



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Genesis 3:14-19

“The Three Fold Sentence and the Seed of the Woman”

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] Our new series of studies is entitled The Old Testament Anticipation of the Messiah. And we are looking today at Genesis chapter 3, verse 14 through verse 19, and centering attention upon Genesis 3:15, where God speaks to Adam and to Eve and to serpent in the garden and gives the great promise, “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.” It might not at first glance seem to be a promise, but it surely is because implicit within it is the coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, but listen as we read verses 14 through 19 words that the Lord God spoke to those who were in the Garden of Eden after the fall.

“And the LORD God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life: And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, (We may render that also, he shall bruise thy head) and thou shalt bruise his heel. Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee. And unto Adam he

said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.”

The three fold sentence “and the seed of the woman.” Griffith Thomas in one of his books imagines a stranger who is never seen the New Testament coming into possession of a copy of the Old Testament. He opens the Book of Genesis and begins to read. From Genesis 3:15, he learns that someone is coming who shall fatally wound the serpent, crushing the serpent’s head. Reading on the in Old Testament, he finds the promise repeated and enlarged in Genesis 9, 12, 49 and in fact throughout the whole of the Old Testament. It’s clear from the fullness of Isaiah’s references that the seed is a personal redeemer. Reaching Malachi’s last chapter however he sees that the promises have not been realized, thus he has become conscious that the Old Testament is a book of unfilled promises. Turing back and starting again at Genesis, he concentrates on the theme of sacrifices, offerings and feasts, lingering over Genesis 4, Exodus 12, the Book of Leviticus and the history of Israel’s worship.

Coming again to the last book, he still has found very little clarification of the meaning of it all. Thus he’s not conscious that the Old Testament is a book of unexplained ceremonies. Once more he turns to Genesis, and concentrating on the many descriptions of the personal communion of the Old Testament saints with Jehovah. He revels in the yearnings of the Old Testament men and women for fellowship with the living God, particularly as he moved by Job’s longing and David’s cries for the experience of the presence of God, but again when he finishes the book there is no complete

realization of the their pantings after God. Thus he’s now conscious of the fact that that Old Testament is a book of unsatisfied longings.

Dr. Thomas imagines at this point that the stranger is given a New Testament. He begins to read and on the very first page he comes to the clause, “that it might be fulfilled.” And soon he discovers that the things he failed to discover in the Old Testament are found in the New. The little book explains the big book. He finds out that Jesus is the prophet who fulfills in his life, the promises, the priest who explains in his death a priesthood, sacrifices and feasts, and the king who satisfies in his resurrection the longings of the saints of God. On the Emmaus Road, in his resurrection life the Lord Jesus opened the Old Testament Scriptures to the two disciples, and Luke says that he began at Moses, and all the prophets and expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself. He was the preacher the text and the sermon, and never was there such a Bible conference as that one.

Our series of studies will follow in a limited way of course our Lord’s methodology, and we shall seek to expound the Old Testament’s anticipation of the Messiah, the coming one, who shall in his representative suffering save his people. Of course we are not going to handle all of the passages that portray him. As he said, that would mean a treatment of all the Scriptures. We therefore shall concentrate on some of the important texts, and the first is Genesis 3:14 through 19, which contains the first preaching of the saving good news, called by evangelical scholars the protevangelium In simple terms the Bible claims that man was created holy. Being in the image of God, that he disobeyed God and became a spiritual wreck and ruin. This is true of the greatest of men as well as of the worst of men.

Robert South once said, “An Aristotle is but the wreck of an Adam, and Athens is but the rubbish of an Eden.” Pascal speaking about man said that he was the glory and shame of the universe. The problem with modern man is his unregeneracy rendering his thoughts about God about sin, about redemption perverse. He cannot see the fall as the

explanation of modern man’s dilemma. His ideas about sin prove this. Reinhold Niebuhr once said that modern man has an essentially easy conscience, and that I think is true, and sin must be known in order to be overthrown. Instead of the true attitude, men try to cover up their sin. Ultimately wrapping themselves in the vesture of the apostles and the mantle of the Messiah himself, for the man of sin the antichrist who shall come shall set him forth as just that.

In other words the epitome of cunning hypocrisy characterizes man’s attitude toward his sin. Anselm once said, “You have not yet considered how great the weight of sin is.” We need that.

Now the Fall had occurred in the Garden of Eden, and as a result of that when God came down in the Garden of Eden, there was confrontation. And after the conversation had reached the critical point, the Lord God announced the sentences of death upon the serpent, upon man and upon the woman and accompanied them with other words concerning their future. The order of the address is the man first, and then the woman and then serpent, and that of course may indicate God’s view of the guilt. He may regard man as the most guilty and woman as next, and the serpent as the final one. Perhaps this is related to the fact that Adam was the representative man in the Garden of Eden and when he sinned man fell. The sentence upon the serpent is announced first in verses 14 and 15.

“The LORD God said unto the serpent, Because thou have done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life: And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, (Or crush your head the Hebrew verb suggests) and thou shalt crush his heel.”

The self-vindication of Adam and Eve ends in this three-fold judgment. It's very striking that here poetry beings, and so sum it up the serpent is cursed, but the one who stands behind the serpent, for it's evident that from this context that there is one who does, Satan himself is to be crushed. He says, Moses says, “The Lord God said unto the serpent.” The judgment then is upon both the reptile and upon Satan himself. One can see that from this fact, that in verse 15 he says, “I will put enmity between thee and the woman and between thy seed and her seed.” That suggests a long history of conflict between the woman's seed and the serpent's, seed. And the whole of the Old Testament reveals that. The New Testament in large is upon it and the history of man since the time of the Lord Jesus Christ has been a continuation of the history of the struggle between the seed of the woman seen in the coming of the Lord Jesus to be the Lord Jesus himself, ultimately and Satan and his seed.

Notice that after the reference to the long history of the struggle between the woman's seed and the serpent's seed we read, “He shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.” In other words the conflict between the serpent and the woman's seed will become individual at a time in the future after the prophecy of the long time of conflict between the two seeds, the seed of the woman the seed of the serpent. The very use of the term enmity, “I will put enmity between thee and the woman.” Suggests that there is a higher power behind the reptile, for surely the text does not suggest that there is enmity between a serpent or a snake and man. So the term seed suggests then the long warfare.

Now Moses, after saying, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman." Says, “And between thy seed and her seed he shall bruise thy head.” That “he” of the original text rendered in the Authorized Version by “it” but by far preferably “he” is a reference to the woman's seed, “he”. It's both collective including the body of descendants who belong to the line of faith from Abraham on, and reaches its individual climax in the Lord Jesus Christ's. The climax of the warfare between the woman's seed and the serpent's

seed is the conflict between the Lord Jesus Christ and the forces of evil when he comes in his incarnation. In other words the identity of the woman's seed is seen only in the history of the Old Testament redemptive purposes as they unfold in time and the elective purposes of God. “He shall crush thy head.” Notice the reference to the seed of the woman is to one who is the seed of a woman, not of a man.

Now we do not say that this is a reference to the virgin birth, but we do say this, that this is in harmony with the virgin birth of our Lord Jesus Christ as set out in the Old Testament prophecy of Isaiah chapter 7 in verse 14, and the New Testament fulfillments in Matthew chapter 1 and also in the Gospel of Luke, chapter 1 as well. So “He shall crush thy head. Thou shalt crush his heel.” There is here I think an individualizing that we must notice. Notice he says, “He shall crush thy head.”

Now long line of individuals who form the descendents of a person does not have a head, nor does a long line of descendents of the serpent have a heel. The very fact that these terms, these singular terms of head and heel are used indicates that this great prophecy, while collective in the sense that it includes not only the whole body of the descendents who belong to a particular company, but also an individual who is the one seed. Or as we have often put it, we have a representative head, the Lord Jesus Christ who stands for all for whom he dies, for whom he lives, for whom he ministers, so the expression, “He shall crush your head,” individualizes the work of the redeemer to come just as, “Thou shalt crush his heel” individualizes the work of Satan who stand behind the serpent in his wounding of the Lord Jesus Christ at Calvary's cross. There is a further thing that we must notice here in this context. The text says he shall bruise the serpent's head, while the serpent shall crush his heel.

Now it doesn't take any intelligence to realize that when the head of the serpent is crushed that's a fatal wound. While the crushing of a heel is not a fatal wound, and so the finality of the conflict is suggested by that individualizing and also by the fact that it is our Lord's heel that is crushed while the serpent's head is crushed. In other words, while

the Lord Jesus Christ the seed of the woman shall be wounded, wounded in the suffering of the cross, he shall overcome by resurrection and ascension and session at the right hand of the Father.

In the case of the serpent however or Satan, when the Lord Jesus died for human sin, that by which Satan holds us in his bondage is broken by the saving work of Christ. What we find here then is the most comprehensive of the Messianic promises. It's like an acorn when we think of a big oak tree. All that follows from the planting of the acorn the trunk, the roots, the trunk the limbs, the leaves, and the acorns themselves, all products of the one little acorn so the Lord Jesus Christ the seed of the woman and all of the blessings that flow out of his saving ministry inclusive of the people of God in their salvation from their sin and rebellion against God and their ultimate glorification and eternal communion with the Lord God in heaven.

The sentence upon the woman follows in verse 16. Moses, writes “Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.” The sentence upon the woman is a three fold one, and the first aspect of the sentence has to do with pain. And second her yearning desire shall be toward her husband. It's not merely sexual yearning. One of the commentators suggests it includes the attraction that woman experiences for man, which she cannot root from her nature. Independent feminists may seek to banish it, but it persists in cropping out. A compulsive drive, Fenrad, the well-known Hebrew interpreter finds in the expressions here. It's now normal, but it may take a perverted form of nymphomania. Thus, she who acted independently of man finds continual attraction to him, her unavoidable lot.

And thirdly she who sought to control him and lead him into sin becomes the one controlled. He shall bear the rule. That is now fixed. Subordination was intended from the beginning but now subordination becomes subjection. While even pagan marriage can rise far above this, the pull of sin is always tormented, but let me say something here

about this. We say that subordination is the fixed rule as a result of the relationship between the woman and the man by creation, and then of course here through the Fall. But let us remember that subordination does not mean inequality.

That is evident if we read simply 1 Corinthians chapter 11, where it is stated that the Son of God is subject to the Father while he carries out his redemptive work, but at the same time he is equal with the Father. Subjection was for the purposes of the carrying out of a task. It was a role function and subjection and submission in Christian marriage is a role function. It has nothing to do with the woman being unequal. We all know that is not true, and particularly we men. We know from experience that the women are at least equal with us. Never did the Lord God intend to suggest inequality, but he did intend to suggest the role function of submission within the marriage relationship.

The sentence upon the man follows in verse 17 through verse 19.

“And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.”

The curse upon man, which incidentally seems to be more upon man's rim than upon man himself follows. The cursing of the ground leads to a life of toil and weakness. Autonomous man has shown his limits, the chains of time clank on the man who reached out for eternity. The fantasy after which he lusted to be like God turns out to be sorrow, sweat and dust. The curse, the bondage of corruption and God says it's because of you. Everything is downhill from that time on. His moral judgment is expressed in verse 19,

“In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.”

Formed from dust disobedient man shall return to it. The self-deprivation of Adam resulted from just one sin, but this one sin changed the chief end of the creature from God to self, and the chief end controls the whole stream of moral action directed to him. Further sin provokes God’s righteous anger, withdrawal of favor, induces guilt and fear of judgment, then hostility to God. That’s why Adam and Eve ran to hide from the Lord God in the Garden of Eden. Further sin follows along the slippery downhill pat the hell. What an awful sin thing is. It brings us into bondage, and then we cannot help but sin. The resulting state is hopeless unless relief is found elsewhere.

The other truth is one commentator has eloquently pointed out, that as the state unto which one sin introduces us as hopeless the punishment must be endless. If we must continue to sin, we must continue to die. The deeper we plunge in guilt the deeper we sink in death. This truth seems to be shouted forth in the very nature of the fear, which enters into the constitution of remorse. A guilty conscience dreads the future. It’s always looking for a wrath to come, even in our endless state when we shall have entered upon the experience of penal fires, if lost there will always be in the perspective apprehension of guilt a revelation of still deeper woe. The future will always be blacker than the present, the night ahead more appalling than anything behind. Hell will be thick darkness waxing blacker and blacker and blacker forever. Sin kills the spiritual life of the soul.

Paul says, “The sting of death is sin.” Sting being in sin, not death. The problem of modern man comes down to this. He’s a sinner in a disintegrating chaotic order, which he cannot grasp, and all he can look forward to is his death. I have often traveled to Seattle, Washington. On clear days one can see the great Mount Rainer in the distance. It’s a marvelous site. One in Seattle lives constantly under the view of Mount Rainer. The death we are approaching stands like that landmark above the landscape of our life, and

makes life a being unto death. This being unto death is far more and also something different from our last hour, which we Christians talk about perhaps far too much. We always think, “I must make the most of my youth.” Why do we use calendars and clocks? We realize we must die, and when one becomes an old man like I am every little cold that one catches, one thinks this may be the end. We have only a limited time. Our Mount Rainer of death stands constantly about us. Arrogant unlimited men who would seize eternity is hurled back upon the barrier of time and death and redemption is the only solution for the guilt that he has and lives out.

The remedy for the sting of death is found in the seed of the woman, and if you are listening to me at this moment, I urge you as an ambassador of the Lord Jesus Christ to remember that the Lord Jesus, the seed of the woman has come, has offered the atoning sacrifice for sinners and offers the gift of eternal life to you if you come to him at this present moment and admit and acknowledge that you are a sinner and plead the saving benefits of the cross of Christ. The man of sorrows has borne the thorns and carried the giant's head to the right hand of God over coming Satan embrace him, and receive the gift of eternal life.

Our next study will be the sacrifice of Isaac or The Old Testament's Greatest Scene, some believe. I hope you will be listening then.