

Study Notes: Genesis 3:14-15
November 28, 2021: First Sunday in Advent: “The First Promise of Hope”
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Background: Genesis 3 tells the story of the temptation and fall of Adam and Eve. After questioning Adam and Eve about their newfound knowledge and what they did, in verse 14, the Lord spoke words of curse or judgment upon the three participants in the crime. He began by speaking to the serpent (Satan). Yet in this curse, there is also hope for humanity, for God spoke of the deliverance that would come because of the “seed of the woman,” who we know to be Jesus Christ!

***So the Lord God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this,
“Cursed are you above all livestock
and all wild animals!
You will crawl on your belly
and you will eat dust
all the days of your life.***

- After hearing from Eve that it was the serpent who had deceived her, the Lord spoke a curse on the serpent. The Hebrew word that is translated as “serpent” is *nachash*. Given the context of this chapter, and the characteristics associated with the serpent, it is certain that while the text does not explicitly state that this is no ordinary member of the animal kingdom, these words apply to Satan and all that he represents. This is also implied by John in the book of Revelation (see Revelation 12:9, 20:2).
- The Faithlife Study Bible notes that the word, *nachash*, is often representative of chaotic and disorderly forces in opposition to the divine order. Given this understanding, this curse “indicates that the serpent, God’s cosmic enemy, has been made docile (i.e., he is defeated).” The Expositor’s Bible Commentary adds, “The expression ‘eating dust’ suggests ‘total defeat’ (cf. Isa 65:25; Mic 7:17).”

***And I will put enmity
between you and the woman,
and between your offspring and hers;
he will crush your head,
and you will strike his heel.”***

- The word translated as “enmity” could also be translated as “hostility.” This part of the curse indicates that there would be combat, especially between the offspring of the woman and the serpent. While some modern scholars think this only refers to the hostility between men and snakes, it is clear that this verse has larger implications in mind.
- The word “offspring” is singular in Hebrew, and the New Testament reveals that Jesus is the ultimate fulfillment of this prophecy (see Galatians 4:4), for it is Jesus who ultimately brought defeat to Satan (see Hebrews 2:14, 1 John 3:8). While Satan may strike at Jesus’ heel, it is ultimately Jesus who delivers the fatal blow to Satan.

- Biblical Scholar Walter Kaiser says, “Genesis 3:15 has commonly been called the protoevangelium (the ‘first gospel’) because it was the original proclamation of the promise of God’s plan for the whole world ... it gave our first parents a glimpse ... of the person and mission of the one who was going to be the central figure in the unfolding drama of the redemption of the world. The ‘seed/offspring’ mentioned in this verse became the root from which the tree of the OT promise of a Messiah grew.”
- The website, gotquestions.org, has a wonderful explanation of this verse, “This passage points to the promise of Jesus’ birth, His redemption, and His victory over Satan. The woman’s offspring is Jesus. Being virgin-born, He is literally the offspring of a woman (Matthew 1:25; Galatians 4:4; cf. Isaiah 7:14). Being the Son of Man, He is the perfect representative of humankind. The devil’s offspring were the evil men and demonic forces who, like a snake, lay in wait for the Savior and struck at Him. Their venomous conspiracy condemned Jesus to be crucified. But the serpent’s strike did not spell the end of the Offspring of the woman. Jesus rose the third day, breaking the power of death and winning the ultimate victory. With the cross, Jesus ‘crushed’ the devil’s head, defeating him forever. So, in Genesis 3:15, the crushing of the serpent’s head was a picture of Jesus’ triumph over sin and Satan at the cross (cf. John 12:31). The striking of the Messiah’s heel was a picture of the wounding and death of Jesus on the cross. Satan bruised Jesus’ ‘heel,’ but Jesus showed complete dominance over Satan by bruising his ‘head.’”