nations of the world would be blessed.

The picture became even clearer when Jacob, blessing his 12 sons, indicated that it would be through Judah's offspring this one would be born.

Still clearer was the promise God made to David that one of his descendants would rule for ever, but which descendant?

The prophecies of men like Micah and Isaiah gave more clarity on the town and that He would be born of a virgin, but it still left Satan to wonder the who and the when. He knew it would be from the tribe of Judah and lineage of David. A better clue came after Gabriel announced to Mary that she would bear the Christ child. Before Satan could plan an assault God intervened and spoke to Joseph in a dream through Gabriel that he should take Mary as his wife and so ease any public defamation or humiliation of Mary and possible stoning for one who became pregnant outside of marriage.

But Satan did find out the identity of this promised Messiah that was made almost four thousand years earlier. He learned his identity on the night of Jesus's birth when it was announced by the angels to the shepherds. He knew the who and the where and he would strike at His heel again inciting Herod, out of jealousy or fear, to murder baby boys two years and younger. God spared the infant by sending the family to Egypt.

When Jesus began His public ministry at the age of 30 there would be repeated attempts to strike His heel.

There were temptations in the wilderness while Jesus fasted.

There was the attempt by the crowds to forcibly make Him king before it was time and so avoid the

cross.

The crowds attempted to kill Him.

He tried in the garden to dissuade Jesus from bearing the great burden of sin.

He made one last attempt while Jesus was on the cross baiting Him to perform one last miracle and come down from the cross.

But the power of God is able to keep His promise and victory was won for all those who desire to shed the shackles of sin, for all those who want the curse lifted from them.

The victory of this offspring of the woman is seen in the words God uttered to Satan, that while he may strike His heel, the offspring of the woman would bruise his head. This death blow to the one and victory by the other is seen in the words of Paul when he wrote "Death has been swallowed up in victory. 'Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death is your sting?' The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you." (I Corinthians 15:54b-58a)

The power of God's promise is also seen in the words of Hebrews 7:25 where it says that Christ is able to completely save all those who come to God through Him.

Genesis 3:15 is a promise of hope in the power of God to bring about salvation through this offspring of the woman. The first gospel message gave hope to Adam and Eve in the promise of God and to all who would follow as descendants. It's message is echoed throughout the Old Testament culminating in the gospels with the coming of the Messiah – Jesus.

All the displays of the nativity around the sanctuary today, whether simple or ornate, are a wonderful and eloquent reminder of the promise God made in Genesis 3:15. Jesus is the one God pointed to as He

stood and cursed mankind for disobedience and then on Satan for his role in deceiving them to sin. Yet in the midst of the curse was His cure, a promise of a coming Redeemer who would make the necessary payment to buy back any and all from their judgment who would trust in Him.

Genesis 3:15 shows us that God has power over Satan, power over sin, and power to save. It unfolds for us hope that is in the omnipotence of God.

This verse also shows us hope in the omniscience of God.

B. Hope In The Omniscience Of God

I John 3:20 clearly states that God knows everything. That simply means that He has total knowledge. He can never increase in learning. He knows the beginning from the end. He didn't have to wonder about the outcome of this struggle because, from His perspective, it had already been played out. He knew what would happen four thousand years before it did. His omnipotence would see His omniscience through to the end. For Him to have sovereign rule over everything, He has to have complete knowledge of everything.

He knows when a sparrow falls (Matt. 10:29-30). He knows every thought even before we speak it (Psalm 139:4).

He knows everything that will occur in history until the end of time (Isaiah 46:9-10).

He knows our hearts and saw us in the womb (Psalm 139:1-3, 15-16; I Kings 8:39).

His omniscience of all things should give us security and comfort that because He knows all things He is able to keep His promises for eternity. Our hope is in the omniscience of God who foresaw the hostility but also the hope that would be for those who place their faith in the coming Messiah who would crush the head of the serpent. That Messiah has come and it is in Him that we can let go of our despair. Adam and Eve could look

forward to the coming Redeemer and place their hope, their faith in Him for salvation.

There is hope in the omniscience of God.

Finally, there is hope in the omnipresence of God.

C. Hope In The Omnipresence Of God

God is always present. Sometimes He takes an active role by showing us His presence as He did when Jesus entered the world. John 1:18 says that through Him God was revealed. At other times He is inactive but still present as He was during the 400 years of Israel's captivity or the silence witnessed for 400 years at the conclusion of Malachi till the coming of John the Baptist in the New Testament. Just because God is silent does not mean that He is absent.

He is the one who said He would be with us in all the valleys of life (Psalm 23:4).

He is the one who said He would never leave us or forsake us (Hebrews 13:5).

He is the one who told us not to fear because He is always with us (Isaiah 41:10).

Psalm 46:1 says that God is an ever present help in time of trouble. Adam and Eve were in trouble and God was there. One author rightly stated that "God is everywhere and in every now."

There is no place or time that He is not present.

Adam and Eve would need to believe in the omniscience of God to see His promise come to its completion. They would have to believe that in the struggle God's presence would sustain them through to the time of His promise.

And this is key because what God said about the coming promise of a Redeemer meant that He had forgiven her. Even though they were subsequently banned from the garden, they left clinging to the promise of God, a promise they had to believe in by faith, a promise they had to hope in.

Without such hope in the omnipotent, omnipresent,

and omniscient God it would be a dismal outlook
for all of us.

As we enter into this Christ season, what are you
hoping in today?

What promise are you laying hold of?

Long lay the world in sin and error pining,
Till He appeared and the soul felt its worth.

A thrill of hope – the weary world rejoices,
For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn!

Fall on your knees! O hear the angel voices!
O night divine, O night when Christ was born!
O night, O holy night, O night divine!

His power and glory evermore proclaim.

Psalm 42:5 “Why are you downcast, O my soul!
Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God,
for I will yet praise Him, my Savior and my God.”