

Learn to Read Genesis Effectively

Distance Learning Programme

Session 4



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SESSION 4

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Genesis 3 v 15 – The consequences of the rebellion

Background

This is one of the key verses of the Bible, but it is perhaps not obvious why. We have already seen how first Eve and then Adam disobeyed God's command that they should not eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This is the first indication in the Bible of God's intention to remedy the situation.

The literal meaning of the verse

*“And I will put enmity
Between you and the woman,
And between your seed and her Seed;
He shall bruise your head,
And you shall bruise His heel.”*



What can we deduce from a careful reading of this verse?

- Who is making this happen?
- Who else is involved? and
- What is the relationship between them?
- What is going to happen to each party?



- God is making it happen
- The serpent and the woman and a descendant of each of them are involved
- The serpent and its descendants are to be enemies of the woman and one of her descendants
- The descendant of the woman will injure the head of the serpent
- The serpent will hurt the heel of the woman's descendant

Another way of considering this verse is as a description of a scene in a play or a film. We seem to have a “picture” here of a man being confronted by a dangerous serpent. The man kills the serpent by stamping on its head, but as he does so the snake bites him in the heel.

This may seem mysterious! Let's use the tools discussed in the first course and see where that will take us.

The symbolic meaning of the verse

First let's look at the entries in *Young's* and *Strong's Concordances* for the words "enmity", "serpent" and "seed":



Look at the references to "enmity" in the *Young's* and *Strong's Concordance* entries on pages 7 and 8

The word "enmity" occurs only eight times in the *Authorised Version* of the Bible – three times in the Old Testament and five times in the New. In each Testament there is only one Hebrew or Greek word translated as "enmity". *Strong's Concordance* gives us a few more details, telling us that it is derived from the word "to hate", as one might hate a member of an opposing tribe (by implication in a war). The same applies to the New Testament word.

One of the New Testament references is Romans 8 v 7, where the Apostle Paul writes about the enmity that exists between the natural mind and God.

James 4 v 4 reminds us that to be friends "with the world" is to be at "enmity with God".

You might like to read Romans 8 v 1 to 11 and James 4 v 1 to 4 to check these points.



Look at the references to "serpent" in the *Young's Concordance* entries on page 7



Look at the way the word "serpent" is used in the rest of the Bible. What does this tell us?

The word "serpent" always seems to be mentioned in a context of evil (either in the form of sin, or unpleasant experiences). For example:

- Serpents are used to bring pain and suffering (Num 21 v 6)
- The term is used in connection with wicked people (Psa 58 v 4; 140 v 3; Matt 23 v 33)
- It seems to symbolise all that is opposed to God (Revelation 12 v 9; 20 v 2)



- The “serpent” thus became connected with rebellion against God



Now look at the references to “seed”
in the *Young’s Concordance* entries
on page 7

With the exception of one verse in the book of the prophet Joel, there is only one Hebrew word translated “seed” in the Old Testament, and it means “progeny” or “descendants” almost universally. If you have a modern version, this word is translated “offspring” or “descendants” in the text, making it easier for us.

So Genesis 3 v 15 is a prophecy about real hostility, and a strife between the descendants (or a descendant) of Eve and the descendant(s) of the serpent. Many people have an instinctive antipathy to snakes, but for most of us in this country today they pose no real threat. You may have a marginal cross-reference to Numbers 21.

X-Ref -
Genesis
3 v 15

Numbers 21 v 4 to 9



Read Numbers 21 v 4 to 9



So is this the fulfilment of Genesis 3 v 15?

This is an incident where literal descendants of the serpent were biting and killing literal descendants of Eve. In some ways it would appear that the Numbers incident *could* be a fulfilment of Genesis 3 v 15.

However, the *New International Version* clarifies verse 15 for us by rendering the final phrase as:

3 v 15 “ ... he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.”



- “He” is singular – referring to a specific descendant of Eve
- This descendant will fatally injure the serpent
- At the same time this descendant will receive an injury to his heel



Why the cross-reference to Numbers 21 then?

We hope you noted the following points:

- The people had rebelled against God, who sent serpents to bite and kill them
- Moses made a replica of the serpent and put it on a pole
- Moses said that those who made the effort to go to the pole and look at it would live
- Those who had confidence in God’s instruction through Moses obeyed and did not die
- By these means God restrained the rebellion

God caused the serpents to invade the camp and also provided a way of escape when the people began to repent (v 7).

X-Ref -
Numbers
21 v 9

John 3 v 14 to 18



Read John 3 v 14 to 18



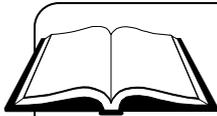
- Jesus compared the effect of the death he foresaw for himself with the effect of Moses putting the serpent up on the pole
- Both were about removing the effects of rebellion against God
- This is what Genesis 3 v 15 is all about
- The particular “seed of the woman” is therefore the Lord Jesus Christ
- The work of Jesus opened up a way to reverse the death sentence that the serpent in the garden was instrumental in causing
- Salvation was promised immediately after the sentence was passed so that faithful descendants of Adam and Eve would not be without hope

We get an indication in the next session that Eve understood this



But how did Jesus “bruise the serpent’s head” while he himself was “bruised in the heel” by the serpent?

If we look up words related to enmity in a concordance we find “enemies” in Romans chapter 5:



Read Romans 5 v 6 to 11



- This passage tells us that Jesus died so that we can be “reconciled” to God. To “reconcile” means to “re-establish friendship”
- Jesus’ death removes the barrier of enmity (v 10) that existed after Adam and Eve rebelled against God
- His rising to life again (v 10) was essential for our salvation

Summary

Genesis 3 v 15 summarises God's plan to put right the disastrous effects of Adam's and Eve's rebellion against God's command.

Two groups are involved:

- The woman and her descendant, the Lord Jesus Christ
- The serpent and his seed – everything and everyone that opposes God

There has to be enmity between them because it is only by rejecting the evil ways of the world that we can be acceptable to (reconciled with) God.

The prophecy was fulfilled when the Lord Jesus Christ inflicted a fatal and permanent wound to the serpent, which symbolises all that resists God. He did this by resisting natural temptation and being totally obedient to God. In order to achieve this, the Lord Jesus was "wounded in the heel" in that he died but rose again.

If you wish to consider this in more detail in your own way, have a look at the first of the optional assignments.

Optional assignment 4

How Jesus fulfilled Genesis 3 v 15

How did Jesus fulfil the promise of Genesis 3 v 15? Does the prophecy end with his death on the cross? You might like to start your exploration with Hebrews 2 v 14 to 15 and, using whatever tools you think suitable, see where that takes you.

Friendship with the world causes "enmity" with God.

The "enmity" of Genesis 3 v 15 is "echoed" in James 4 v 4 and 1 John 2 v 15. See what you can learn from these verses. "Echoes" of the enmity are seen in Matthew 6 v 24 to 34 in the choices to be made in our lives.

Young's Concordance entries

ENMITY –

1. *Enmity, ebah.*
 - Gen. 3. 15 I will put enmity between thee and the
 - Num 35. 21 Or in enmity smite him with his hand
 - 35.22 if he thrust him suddenly without enmity
2. *Enmity, echthra.*
 - Luke 23.12 for before they were at enmity between
 - Rom. 8. 7 Because the carnal mind (is) enmity
 - Eph. 2.15 Having abolished in his flesh the enmity
 - 2.16 the cross, having slain the enmity thereby
 - Jas. 4. 4 friendship of the world is enmity with G.

SERPENT –

2. *A serpent, nachash.*
 - Gen. 3. 1 Now the serpent was more subtil than any be.
 - 3. 2 the woman said unto the serpent, We may
 - 3. 4 the serpent said unto the woman, Ye sh.
 - 3.13 The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat
 - 3.14 God said unto the serpent, Because thou
 - 49.17 Dan shall be a serpent by the way, an ad.
 - Exod. 4. 3 it became a serpent; and Moses fled from
 - 7. 15 rod which was turned to a serpent shalt
 - Num 21. 6 LORD sent fiery serpents among the peo.
 - 21. 7 that he take away the serpents from us
 - 21. 9 Moses made a serpent of brass, and put
 - 21. 9 that if a serpent had bitten any man, whe.
 - 21. 9 he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived

SEED (sown, time)

1. *Seed, seed time, progeny, zera.*
 - Gen. 1. 11 the herb yielding seed, (and) the fruit tree
 - + 5 more refs. in Genesis 1
 - 3. 15 put enmity...between thy seed and her seed
 - 4. 25 hath appointed me another seed instead
 - 7. 3 keep seed alive upon the face of all the ea.
 - 8. 22 seed time and harvest, and cold and heat
 - 8. 9 with you, and with your seed after you
 - 12. 7 Unto thy seed will I give this land : and

Strong's Concordance entries

ENMITY

342 'êybâh (ay-baw')
from **340**;
hostility:
enmity, hatred.

340 'âyab (aw-yab')
a primitive root;
to *hate* (as one of an opposite tribe or party);
hence to *be hostile*:
be an enemy.