

The Proto-Evangel In Genesis 3.14-15

A Hermeneutical Workbook

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Step 1: Presuppositions

Low View of Inspiration

If Genesis 1-11 is myth, then:

- Serpent is a snake, Adam and Eve not persons who really existed.
- Allegory with spiritual meaning.
- Fable with moral teaching.
- Etiology: Why women hate snakes.
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High View of Inspiration

If Genesis 1-11 is historical, then:

- Serpent, Adam, Eve real entities.
- Etiology: Why sin in the world, why continual spiritual warfare.
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The Hebrew poetry of Scripture is characterized by “parallelism, terseness of expression, and figurative language.”

Step 2: Genre = Poetry

Purposes Of Genesis 3.14-19

Poetic Block

Primary

- ☐ Worship
- ☐ Wisdom Teaching
- ☒ Prophecy

Secondary

- ☒ Punctuation
- ☒ Interpretation

Figurative Terms And Phrases

- **Belly crawling, dust eating** (Ps 44.24-25; 72.9; Is 29.4; 49.23; Eze 28.17; Mic 1.9-10; 7.16-17; Na 3.18)
- **Head:** Heb. *rosh*: leader, primary part
- **Heel:** humanity, vulnerable part

Parallel Entities

- **You (Serpent) and Woman (Eve)**
- **Your (Serpent's) seed, her seed**
- **Head and Heel**

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Step 3: Context

Widest Context: Whole Bible

Overarching Themes

- Seeds, good and bad
- Spiritual warfare
- Redemption
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Intermediate Context: Pentateuch

Overarching Themes

- Coming deliverer, ruler, champion
- Covenants
- Expiation of sin, the Passover
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Near Context: Genesis 3

Main Characters

- God
- Satan (Serpent)
- Adam
- Eve

Main Events

- Temptation
- Fall
- Sentencing
- Prophecy of Hope [Redemption]

Immediate Context: Genesis 3.14-19

Main Characters

- LORD God
- Serpent
- Your (Serpent's) seed
- Woman & Her seed

Main Events

- God speaks, passes judgment
- Puts enmity
- Wounding of head
- Wounding of heel

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Step 4: Semantics

Identity of *Serpent*, נָחָשׁ

Options

- ☐ Reptile
- ☐ Unknown creature with occult powers
- ☐ Reptile used as mouth-piece by Satan
- ☐ Satan disguised as snake
- ☒ Satan

Deciding Factors?

- Hebrew preposition *from* vs. *in*; no direct article before עָרִים.
- Revelation 12.9
- God deals with the Serpent as a single entity, not as a spirit and a snake.
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Meaning of עָרוֹם In Genesis 3.1

Options

- ☐ Clever
- ☐ Crafty
- ☐ Cunning
- ☒ Intelligent
- ☐ Shrewd
- ☐ Wise

Deciding Factors?

- *Intelligent* is a good lexical option, and explains why the Serpent can talk.
- Genesis 3.1 does not use a superlative construction, as if the Serpent were *more* clever, crafty, wise, etc. than the animals.
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Meaning of שָׁוָה In Genesis 3.15

Options

- ☐ Batter
- ☐ Bite
- ☐ Bruise
- ☐ Crave
- ☐ Crush
- ☐ Lie In Wait
- ☐ Remember
- ☐ Smite
- ☐ Strike
- ☐ Tread Under Foot
- ☐ Watch
- ☒ Wound

Deciding Factors?

- Too few usage examples in Bible.
- Too little evidence for *bruise*.
- Other common, standard Heb. words for *strike* and *crush*.
- A term to express a general act of enmity causing physical harm is best.
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Step 5: Syntax

Meaning of מְכַלֵּם חָיָה in Ge 3.1

Options

- ☐ More crafty than any [other] beast ...
- ☐ More cunning than any animal ...
- ☐ Shrewdest of all the wild beasts
- ☐ More subtle than any beast ...
- ☐ More clever than any of the wild animals
- ☐ Wiser than all the wild animals
- ☒ Intelligent in distinction from all beasts ...

Deciding Factors?

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Meaning of אָרֹר אֶתָּה מְכַלֵּם In Genesis 3.14

Options

- ☐ Cursed are you **more than all** cattle ...
- ☐ Cursed are you **more than any** ... cattle
- ☐ Cursed are you **above all** cattle ...
- ☐ Cursed are you **among all animals** ...
- ☐ Cursed are you **of all the wild animals** ...
- ☒ Cursed are you **apart/distinctly from** ...

Deciding Factors?

- Animals not cursed, only Serpent and ground.
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Number Of The Two Seeds Of Genesis 3.15

Options Proposed By Exegetes

- ☐ Serpent's and woman's seeds both collective plurals.
- ☒ Serpent's and woman's seeds both singular individuals.
- ☐ Serpent's seed collective plural; woman's seed singular individual.
- ☐ Serpent's seed collective plural; woman's seed collective plural *and* singular individual.

Deciding Factors?

- Poetic parallelism requires both seeds be of the *same* number.
- Poetic parallelism with singular Serpent and singular woman *implies* the two seeds are also singular entities.
- Pronoun *he* in Ge 3.15b cannot change woman's seed from plural to singular, but confirms her seed to be a singular individual.
- **Conclusion: both seeds are singular individuals.**

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Step 6: Interpretation

The Identities And Actions Of Each Entity

- LORD God: Questions the human rebels, passes sentence upon them and the Serpent.
- The Serpent: (Eze 28.13-14) Satan, (Re 12), The Whisperer.
- The Woman: Eve, only referred to in v. 15, receives sentence in v. 16.
- The Serpent's Seed: An individual spawn of Satan, a son of the devil by allegiance of wills, identical to the Serpent's head; sentenced proleptically to continual enmity with woman's seed.
- The Serpent's Head: (Heb. *rosh*: leader, primary part) A physical manifestation of Satan, presumably the Antichrist, the Serpent's seed.
- The Woman's Seed: A physical descendant who deals the strategic wound to the Serpent's head.
- The Heel Of The Woman's Seed: A confirmation of her descendant's physicality and individuality, His humanity.

Step 7: Application

Lessons And Applications Of Genesis 3.14-19

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