

Who is the Serpent Crushing Offspring?

The expanding understanding of Genesis 3:15 in
the epochs of Scripture

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"I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel." (Genesis 3:15).

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Introduction

My thesis is that through the cohesive story of Scripture we can see that at the beginning there was already a glimpse of hope for humanity through the promised seed of Genesis 3:15. My thesis is that Genesis 3:15 is the *protoevangelium*. It is the first gospel. However, quite ambiguous at first, and at times the line of the seed looks hopeless; we, as the story continues, see the serpent-crushing-seed in full glory. Thomas R. Schreiner rightly says, “We can fairly say that the OT is animated with an eschatological hope. Gen. 3:15 forecasts a day when the seed of the woman will triumph over the seed of the serpent,” though as we will see, “subsequent history appeared to mock the promise.”¹ Genesis 3:15 announces good news but we here, will look through Scripture and see just how *good* this good news is.

In this paper, we will explore the meaning of Genesis 3:15 as understood in light of the unfolding story of Scripture. We will trace the theme throughout both the OT and NT. We will look at what the immediate understanding of the pronouncement was to Adam and Eve at the outset of Genesis. We will see that they had hope that a seed would be born that


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(ESV's translation, which shows
interpretation)



¹Thomas R. Schreiner, *New Testament Theology: Magnifying God in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 25. Similarly, Hamilton says, “From start to finish, the OT is a messianic document, written from a messianic perspective, so sustain a messianic hope” (James M. Hamilton Jr., “The Skull Crushing Seed of the Woman: Inner-Biblical Interpretation of Genesis 3:15” *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 10, no. 2 [2006]: 30). T. Desmond Alexander points out that “there is a very long tradition supporting a messianic reading of Gen. 3:15” (*From Eden to the New Jerusalem* [Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2008], 105n5). James P. Boyce in his *Abstracts of Systematic Theology* said, “The whole tenor of subsequent Scripture, especially that of the New Testament, shows that this is not to be regarded as merely declarative of hostility between mankind and the serpent tribe, but more particularly of the future strife between Christ and Satan, and of the final triumph of the former over the latter... [Though,] to what extent our first parents comprehended the full blessedness of this promise cannot be ascertained” ([Escondido, CA: Dulk Christian Foundation, 1887], 259). Jonathan Edwards has said Genesis 3:15 “Is undoubtedly a prediction of the Messiah’s victory over Satan, and his suffering from Satan, and of the Messiah’s people’s victory and deliverance through him” (*The Works of Jonathan Edwards: 2 Volume Set* vol. 2 [Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 2005], 645). See also Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1993), 484-85. Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom Through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2012), 62. For a thorough overview see “The Curse of the Serpent (Genesis 3:15) in Biblical Theology and Hermeneutics” (John L. Ronning Ph. D. diss., Westminster Theological Seminary, 1997).

would bring some form of deliverance but beyond this we cannot be sure of their understanding.² Then we will briefly trace the development and understanding of the Genesis 3:15 promise through the OT and see that we leave the scene still looking for the promised hero of the story. Finally, in the NT we see things happen and come together in ways that could never have been imagined, something like *true* fiction. We look at the birth of the seed of the woman and explore the culmination of the promise in the victorious King in Revelation who has once and for all crushed the head of the serpent of old.

We could imagine that we are in court and we are trying to find out who crushed the head of the serpent (as if it was a crime!). The suspects are all innocent until proven guilty. So we must look at the “crime” and see who fits the description. We can look and look at the suspects of the OT over and over again but none of them fit the crime. We come to see that it was not a “gang” that did it, not the collective seed. We see this in part because we have firsthand witnesses that expected that it was not a gang that was guilty but a single man. In fact, they accused two different men, but they both had alibis, they could not have crushed the serpent. We continue searching the OT for the one who did it (or in our case, *will* do it) but we never see him (or them?). The case becomes cold and sits for many years. In fact, many lost hope of finding out who did it.

Until one day, until someone else came on the scene, someone who was quite suspicious from the beginning. We might solve the mystery at last. Will we find the one who fits the description?

This is what we set out to do here. We want to see who fulfills the promise of Genesis 3:15. We will “interview” Adam and Eve as eyewitnesses. Then we will look at various “suspects” throughout the Old Testament. Finally, we will see the identity of the serpent crushing seed revealed in the NT.

The Immediate Meaning. First, it will be helpful to look at the word “crush.” Bruce K. Waltke says, “In Hebrew, both words ‘crush’ and ‘strike’ are from the same root *šûp*. This parallel shows that both are grievously wounded by each other, but the blow dealt to the Serpent by the promised seed is fatal.”³ I believe later, when we look at the NT, Schreiner’s words regarding the Septuagint’s translation

² Many Jews would understand this text as simply referring to humanities aversion to snakes. It is simply a prediction that we dislike them so crush their head. One Jewish article I read, by Uri Yosef, argued inconclusively that Genesis 3:15 is not a messianic prophecy. This person’s interpretation is that the verse in question simply refers to the opposition between snake and man. Yet, at the end of the article the author says, this verse could eventually include the reference to the Messiah at some point in the chain of genealogies. I say, “Exactly! At some point it does!” He goes on to say that it is in no way a unique identification of the Messiah. However, it is. Through this passage, we see that the Messiah will crush not a natural snake but the supernatural Satan. We see hints even in Genesis that through this crushing there will once again be peace (note the expectation of an offspring in Genesis). Of course, this is very important for a Christian understand because it is one passage among many (cf. ex. Is. 53) that allows room for victory even through the crushing of the Messiah.

I do think it is clear that they would have realized that the problem was not just any “snake” or snakes in general but *the* snake that tempted them. The *supernatural* snake is the problem. I believe this would have been clear to them. They had seen other snakes before in the garden and after they were expelled as well. In addition, they presumably heard God’s judgment on the snake since they expected its promised foe. So contra Robert Alter who says, “The serpent is by no means ‘satanic,’ as in the lens of later Judeo-Christian traditions” (*Genesis: Translation and Commentary* [W. W. Norton & Company, Inc.: New York, 1996], 13). I believe, it was not just the “later Judeo-Christian traditions” that saw the satanic nature of the serpent but even Adam and Eve understood this to some degree. We certainly see this in the NT but I think we can see it in the OT as well (cf. Gen. 4:25; 49:10 for ex.). John from the Island Patmos makes it explicit for us saying, “the dragon, that *ancient serpent*, who is the devil and Satan” (Rev. 20:2, italics mine). See also Jack Collins “A Syntactical Note (Genesis 3:15): Is the Woman’s Seed Singular or Plural?” *Tyndale Bulletin* 48.1, (1997): 146n21 and T. Desmond Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem*, 104n4. Ass. Moses of Moses 10:1.

³ Bruce K. Waltke, *An Old Testament Theology: An Exegetical, Canonical, and Thematic Approach*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), 281. Marten H. Woudstra has said,

will be insightful. He says, “The LXX of Gen. 3:15 badly misunderstands the intention of the Hebrew text.”⁴ Similarly, James M. Hamilton Jr. points out that the LXX translator did not know what to do with the term, rendering it “keep/watch.”⁵ This could help explain why there are not *more* or *clearer* allusions to Genesis 3:15 in the NT.

As we look at this theme in Scripture, we cannot merely look at a word study.⁶ In part because the verb for “crush” in Genesis 3:15 is seen only four times in the Old Testament. It is seen twice in our passage and once in Job 9:17 and once in Psalm 139:11 but in both of these cases it is not used with the same imagery. However, we should not make the false conclusion that we do not see Scripture return to this theme. It is more helpful as we look at this passage to look at the scenarios⁷ or links that are used to recall the Genesis 3:15 promises and not merely a word study. As Hamilton says the “announcement of judgment on the serpent provides fundamental imagery that is reused and interpreted throughout the rest of the Old Testament”⁸ even if קָרַשׁ is not used. As Hamilton says elsewhere, “the themes of biblical theology are broader than individual words.”⁹

Second, we must look at the word “seed,” and what it means. Although the term for “seed” in Genesis 3:15 does not have distinctive singular or plural forms it is argued that in both occurrences in this verse seed can be understood to be singular.¹⁰ Waltke helps us here. He says,

Like the English word ‘seed,’ *zera* ‘ can refer to an immediate descendent (Gen. 4:25; 1:13), a distant offspring, or a large group of descendants. Normally ambiguity is removed as a

It has been frequently pointed out that since in the one instance the head is affected and in the other ‘only’ the hell, this passage should be taken as an unambiguous indication of future success and victory on the part of the woman’s seed. But others have countered by saying that the relative position of the two combatants, man and snake, make the use of these two modes of attack inevitable. But is a snake bit, even when aimed at the lowly heel, meant to be any less lethal than when a man strikes at a serpent’s head?

...Though upon this approach this passage does not explicitly predict ultimate victory of the woman’s seed, nevertheless the One who set the enmity might also be regarded as implicitly guaranteeing the ultimate success of those who are on his side. Although much remains yet to be said in later revelations, what is being said is of such significance that the term ‘protevangelium’ may be rightly used to describe it (“Recent Translations of Genesis 3:15” *Calvin Theological Journal* 6 [1971], 203).

⁴ Thomas R. Schriener, *Romans* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1998), 804n7.

⁵ Hamilton, “The Skull Crushing Seed of the Woman,” 34n42.

⁶ “Too much biblical theology has fallen prey to the word-study fallacy and has failed to see that themes can be developed with synonymous terms. Charles Halton has shown that ‘ancient writers felt no compulsion to provide direct links with their allusion...instead, they borrowed imagery and fused it with their own rhetorical purposes.’ I would suggest that this is exactly what happened in the Old Testament with Genesis 3:15,” says Hamilton (*God’s Glory in Salvation through Judgment: A Biblical Theology*. [Wheaton: Crossway, 2010], 77.).

⁷ Cynthia Long Westfall says a “‘scenario’ is a linguistic term that is used to indicate ‘an extended domain of reference’ or associated bundles of information that lies behind a text. A scenario includes setting, situations, specific items, and ‘role’ slots” (“Messianic Themes of Temple, Enthronement, and Victory in Hebrews and the Epistles” 210-229. In *The Messiah in the Old and New Testaments* Stanley E. Porter ed. [Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2007], 212).

⁸ Hamilton, *God’s Glory in Salvation through Judgment*, 77. On the same page he also gives a list of “Imagery from Genesis 3:14-19 in the Old Testament” in Table 2.4. As Hamilton points out, we see imagery of broken heads in Num. 24:17; Jud. 4:21; 5:26; 9:53; 1 Sam. 17:49; Is. 1:4-5; 7:8-9; 28:3; Jer. 23:19; 30:23; Hab. 3:13; Ps. 68:22-24; 74:12-14; 110:6, broken enemies in Ex. 15:6; Num. 24:8; 1 Sam. 2:10; 2 Sam. 22:39, 43; Is. 14:25; Jer. 13:14; 23:29; 48:4; 51:20-23; Ps. 2:9; 72:4; 89:24; 137:9; Dan. 2:34-35; Job 34:22-25, trampled enemies in Josh. 10:24; 2 Sam. 22:39/Ps. 18:39; Is. 63:3, 6; Mal 3:20-21; Zech. 10:5; Ps. 44:5; 60:14; 108:14; 91:11-13, enemies lick dust in Is. 49:23, Mic. 7:17; Ps. 72:9, and stricken serpents in Is. 27:1; 51:9; Ps. 58:5-7, 11; 74:12-14; 89:11; Job 26:12-13; 40:25-41:26.

⁹ James M. Hamilton Jr., “The Seed of the Woman and the Blessing of Abraham.” *Tyndale Bulletin* 58 (2007): 265.

¹⁰ T. D. Alexander, “Seed” 769-773. In *The New Dictionary of Biblical Theology* T. Desmond Alexander and Roger S. Rosner eds. (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 769.

discourse continues. However, the further discourse of Scripture, which unpacks the spiritual riches of God's indictment on the Serpent, does not screen out these three meanings; it merges them. The immediate seed of the women is Abel, then Seth. The collective seed is the holy offspring of the patriarchs (Gen. 15:5; 22:17).¹¹

Thus, in the immediate understanding of the verse, the seed refers to a singular seed but as we see, as the story continues, it also entails a collective aspect.¹²

The immediate understanding of the text is seen by the name Adam gives to his wife. Adam names his wife Eve, that is, life-giver, and not death (Gen 3:20).¹³ Through this, Adam shows that he has hope. Perhaps, he even hopes to once again enter back into the garden and enjoy renewed and undeterred fellowship with God once the evil serpent gets what is coming to him. Stephen G. Dempster says, "in light of the immediate context, the triumph of the woman's seed would suggest a return to the Edenic state."¹⁴

Later we see that Eve bore Cain and thought she had the serpent crushing seed. She said, "I have gotten a man with the help of the LORD" (4:1) Michael Horton explains that without the definite article, we are especially dependent on the context. Therefore, in light of Genesis 3:15 this verse could be understood to mean, "the man," that is, the seed.¹⁵ Adam and Eve had hope. They expected a seed (singular), in their lifetime that would bring some form of deliverance, though we cannot be certain as to the extent of the deliverance for which they hoped.

However, as we read on in the story we see that Eve's hope is unfounded. Cain was the seed of the serpent and killed his brother Abel (cf. John 8:44; 1 John 3:8-15).¹⁶ Yet she continued in expectation. We see this with the birth of Seth (Gen 4:25).¹⁷ The curse wrought because of rebellion in the garden was not revoked and death spread to all men. We see this in the refrain, "and he died," in Genesis chapter five yet we see hope of deliverance through Enoch's experience (v. 24). A later decedent of Adam and Eve,

¹¹ Waltke, *An Old Testament Theology*, 280-81.

¹² Similarly, Edmund P. Clowney, has said,

The term "seed" is ambiguous in Hebrew: it can refer to descendants as a corporate group, or to an individual descendant. Genesis does not specifically resolve that ambiguity. But as it holds before us the line of fathers and sons, it surely points to a second Adam, a Seed who is appointed like Seth, called like Noah, chosen like Shem, and made a blessing to all the earth as the Seed of Abraham (*The Unfolding Mystery: Discovering Christ in the Old Testament* [Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1988], 42).

¹³ See John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of the Word of God* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing Company, 2010) 57-58, Stephen G. Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty: A Theology of the Hebrew Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003) 68, and Hamilton, *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment*, 79. It may also be significant that after Adam names Eve, presumably in an act of faith, God sacrifices an animal to cloth them and cover their guilt (Gen 3:21).

¹⁴ Stephen G. Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty: A Theology of the Hebrew Bible*, 68.

¹⁵ Michael Horton, *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims on the Way* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 438.

¹⁶ Hamilton, *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment*, 81.

¹⁷ See *Ibid.*, 82. Waltke says,

Probably Eve at first thought Cain fulfilled the promise, but when he proved to be a murderer, she probably replaced Cain with Seth (cf. Gen. 4:1-25). In other words, if we interpret the meaning of the 'seed' within the first literary section of Genesis... we arrive at Seth as the righteous seed. If we expand our range to include the whole of Genesis, then the lineage culminates in Judah (cf. Gen. 49:10). But Judah is an unsatisfactory conclusion to the thematic anticipation of a seed who will gain victory over the Serpent. Thus, the book of Genesis is in want of a proper ending (*An Old Testament Theology*, 62).

Lamech, also expected deliverance. He named his son Noah and said he will comfort us from all our toil and pain that was caused by the curse on the ground (v. 29).

However, in Genesis chapter six, through Noah's flood, we do not see the crushing of the serpent as is hoped for and we do not see a reversal of the curse but we do see preservation of the line of the seed of the woman, and in fact of all humanity. Actually, a careful reading of Genesis will lead one to see the importance that the book places on seed and their preservation. This is especially clear and miraculous in light of the NT and the barrenness of certain women at crucial points along the line of *the* seed.¹⁸

In the first chapters of Genesis, we see a foggy hope of a seed to come that will crush the head of the serpent. However, it is not until further down the road of revelation that the identity of that seed becomes clearer. In fact, we do not even know if the promise is ultimately fulfilled through a collective seed or a singular seed at this point.¹⁹ We will look at this in our next section.

There are important pieces that we must gather from the first few chapters of Genesis that are important if we want to fit the puzzle together at the end. We must note the hope established from the beginning (to reenter Eden?). We must see the importance placed on the seed of the woman. It is also important to remember the crushing language employed. It is with these and similar themes that we can trace the serpent crushing seed through Scripture. At first, the promised one is vague but as we continue, we pick up more pieces that fit in place in unexpected ways. To culminate in what the apostle Paul will call foolishness.

T. D. Alexander sums up well for us.

Although Genesis 3:15 hints at reversal of the alienation arising from the disobedience of Adam and Eve, for the fulfillment we must read further. Here, however, we find the first brushstroke on the biblical canvas concerning a future king through whom God's salvation will come to humanity.²⁰

The Concept Traced through the Old Testament. We have seen what the immediate expectation was but what do we see as the story of Scripture develops? What more information do we see surface that gives us a hint to the prophesy's ultimate fulfillment? We have seen that Adam and Eve hoped for a singular seed to be their victor but how do we understand the collective seed and the promised enmity between the two seeds? We have seen that Abel, instead of crushing the serpent, was crushed himself by the serpent's seed. We have seen that Seth too, did not crush the serpent. So where is the promised one?

As we ask these questions, we will see a line traced through Genesis and the whole Old Testament, a line of seed and their story. Specifically, a line that has hope, hope in God and His promises,

¹⁸ See T. D. Alexander, *The Servant King: The Bible's Portrait of the Messiah* (Vancouver, BC: Regent College Publishing, 2003), 23.

¹⁹ Admittedly, even once we come to the NT it looks at times that the fulfillment of Genesis 3:15 still has a singular and a collective aspect to it and this may be true but it only has a collective aspect to it because of the singular seed. Paul says that the God of peace will soon crush Satan under *your* (pl.) feet (Rom. 16:20). Yet how are they identified with God's people, it is through the Christ that crushes Satan and death. I could list other things that identify Jesus, the Christ, as *finally* and *ultimately* fulfilling the promise to Adam and Eve but this must suffice here. It is true that we (collective) will crush Satan under our feet; I do not want to be at odds with Paul, only we do it as we are *in* Christ. See also Jack Collins "A Syntactical Note (Genesis 3:15): Is the Woman's Seed Singular or Plural?" *Tyndale Bulletin* 48.1, (1997): 147n24 and T. Desmond Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem*, 106.

²⁰ Alexander, *The Servant King*, 19.

hope in an offspring. As Hamilton says, “People are either seed of the serpent, on the side of the snake in the garden, or seed of the woman, on the side of God and trusting in his promises.”²¹ The careful reader of Scripture can see the enmity between the two seeds in Genesis²² and in fact through the whole Old Testament. There are even physical decedents of the woman, i.e. seed, that are spiritually seed of the serpent.²³

The Genesis narrative does not go on very long before we see more seed/offspring promises. However, the Abrahamic promises do not continue the language of “crushing” but, as we have seen, we do see the promised enmity. The promise to Abraham is obviously important in many ways but we cannot dive into them here for our purpose. What we do need to see, however, is Abraham’s seed will be given the land (Gen 12:7 cf. Gal 3:16²⁴). The land promised, is significant because the righteous seed brings prosperity to the land as they crush and conquer the heads of the serpent’s seed. Thus, maybe Adam and Eve would have been right to think that the promised one would bring in some form of Edenic state.²⁵

Hamilton says, “The blessing of all the families of the earth through Abram and his seed (12:3; 22:18) directs readers of the Genesis narrative to a seed of the woman who will crush the serpent’s head, repeal the curses, and open the way to Eden.”²⁶ Though we do not have time to look at all the accounts, there are many times in the OT when the two seeds are seen in conflict crushing each other. The seed of the woman is seen time after time crushing the seed of the serpent to obtain the Promised Land, a type of Eden.

We see that there was much crushing going on between the two seeds but can we say that what we see constitutes a fulfillment of the promise? Though we cannot look at very much of the conflict between the two seeds we will look at a few of the individual seeds of the woman to evaluate their role in the Genesis 3:15 promise. Did the seed or seeds ever bring a truly Edenic state? Was the satanic serpent crushed, or just his followers?

First, we will look briefly at Joshua. In Joshua after God’s people defeated their enemies, “the land lay subdued before them” (Josh 18:1). Note all the things that point us to a new garden experience. They entered the land from the east (Josh 3:1; cf. Gen 3:24). Joshua came to an angel, like the angel guarding the way to the Garden of Eden (Josh 5:13; cf. Gen 3:24).²⁷ Joshua is a new Moses and there is a new exodus, but neither was this to last. This Eden, too, fell short. They had cleared out the seed of the serpent and cultivated a *new* Eden. However, the snake and his progeny were not entirely destroyed (Judg 1:27-36). They reared their ugly heads and became thorns in their sides (2:3). God’s people were once

²¹ Hamilton, *God’s Glory in Salvation through Judgment*, 84.

²² In Table 2.9., Hamilton shows the “Seed Conflict in Genesis.” On the individual level we see Cain and Abel (4:1-16), Ishmael and Isaac (21:8-9), Esau and Jacob (27:41), lastly the Sons of Israel and Joseph. On the collective level we see Pharaoh and Egypt and Abraham and Sarah (12:10-20), Kings of the world (Sodom) and Abraham and his men, Lot, Melchizedek (14:13-24), Abimelech and the Philistines and Abraham and his people (21:22-34), Abimelech and the Philistines and Isaac and his people (26:14-16), the men of Shechem and Simeon, Levi, and Israel (Dinah) (34:1-29), lastly the Sons of Israel and Joseph (37-44). See *Ibid.*

²³ Thus Hamilton says, “In some cases those who have their heads crushed are physically descended from Abraham, but by their actions they show themselves to be at enmity with those faithful to Yahweh” (“The Skull Crushing Seed of the Woman,” 35).

²⁴ John Polhill has said, “His intricate grammatical argument may seem strained to us, but it was well within the guidelines of first-century Jewish methods of interpretation” (*Paul and His Letters*, 32).

²⁵ Hamilton, “The Seed of the Woman and the Blessings of Abraham” esp. 260.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 261.

²⁷ See *Ibid.*, 259-60.

again unfaithful and listened to a voice other than God's. They once again listened to the serpent, through his seed, and were lead astray to other gods. This once again led to a curse and ultimately being cast out of the blessed land.

All through the book of Judges, we have miniature narratives reminding us of the larger biblical narrative. We see deliverers rise up and crush the seed of the serpent and bring prosperity, *for a time*. Jael crushed (cf. Judg 5:26) one of the serpents offspring. The crushing was celebrated but the Edenic peace (i.e. "rest to the land") did not last very long, only forty years (v. 31). The true defeat of the serpent and his seed is what leads to true eternal rest. This is accomplished only when the serpent and his seed are ultimately crushed and cast into the lake of fire. This is a long way from what we see happening in the book of Judges.

Jael crushes the opposition but only for a time. But she certainly is not the offspring that was hoped for. Many other similar judges rise up but they likewise only crush the *seed* of the serpent and not the *serpent* himself. As the propagator remains, he will continue to spawn his evil seed and thus there will be no lasting peace. In the Old Testament, there are many that crushed the seed of the serpent. However, the defeat was never final for they only crushed the seed and not the spreader.

Samson is yet another example from the book of Judges. He broke the bonds that bound him, defeated the seed of the serpent by literally crushing them, and being crushed himself (Judg 16:29-30). Here, in this narrative, we see two separate seeds being crushed. Is this the fulfillment of the promise? Is this the crushing that is being referred to? One leaves the book of Judges hoping that Genesis 3:15 has not been fulfilled, because if it has been, that is simply bad news. That would mean that the good news and hope given so long ago, was not that good after all. For at the close of Judges we see "there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes" (Judg 21:25). Someone needed to come or something needed to happen to restore the Edenic peace. With that in mind, we will look at the line of the kings.

From a NT perspective, we see the huge significance of the book and in deed the person of Ruth. We see God's sovereign providence in the preservation of the line of the seed, king David, and as we shall see the one true and greater King, Messiah Jesus. God retains the line of promise through which the true Promised One will come. But we are getting ahead of ourselves.

Saul was supposed to restrain the people (1 Sam 9:17; 10:1) as part of his subduing the earth and making a new Eden as Adam was to do.²⁸ He, however, also failed and the serpent seed continued to spread. However, God provides a new seed, David. David is *a* fulfillment of the seed promises in Genesis (3:15 and 12) but he is not *the* fulfillment.

David is the seed of the woman. He is in a very real way the promised one who will crush God's enemies, the seed of the serpent, but even king David could not crush *the* serpent. It is *not*, as Hamilton says,

insignificant that YHWH tells David, 'I will raise up your *seed* after you' (2 Sam. 7:12). This seed of David will be, according to the genealogy in Ruth 4:18-22, descended from Perez, Judah's son (Gen. 38:29). Thus the seed of David is seed of Judah, seed of Abraham, and the genealogies in Genesis 5 and 11 show us that he is also seed of the woman.²⁹

²⁸ Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem*, 26.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 268.

Consequently, we see that David is descended from the woman linking him to the promise and we see through his life that he struck down many of God's enemies. People even sang songs celebrating his ability to crush the serpent's offspring (1 Sam 18:7). We also see that David did in fact do a very good job at clearing out the land and bringing in peace.

Adam was to rule and subdue as a coregent. He was a form of king. He should have drove the serpent from the garden. The role of the king in Israel was to drive out the enemies and create a new Eden where God is exalted. The rule of the kings after Adam was to drive the seed of the serpent out of the land making a new garden.³⁰ However, all these kings failed at one point or another, they were not the promised one (See for ex. Deut. 17:14-20). Even David. David, as it were, listened to the serpent and let it in to his own bedroom and was guilty of Uriah's blood.

Waltke says,

“Examined in light of the entire Primary History (Genesis-2 Kings), the idea of ‘seed’ becomes meshed with the Davidic covenant and a righteous king in the tradition of David (see 2 Sam. 7). But even here the Davidic line falters, unable to fulfill the promise of victory over the Serpent (see Ps. 89).”³¹

The people's hope in the king was not entirely unfounded because at times it did look as though God's people were returning to the Garden. David is even promised an offspring. Waltke points out that, “After Genesis we do not hear again of the promised seed from the lions of a hero of the faith until God promises David a seed from his loins (2 Sam. 7:12).”³² Are best guess for the identity of this offspring would be Solomon, but do we see the promise fulfilled in him?

God says, “I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish his kingdom *forever*” (2 Sam 12b-13). It looks like David's imminent son will be the one that will bring the culmination of God's promises. Even after David dies and Solomon alone is on the scene, it appears this way, *for a time*.³³

Solomon *does* build a house for God. God dwelt in the temple reminding us of Eden where God dwelt with Adam and Eve. The queen of Sheba visited (1 Kgs 10; 2 Chr 9); it looked as though God's glory would cover the earth as the waters cover the sea (Isa 11:9). However, there was yet another curse.

³⁰ See James M. Hamilton Jr. “That the Coming Generation Might Praise the Lord” *Journal of Family Ministry* 1.1 (2010): 12.

³¹ Waltke, *An Old Testament Theology*, 62.

³² *Ibid.*, 281.

³³ Daniel L. Akin has said,

God had been working in and through the nation of Israel since the time of Abraham. Now he committed himself to one of Abraham and Judah's descendants in order to fulfill his promises to Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:15), Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3), and Judah (Gen. 49:9-10). By means of an unconditional covenant (note the repeated “I will's”), God promised to establish an eternal Davidic dynasty. This is a classic example of a prophecy with a dual fulfillment, with both a near and a far focus. Immediately David's son Solomon is pictured as the one who would succeed his father in the Davidic monarchy. He is the one to build the temple... The prophecy also has a distant fulfillment as 2 Samuel 7:16 clearly indicates when it speaks of a throne that will be established forever. This promise now becomes the focal point of messianic hope and expectation. A future descendent of David will come reign as Israel's messianic King

Encapsulating the promises made to Abraham and Judah, he will be a blessing to the whole earth and also a sovereign King... The nation anticipates a deliverer who will be a king and a descendent of David. What the nation expects will be fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth (“The Person of Christ” 480-544. In *A Theology for the Church* Daniel L. Akin ed. [Nashville: B & H Publishing Group, 2007], 483.).

The kingdom was divided, the promise was unfulfilled. Solomon's kingdom was short of lasting forever. Solomon reigned forty years and then died (1 Kgs 11:42-43) and the kingdom was divided (12:16-24).³⁴

What of the promises of the LORD? What are we to make of God's promise in the Garden and God's promise to Abraham? Have they been fulfilled?³⁵

We are still to look for one at the close of the OT cannon. The prophets do point us to a one that is crushed (Isa 53) but what about the prophesied crushing? We also see hints of a return to the Edenic state but how and through whom?

We see that none of the hopes, however prosperous for a time, brought a lasting Edenic experience. After the close of the OT cannon, there were those that still believed in the promised seed and through the Maccabean revolt they even tried, and were successful for a *time*, to smash the head of their enemies. Though, this too did not bring the lasting blessing that was hoped for.³⁶

People at one time expected the age-old enemy to be defeated bringing freedom and prosperity reminiscent of Eden. At the outset of the story, the seed was promised the land but we leave the story and the collective seed do not process the land. Many of God's promises have not been fulfilled and people's hopes were all over the map. With the development of the Old Testament cannon there *seems* to be "irreconcilable differences" between all the messianic hopes. Who will crush the serpent and bring lasting peace to the land, they must have wondered.

In the Old Testament, we see a seed of promise, a seed of hope, but this seed does not sprout until we come to the NT. It is only then that we see the unfolding of the mysterious and unsuspected beauties of the seed come forth in Jesus the Christ. It is to Jesus, the Christ, which we now turn.

In the New Testament, we see Jesus is the Promised Seed, the Good News.³⁷ At the close of the OT as we saw there is no serpent crushing seed on the horizon. But there is good news, stretching back all the way to the beginning of the story. This is not the end of the story. The genealogies link Jesus all the way back to David, Abraham, and even the seed of the woman.³⁸ The "seed" referred to in Genesis 3:15 and chapter 12 is the same seed. The curse evoked because of sin, is revoked in the promised blessing to Abraham's seed, who is also the seed which will defeat the serpent; namely, Jesus of Nazareth.³⁹

³⁴ Note that Jeremiah gives us commentary on this, he tells us essentially that Solomon did not fulfill the promise but there is still one to come cf. Jer. 23:5-6; 33:14-16. We see God's promise is sure, even if the way in which it will be fulfilled is not cf. 33:19-22.

³⁵ Note that Jeremiah gives us commentary on this, he tells us essentially that Solomon did not fulfill the promise but there is still one to come (cf. Jer. 23:5-6; 33:14-16). We see God's promise is sure, even if the way in which it will be fulfilled is not sure (cf. 33:19-22). We see this same sort of thing from the book of Lamentations, in fact that is how the book got its name. The author is lamenting the state of fallen Jerusalem. The book closes, in part, by saying, "The *crown* has fallen from our head... But you, O LORD, reign forever; your *throne* endures to all generations... Restore us to yourself, O LORD, that we may be restored!" (Lam. 5:16a, 19, 21a italics mine). I think we can see here a shift or development in reliance. Israel needs a supernatural agent if they are going to have any hope of all their promises coming to fruition.

³⁶ Solomon did not establish the house or kingdom and it is clear that Ezra did not build the house either (Ezra 3:10-13). There was hope for a time during the intertestamental period but many of those hopes were crushed along with the people that had them. Finally, even more had their hopes crushed in the year 70 with the destruction of the temple. Yet those who believe on Jesus the Christ have their hope founded for Jesus Himself is the temple (Jn 2:19-22).

³⁷ We could explore many passages further. For instance: Matt 22:44; Luke 10:17-19; Acts 2:35; Rom 16:20; 1 Cor 15:25; Gal 3:16; 4:4; Eph 1:20-22; Heb 2:5-9, 14-15; 10:13; Rev 12; 22:16. We could also look at the two collective seeds in the NT, those who follow Satan and those who follow their Savior.

³⁸ Of course everyone is the finally the seed of the Eve but this is a literary device showing the significance of Jesus.

³⁹ See Hamilton helpful article, "The Seed of the Woman and the Blessings of Abraham." See also Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom Through Covenant*, 630.

God promised that He would send someone to defeat the “bad guy” of the story. In the NT, we see that Jesus is just the one to do it. However, at the beginning it is unclear exactly how He will do. We do see that He does have the power. He cast out demons, reminding us what Adam should have done in the garden.⁴⁰ He healed the sick and gave sight to the blind in a foreshadowing of the reversal of the curse.

In a similar scene, seen throughout the Bible, man’s nemesis is once again at it with him. Satan is tempting not Adam but the second Adam in the wilderness (Luke 4). However, unlike Adam in paradise the second Adam does not give into the Serpent’s temptation, although He is in the desert. Jesus was tempted in every way that Adam was, and we are, yet He did not sin (Heb 4:15). When tempted, Israel failed the test but Jesus passed it (Hos 11:2; Matt 4:1-11). This was one of the three most significant battles we see between *the* Seed and the serpent. This was the battle that showed that Jesus is the Christ who has what it takes to slay the serpent but there are yet two more big conflicts ahead in our story.

The next battle we see is the cross. Jesus became man so “that through death he might destroy the one who has the power over death, that is, the devil” (Heb 2:14).⁴¹ Jesus’ heel was “bruised” at the cross but through that same cross, where He received the bruising, He struck the serpent with a definitive deathblow to the head. From the cross, Jesus cried out, “It is finished!” In Jesus’ death, the devil, and death are defeated! He has delivered us from the domain of darkness (Col 1:13). He disarmed the demonic rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them through the cross (Col 2:15).

This is the good news; Jesus is the good news. Notice the genealogies point to Jesus as being the Christ that was promised to defeat “the Serpent of old” (Matt 1:1-18; Luke 3:23-38 says, “Jesus... the son of Adam,” i.e. seed of the woman). Jesus’ genealogies recall the promise in the garden, the Abrahamic promise, and the 2 Samuel 7 promise. It is significant “that Jesus is named as being born of (i.e., the seed of) the woman (Gal 4:4) and the seed of David (Rom 1:3; 2 Tim 2:8).”⁴² Alexander says, “The NT presents Jesus Christ as the one who brings to fulfillment the divine promises associated with the unique line of seed descended from Abraham.”⁴³

The Bible is a true story about God making the world, man messing it up, and God becoming a man to fix the world by not messing up. It is a story of Eden—exile—repeat. It is not until the *true* Adam, the true and righteous Son of God comes that this process is put to an end. All of Christ’s predecessors fell short; Adam, Noah, Abraham, Saul, David, Solomon, and the lambs, priests, and prophets could not fill Christ’s rule. They could not crush the serpent and renew the Edenic state.

At first, the promised offspring (Gen 3:15) is vague, in fact, Eve rejoiced because she thought she had *the* offspring (4:1). However, now we have seen that which even the prophets longed to look (Matt 13:17), we know that all Scripture finds its fulfillment in Jesus who is the long awaited Christ (2 Cor 1:20) because He Himself interpreted it for us (cf. Luke 24:27, 44). As Tremper Longman III says, Jesus gave his disciples a lesson in hermeneutics, and from then on, they could not “read the Old Testament except in the light of the resurrected Jesus.”⁴⁴ I submit to you that we should listen to Jesus’ instruction in hermeneutics.

⁴⁰ Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem*, 112n14.

⁴¹ The verses employed in this paragraph use “scenario” or links that recall the Genesis 3:15 promise.

⁴² Hamilton cites Wifall in “The Skull Crushing Seed of the Woman,” 43.

⁴³ Alexander, “Seed” in *The New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, 772.

⁴⁴ Tremper Longman III, “*The Messiah: Explorations in the Law and Writings*” 13-34. In *The Messiah in the Old and New Testaments* Stanley E. Porter ed. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2007), 31.

In Hebrews 2:5-9 and 14-15, we see that everything is being put in subjection under Jesus' feet but we also see that Jesus is crushed, He suffered death. But note that it does not say that He was defeated. It says, He suffered death. For anyone else, death means defeat, but for this seed of the woman, it was a mere strike to the heel. It is through His death, through being struck on the heel, that He strikes the devil with a death blow. It is through death, that He destroyed "the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil." Stated with emphasis for our purpose, it is through being crushed that Jesus, the seed of the woman, decisively crushed the one who has the power of death, the serpent of old.

The offspring of Abraham is a blessing to the nations because He defeats the Serpent and as the Great High Priest gives them access again to the new Eden, the new Temple, the City of God. Here in this passage in Hebrews, like in the NT in general, we see the author pulling together many themes to exalt Jesus the Christ and His superiority above all else. It is like a beautiful sunset, you see specific colors but it is hard to tell where one ends and another starts, it all bleeds together. It is the same with many passages of Scripture, the themes bleed together, they are there, it is clear, but they are so closely and beautifully blended, it can be difficult at times to separate them. This reminds us, once again that *all* Scripture, not just Genesis 3:15, finds its yes in Christ (2 Cor 1:20).

Jesus followed the Torah and always did what God the Father told Him. Thus, He defeated the snake by not listening to him. He also crushed the serpent by being crushed Himself on the cross. The question is then raised, then why are we not back in the Garden, why are we not enjoying the Edenic state? The answer is that there is an "*already/not yet*"⁴⁵ aspect to God's defeat of Satan.

The seed of promise is traced all the way through the OT and picked up by the NT authors. Those in the Jewish culture of their day would have known their Hebrew Bible's and all the hopes and promises contained therein. They would have understood that the promises were not reached through David. Yet the confusing thing for many was that Jesus as the Christ also did not bring to fulfillment all their hopes and expectations from the Old Testament. Where was there Davidic king who would crush their enemies, they thought.

The Consummation of the Crushing and the Good News of the Coming of the Kingdom. We see from the Apocalypse that Jesus will once and for all defeat the serpent of old. Jesus is the promised one (Luke 24:27, 44-46; Acts 13:23, 27; 17:3; Rom 1:2-4; 1 Cor 15:3-4;) who will restore Eden (cf. Rom 5:10; Col 1:20; Titus 2:14; Gal 3:13; Eph 1:7, 10). Jesus has inaugurated the Kingdom of God but there is an "*already/not yet*" aspect to it. Although the Kingdom has been ushered in through Christ, it will not reach its zenith until Christ's second coming and the culmination of the new creation. Jesus *has* saved us and "put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself" (Heb 9:26) and yet there is still a future aspect to our salvation; He *will* save us (v. 28). Through Jesus the Christ we have the unwavering hope of a *new creation* (2 Pet 3:13). "The creation was subjected to futility" in Adam (Gen 3:17-19) but in Christ "the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God" (Rom 8:20-21).

This third, and last conflict, we see can hardly be called a battle. We see that Jesus defeated Satan by being slain. It is through Jesus being slaughtered that we have a new kingdom of priests that will

⁴⁵ See G. E. Ladd, *The Gospel of the Kingdom: Scriptural Studies in The Kingdom of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1959).

always faithfully reign (subdue) the earth (cf. Rev 5:9-10). Through Jesus, the curse has been reversed and we will once again enjoy Eden. Jesus identifies Himself as the Christ who is the root and descendent of David (Rev 22:16 cf. Gen 3:15; Num 24:17; 2 Sam 7:12-13; Isa 11:1-10). There is a clear link here to Balaam's oracle in Numbers 24. This passage clearly alludes both back to the promise of a seed crushing offspring to come and forward to its fulfillment.

The victorious King comes on His white horse and His robe is stained with the blood with the blood of His enemies. We also see that He is seen as the lamb looking as though He had been slain. This is because He strikes the Serpent by being stroke. Jesus' heel was stroke but He crushed the serpent and His seed by the sword of His mouth (cf. Rev 19:11-16, 21). He is the messianic hope, King on the throne of David that succeeds at driving out the serpent. He establishes an eternal Eden where no more is there any snakes to tarnish the garden. "Nothing unclean will ever enter it" (Rev 21:27 cf. 22:3)! They have all been cast out, defeated. It is in the last Adam that we all can truly live.

Jesus once and for all crushes the head of the serpent and sends him into hell. Jesus is the good news but the good news is not static it goes on and on and on; those in Christ live happily-ever-after in the new Eden. In contrast, God "will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers" (Matt 13:41) and cast the seed of the serpent into the pit of eternal fire (Rev 20:14-15). "They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might" (2 Thess 1:9). However, for those in Christ the story of history will have a happy ending in Eden. (Rom 8:29-39).⁴⁶ The NT teaches us that Jesus the Christ/Messiah is the one who crushes Satan and all on his side and in so doing frees those identified with the seed of the woman and allows them back in the garden. This is the good news announced in Genesis 3:15 understood with the lens that Jesus gave us on the Emmaus road.

Conclusion. The cumulative evidence shows us that Jesus, and Jesus alone, is the only one finally and ultimately "guilty" of the crushing. He alone fits the evidence. He alone truly crushed the serpent of old. This is simply where the evidence leads us. Thus in Genesis 3:15 we see the first pronouncement of the good news of Jesus. Though, of course not all that was understood yet. As we have seen, more evidence had to surface. But it did. And it pegged Jesus to the Genesis 3:15 case.

After Thought. Ironically, though the Bible covers every type of literature in its final form the Bible is a cosmic comedy. And all throughout the biblical story there is one main character, even if not always on the scene. The story of Scripture is a story about God's only Son, Jesus the Christ, the Promised One. I was reading the other day in the book of Ezekiel. I read the words "there shall be no more a brier to prick or a thorn to hurt them" in Ezekiel 28:24. I began thinking about all the edenic language in Scripture and began to sketch a few lines to the poem below that recalled some of that biblical language. I have tried to show through this poem, "The Word about the Word for the World," that Jesus is the hero of the story because He fixes what is the cosmic problem by restoring a way to Eden and fellowship with God.

*Just a word and all wonders wrought
God announced, and behold, it was all good*

Creation had communion with the creator

⁴⁶ Look at the difference between God's people in Isaiah 65:17-25 and the rebellious in 66:24.

God walked in the garden
Yet with Adam the serpent did conspire
And brought the world into mire

Beckoned to the grave
Everything disarranged.

The curse burst upon the scene
But in the midst a seed of hope was seen

Many men came and went
Was the hope of promise spent?

Many lambs, prophets, priests and kings
Yet none with true salvation in their wings

Darkness for a time
No prophet's voice was heard

Yet in the darkness I light it shone
And it would overcome the darkness

Behold, O' world, your Prophet, Priest, and King
Jesus the Promised seed and lamb

The curse brought in shall be expunged
Yes, replunged upon the Son

Christ was crushed as promised
But in His crushing, crushed Satan, sin, and death

Yes, He was cursed to reverse the curse
He felt our plight to set all things right

The lion to lay down with the lamb,
Because, the Great I AM, was slain

No more brier prick or thorn to stick
All shall be made new

When our King all subdue
All shall be made new

All foes to be forgotten
Forever banished now

That serpent of old has received its last scald
And now it's the god of the pit

The true Temple, Tabernacle, Eden restored
Communion with the creator in the New Jerusalem

*The ground is paved with gold,
For gold has no glory now,
The only glory is the story of God's unfailing love*

*All shall be made new
Victory through the Son!*

*All shall be made new
Victory through the Son!*

Come, Lord Jesus, come!

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