

The Proto-Evangelium

I will put enmity [hostility] 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)

Genesis 3:15 is the first promise of redemption (salvation) in the Bible. After Adam and Eve’s disobedience, God cursed the serpent for his role in the deception and temptation of our first parents. The serpent will “eat dust all the days of his life” (v.14) ‘Eat dust’ is figurative language for God’s judgment against the serpent. Then God promises the serpent that “her offspring” (Eve’s) would strike (bruise) his head. Promises and covenants like this are why the Bible is full of genealogies. Genealogies track descendants. In Genesis, one can trace Eve’s descendants from her son Seth to Noah to Abraham to Jacob to his son Judah and Judah’s son by Tamar – Perez.

Perez is in the genealogy of Jesus in Matthew 1 and Luke 3. Born of Mary, Jesus is the One whom God chose to inflict the deadly blow to the head of the serpent (Gal 4:4). Revelation 20:2 makes it clear that the ancient serpent of Genesis 3 is the devil, Satan. Thus, we understand that the offspring of the serpent of Genesis 3 is Satan and the offspring of Eve is Jesus. Jesus is the descendant of David of the tribe of Judah, the son of Jacob, the son of Isaac, the son of Abraham, the son of Terah, the descendant of Shem, the son of Noah, the descendant of Seth, the son of Eve.

This promise is called the proto-evangelium because it is the *proto*, the **first**, announcement of good news. It is good news that a son of Eve will punish the serpent. Satan is the culpable agent for the fall of man. But both Adam and Eve made a choice to disobey God which is why they were exiled from the garden of God. The Greek word εὐαγγέλιον, transliterated *euangelion*, is literally ‘good news’ translated gospel. Thus Genesis 3:15 is called the first announcement of the gospel.

On the cross, Satan attempted to strike the head of Jesus, but in the end, it was merely a heel injury. Satan entered Judas Iscariot (Luke 22:3) and orchestrated the crucifixion of Jesus. How could Jesus save anyone if He were dead? Early in Jesus’s life, Satan attempted to kill baby Jesus through Herod (Mat 2). Then as an adult, Satan tempted Jesus to sin, but He resisted all temptations to sin and remained without sin. In both cases, Jesus won. The crucifixion was Satan’s final attempt to defeat the Son of God. And were it not for Christ’s resurrection on the third day, the promise looked as though Satan reversed it. But Christ defeated His archenemy when He overcame death and rose from the grave. Christ paid for sin on the cross. The victory was secured. Christ, the lamb of God, died for the world’s sins. Jesus made it possible for all who put their faith in His death, burial, and resurrection as payment for their sins to be saved (1Co 15). No longer would sin separate believers from God, like sin separated Adam and Eve from fellowship with God. What Satan meant for the defeat of God’s plan of salvation turned out to be his own defeat. He suffered a head injury.

Although Satan is still the “god of this world” (2Co 4:4, 1Jo 5:19), he cannot keep humans from believing the gospel. His power to keep the nations deceived like he deceived Eve has been curtailed or restrained (Rev 20:3). Christ entered his world and bound him. Thus, he is a ‘bound’ “roaring lion seeking whom he may devour” (1Pe 5:8). Jesus asked, “how can someone enter a strong man’s house and plunder his goods unless he first binds the strong man? Then indeed he may plunder his house” (Mat 12:29). Jesus entered Satan’s house (this earth) and for three years He plundered his goods. Those who were demon-possessed were set free. Those who lived in deception now believed that Jesus was the Messiah. Satan desired to sift Peter like wheat, but Christ prayed for Peter’s faith not to fail. And it did not! Peter did not stay in a state of unbelief after Christ’s death. Peter believed that Jesus rose from the grave and went on to preach to the saving of 3000 souls in Acts 2. And today, each time a sinner turns to God with faith in the gospel of Christ, Satan’s goods are plundered, and another soul is saved.

Finally, the Bible promises that God will end Satan’s constrained reign of terror when he is thrown into the lake of fire where he, the beast, the false prophet, and all unbelievers will be tormented forever and ever (Rev 20:10). At this point, followers of Christ will spend eternity with their God in a new heaven and on a new earth. All pain, sorrow, grief, crying, and death will be no more. God’s people will freely eat from the tree of life, and there will “no longer be any curse” (Rev 22:2-3). Humans will once again dwell with God like Adam and Eve did before sin entered the world (Rom 5:12; Rev 21). God promised that this redemption would happen in Genesis 3:15, just a few verses after sin entered the world.