

Are you a bit cynical when it comes to political promises? If you've endured a Presidential election, you've heard some empty campaign promises.

Here are some great ones! When he ran for President, Alan Caruba (**picture**) promised to end...boredom. Al Gore (**picture**) promised that zebras will not change their spots. Michelle Bachman (**picture**) promised to withdraw from Libya...and Africa. Gabriel Green (**picture**), dubbed the "Space-Age Candidate" in 1960, had lofty goals of creating a UTOPIA by eliminating poverty with credit cards. George H. W. Bush (**picture**) famously promised in 1988: "Read my lips: No new taxes," only to sign a bill raising taxes during his first and only term. Maybe Nietzsche (**picture**) was thinking of political promises when he said, "*One must have a good memory to be able to keep all of the promises one makes.*"

The reason I'm bring all this up is that today we're beginning a sermon series, "*An Old Testament Christmas*" (**picture**). It's about God's promises made in the Old Testament. During the series we'll be studying different Old Testament prophecies about the birth of Jesus, prophecies indicating that Christmas began long before the night Jesus was born.

Jesus' coming was predicted for thousands of years. The Old Testament contains some 300 specific predictions about the coming Messiah. Obviously, the Christmas Season isn't long enough for us to look at all 300 Messianic prophecies, so we'll only study a few of the major ones.

Maybe today you're here and you've got lots of questions. We are so glad that you're here! We believe that truth does not fear scrutiny. Because our time is limited on Sunday, I'd encourage you to check it out for yourself. Lee Strobel (**3 pictures**) was an atheist and a journalist for the *Chicago Tribune*. He was where maybe you're at. He came to Christ and is a best selling author. Let me encourage you to pick up two of his books, *The Case for Christ* or *The Case for Christmas*. And read the original account for yourself that we find in the Gospels. A great place to begin is the Gospel of Luke.

Today we want to focus on Genesis 3:15 (p. 3): *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.*" God didn't waste any time telling us that Christmas was coming. He began predicting Jesus' coming in the very first book of the Bible. This is the first promise of the coming Savior, the first Messianic prediction. If you're taking notes...

1. It begins with the bad news of the Gospel. The term "gospel" is one of those words found in the New Testament that most don't realize is actually an Old Testament word. It simply means "*good news.*" That's how it's usually translated in the Old Testament and sometimes in the New Testament. The concept of the gospel found in the Old Testament is recognized by two New Testament passages. Galatians 3:8, "*And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, 'In you shall all the nations be blessed'.*" Here Paul is quoting Genesis 12:3. Then, Hebrews 4:2 says, "*For good news came to us just as to them...*" The gospel is good news.

The gospel solves our greatest problem, sin. But you must know the bad news before you're ready for the "good news." When New Testament writers use the term "*gospel,*" they're using a term first used by Old Testament prophets, translated as "good news," "glad tidings," or "good tidings." It's a response to the worst "bad news." Genesis 3:15 is critical to understanding God's good news (*gospel*), but we need to understand its context.

Genesis 3:15 is the first verse in the Bible where Adam and Jesus appear in close proximity. From Genesis to Revelation, the Bible contains one unbroken testimony of the Savior and the gospel. It's a common thread running through Old Testament passages of God's problem solving plan to free us from sin and guilt. It's why Jesus said all of the Scriptures speak of Him (Luke 24:27), because they do.

This all takes place at the beginning of human history. Adam and Eve have disobeyed God's only command, eating the forbidden fruit. Incidentally, did you see the recent scientific news report? Dr. Mark Stoeckle (**picture**) of Rockefeller University and other scientists have discovered that "all humans are descended from just two people."

The Bible tells us that God created Adam and Eve, placed them in a perfect Paradise. But in Genesis 3, sin entered Paradise. Their first impulse is to hide from God. Their second is to make excuses for their sin. Adam blames Eve, Eve blames the serpent. No one is willing to own up or take responsibility.

Suddenly Paradise isn't so beautiful. Eden was ruined by the entrance of sin. Dark shadows grow as Adam and Eve contemplate what they've done. The smell of death is in the air. Under a nearby tree the serpent lies quietly. He alone delights in what's happening. This was his plan from the very beginning. He intended to humiliate God by ruining

Paradise and now he's done it. He's shown the whole universe God's great experiment didn't work. No race of beings could ever be trusted to freely obey God. Left to themselves they always disobey, even in Paradise. That powerfully demonstrates too, that sin is not environmental.

As God surveys the moral wreckage of the fall, He immediately begins to pass sentence. He begins where sin began, with the serpent. Later He'll come to the woman and man, but He speaks to the serpent first. While you may not realize it, this verse isn't directed at us, though it certainly applies to us. God is the speaker. The snake is the one being spoken to. God passes judgment on the serpent for his part in the fall of humanity. First, he's cursed above every other animal. Second, he'll crawl on his belly forever. Third, he'll eat dust all the days of his life. Genesis 3:15 is the first mention of the gospel, but there's no hope for Satan. He's forever excluded from God's plan of salvation. There's only a curse and a public judgment.

The Fall is Satan's finest hour. When Satan deceived Eve and Adam chose to follow her, he usurped God's plan and gained the world for himself. For a short period Satan won the great battle with God, but his victory was short-lived. Everything since has been downhill for him, but it was downhill for Adam, too. In disobeying God, Adam demonstrated contempt for God.

Our world is in denial when it comes to sin. Sin isn't something we talk about. Calvin Miller (**picture**) writes, "*The word 'sinful' was once considered to be an important part of theology but of late it's only an adjective we apply to gooey desserts and women's perfume.*" Such thinking is often found in Christian circles. Many believers have difficulty thinking of themselves as sinners. It just seems too extreme. One Christian periodical had a cartoon depicting four church members with concerned faces meeting in their Pastor's office. With earnest and imploring eyes, they presented their Pastor with a clipboard filled with signatures of the people in the church. Their spokesman said, "*Pastor, this petition requests that in your sermons you change the term 'sinner' to 'person who is morally challenged.'*"

Evil and goodness are not equal opposites. No, evil is dependent on good. It's like a parasite. Thomas Williams (**picture**) puts it this way, "*Evil is to good, not as black is to white, but rather as rust is to metal, as disease is to health, as death is to life.*" People who commit evil are grasping for *good*, but try to get it the wrong way. Drunks drink because they want a buzz. Tyrants grab power because they want significance. Those having sex outside of marriage want acceptance and intimacy. Good feelings, significance and intimacy are all good things, created by God. There's nothing wrong with having them the right way. Sin enters when we try to get "good" things the wrong way, contrary to God's loving laws. Sin is a parasite feeding on things which are inherently good.

2. The bad news has deadly consequences. A sign on a convent read: "*Absolutely no trespassing. Violators will be prosecuted to the full extent of the law. Signed, The Sisters of Mercy.*" That illustrates the struggle we all have – confusion about the relationship between God's grace and judgment.

Some say God is so gracious, that He overlooks sin. They pride themselves on tolerance and acceptance of everyone, no matter how vile the sin. Their theme verse is, "Let him who is without sin cast the first stone." Others emphasize God's judgment of all sin. They're stern and judgmental, like their "God." Their favorite verse is, "Prepare to meet thy God." But neither side reflects a full biblical picture of God. The first stresses God's love and grace, but omits His holiness. The second emphasizes His holiness, but omits His grace. Scripture says God is both loving and holy, gracious and righteous, merciful and just. Because God is righteous and just, sin has consequences...otherwise, God wouldn't be just. And sin has painful consequences. Satan never mentioned this to Eve. He said nothing about the consequences and doesn't mention them to us either.

He never says anything about the trauma a woman goes through after an abortion. He fails to bring up the dirty feeling of being used that comes after sleeping around, a feeling which can haunt your future relationships. He says nothing about the fear that grips you if you get a letter from the IRS after you cheat on your taxes. There are serious consequences to all sin.

3. The good news is God's first promise. Noted physicist, Dr. Neils Bohr (**picture**), said, "*Prediction is a very difficult art...especially when it involves the future.*" But God knows the future and has a plan to deal with sin. God always had a plan wrapped up in the Person of Jesus Christ. Genesis 3:15 is the first mention of the gospel and grace in the entire Bible.

It's easy to miss because the name "*Jesus*" isn't in the text, but He's there. Jesus is the "*seed of the woman,*" Who would one day make His entrance into this world in a most *unlikely* fashion. *Unlikely* because in Hebrew the male is considered the one who has the seed. Children are normally referred to as the "*offspring*" or "*seed*" of the father. This prediction said a day would come when a child would be born from the seed of a woman. That's a way of saying Jesus would be born of a virgin. He wouldn't have an earthly father but through the power of the Spirit, His Father, would be God Himself.

Notice the *location* in the Bible of this first gospel promise? God didn't waste any time. He didn't wait until Deuteronomy, the 5th book of the Bible or Malachi, the last book of the Old Testament, No, He shared the promise of His Plan in Genesis. This was His plan from the dawn of time, even before that! It's how long God has loved you and has planned Your redemption!

In romance movies guys often tell their sweethearts, *"I've loved you all my life. I've loved you even before I met you."* That's dumb. You can't love someone you don't know. But our omniscient God has known you before you were born and loved you before time began! It's always been His plan to send Jesus to crush our Enemy. Hebrews 2:14, *"Since the children have flesh and blood, He too shared in their humanity, so that by His death He might destroy Him Who holds the power of death that is, the devil."*

A study of the Gospels show that Jesus clearly fulfilled this first Messianic prophecy. That horrible Friday Satan struck His heel as Jesus died on the Cross, but on the third day He rose again. In so doing, He crushed Satan. **Genesis 3:15 is "the Protoevangelium," which means "the first Gospel."** It's the first prediction that through His sinless life and atoning death, Jesus would overturn the curse of the Fall. As Hebrews 2:15 says, Jesus came to *"free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death."* He came to destroy the works of our Enemy. Martin Luther (**picture**) wrote, *"The prince of darkness grim; we tremble not for him; his rage we can endure; for lo, his doom is sure, one little word shall fell him!"* What is that word? The word is *Jesus!*

4. The Gospel is in God's first promise. *"From now on you and the woman will be enemies, as will your offspring and hers. You will strike his heel, but He will crush your head."* What's the promise here? We can summarize its predictive truth in three short phrases. First, it tells us that there will be...

There will be an endless conflict. The word *"enemies"* indicates "hostility." One translation says, *"There will be war."* God Himself takes responsibility for this conflict. Eve and the serpent will always be in conflict.

If Satan thought by deceiving Eve, he'd have her in his hip pocket, he was dead wrong. Eve made a huge mistake, but she'd never join the serpent's fan club. Every woman dreams of living in Paradise. Now that Eve has been cast out, every hard day reminds her to despise the serpent.

There's a deeper meaning in the word *"offspring."* In the Hebrew the word is *"seed"* referring to the generations yet unborn that'd trace their heritage back to Eve. Offspring refers to men and women of faith in every generation who believe God. It's the godly line that leads to Abel, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, Daniel, Esther – culminating in the person of Jesus Christ.

Satan has his seed too. Throughout history in every nation, tribe, clan and family, Satan has his people. The line starts with Cain who murdered Abel and goes on to the vile generation of Noah's day, to the Pharaohs who opposed Moses. It includes all the pagan peoples of antiquity as represented by Goliath who scoffed at David and at David's God. Who was it that threw Daniel in the lion's den? The ungodly line of Satan. Who hated the prophets and murdered them in cold blood? The ungodly line of Satan.

Then, we come to the days of Jesus. When He was born, Herod tried to murder Him. As He grew up, the Pharisees opposed Him, plotting to kill Him. Satan infiltrated His inner circle, filling Judas' with malignant evil. When He's arrested, men stood in line to lie about Him. When Pilate offered to release Jesus, the bloodthirsty crowd cried out for Barabbas instead. Who was behind the crucifixion of Jesus? The ungodly line of Satan. It's *the Conflict of the Ages*, the struggle between those who believe God and those who don't. Beginning with Genesis 3:15 there's a fundamental division in the human race. Francis Schaeffer (**picture**) speaks of *"two humanities"* that arise after the Fall, *"From this time on in the flow of history there are two humanities. The one humanity says there is no God, or it makes God in its own imagination, or it tries to come to God in its own way. The other humanity comes to the true God in God's way. There is no neutral ground."*

The seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent have opposed each other across the ages and the battle continues to this present hour. Remember the words of Jesus, *"If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you"* (John 15:18-19). Jesus never promised people wouldn't hate Christians. He just told us not to worry about it. Being hated by a lost world is part of this conflict that goes back to Genesis 3:15.

There will be a temporary defeat. *"You will strike his heel."* If you've ever had a heel spur, or pulled your Achilles', you know how painful it can be. Heel trouble slows you down, but it won't kill you. You can live with heel problems even through you have to hobble around.

This has a two-fold reference. First, it refers to the fact in this life Satan sometimes wins the battle. He has many weapons in his arsenal and he shoots them at the people of God, 24/7. Sometimes we're wounded by discouragement, criticism, anger, bitterness, or perhaps by cherished plans that go astray, dreams that never come true, projects that never come to fruition, goals frustrated despite our best efforts.

If you want proof Satan wins a temporary victory, visit a cemetery. Every grave testifies to his infernal power. We'll all spend time there eventually. This text reminds us the Christian life is not a bed of roses. Not only is there continual conflict, the bad guys win a fair number of the battles.

But there's another meaning, however. When Christ died on the cross, Satan struck His heel. Where on His body were the nails pounded in? His hands and feet, right through His heels. When they took His dead body down from the cross, it appeared Satan had won. But on Sunday morning, that first Easter, the true Victor walked out of the grave, alive from the dead.

Satan delivered a terrible blow on Good Friday. No doubt he thought he'd thrown a knockout punch, but he was wrong. All he did was strike Jesus on the heel. But that suffering was nothing compared to what Jesus did to Satan.

There will be eventual victory. *"You will strike his heel, but He will crush your head."* Compare these two phrases for a moment. First it's the *heel* vs. the *head* and second, it's *striking* vs. *crushing*. When Jesus died on the cross, He delivered a crushing blow to Satan. Who do you think won?

Heel wounds are painful but won't kill you. No one survives a crushed head. The Cross was God's head crushing death-blow to Satan. When Jesus died and rose from the dead, he utterly defeated Satan.

The key to killing a snake is his head. Dr. James Merritt tells of when he was a teenage boy, he had a little dachshund he kept out in a pen in the backyard. One morning as he was getting ready for school, he heard his little dog yelping. It was the kind of bark that let him know something was wrong. He ran outside and there was a huge snake (**picture**) about 5 ft. long and several inches thick, coiled up, ready to attack his dog. He ran into the house, got his rifle, came out, got within about six feet of the snake, and pumped four bullets into the body of the snake. But it looked like it didn't even phase the snake, even though he was ripping holes right through his body. He's still coiled up ready to strike. Then he realized what he needed to do. He got a little closer and shot the snake in the head and instantly killed him.

One day Satan's head will be crushed once and for all. It's noteworthy to see who's going to do it. Believers will participate in that event. Romans 16:20, *"And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly."* Notice the word *"your."* We'll crush Satan. How can that be? It's simple. Because Jesus won the victory, we have the victory. We're in Him and He is in us. 1 John 4:4, *"You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world."*

That raises one question: If Satan has been crushed, why does he still seem to be doing so well 2000 years later? We know Satan is alive and well on planet earth. How can a defeated being who was crushed by Christ exercise so much power? The answer is at the Cross Satan was judged and his sentence pronounced. However, he's now free to roam the earth awaiting his final execution. It also explains why Satan's destructive power on the earth will grow even greater in the last days. The clock is ticking he becomes more desperate. But in the end Satan will be destroyed and all those who follow him will be destroyed with him.

Conclusion: Let's wrap up this up by considering how it applies to us today.

1. *The Christian life will always be a struggle.* Struggle implies effort, exertion, difficulty. The Apostle Paul uses images of a runner, a boxer, wrestler and soldier. The Christian life isn't easy; it's hard work demanding full commitment and engagement of your soul. Until the day you die you'll struggle with temptation. Sometime you'll win, sometimes you'll lose. Don't get discouraged. We're at war. The Enemy continually attacks us. Salvation is free, but no one gets a free ride to heaven.

2. *Our victories won't come without wounds.* If it pleased the Father to bruise His own Son, how will we escape the wounds of life? If Jesus suffered in doing the will of God, we will too. At the Cross Satan wounded Jesus. Even after His resurrection His body carried the marks of His suffering.

The same will be true for us. You'll struggle hard in this life and in struggling, you'll be wounded. Don't despair that life is hard. Be thankful and struggle on! If you feel like running away, remember there's nowhere to run. If you leave the battlefield today, you'll wake up to find yourself on another one tomorrow. So you might as well stand and fight. As Phillips Brooks (**picture**) wisely said, *"He is a foolish dreamer who expects an easy and bloodless victory for any noble plan. But yet, success waits before every good cause if it can only persevere and struggle on with its wounded heel."*

There's no gain without pain. It keeps us humble. Even when we finally win, we know what it cost to win. We know it's not our power and that keeps us from boasting. The coward who shrinks from wounds and the boaster who forgets there are wounds, miss the true meaning of Genesis 3:15.

3. *God's plan of salvation is wrapped in the Person of Jesus Christ.* The *"seed of the woman,"* made His entrance into this world in an unlikely way. When this promise was given, no one could have imagined the coming of Jesus. The *"seed of the woman"* simply meant He must be a member of the human race. Jesus didn't come in the normal, biological way, He's conceived by a Virgin. No one before or since entered the world as He did. Jesus is the ultimate *"seed of the woman."* No man was involved in His conception.

When God wanted to save the world, He didn't send a committee. He sent His Son. When God wanted to say, "I love you," He wrapped His love note in swaddling clothes. When God wanted to crush Satan, He began in a stable.

Let me close by sharing the three questions Paul Little (**picture**) liked to ask when he shared the gospel with someone. **First, have you accepted Christ as your Savior, or are you still on the way?** Some of you are still "on the way" toward Christ. You realize that step by step, you're coming closer and closer to a moment of decision. **Second, if you are still "on the way," where are you in your spiritual journey at this moment?** Are you still far away and uninterested or do you find yourself being drawn to Jesus?

Third, are you ready to receive Christ as Savior and Lord? No decision is more important. But no one else can make it for you. If you aren't ready, then nothing I say or do can compel you to come to Christ. But if you're ready, then it's time for you to do business with the Lord.

The Bible says, "*To all who received Him, to those who believed in Him, He gave the right to become children of God*" (John 1:12). Have you ever received Christ as your Savior and Lord? Would you like to do that now?

If you would, just pray in your heart: "Lord, I'm a sinner. I know Jesus died for all my sins. Come into my life today. I'm trusting Jesus as my Lord and Savior right now."

Friend don't run away from God like Adam and Eve...you can't anyway. Instead, run to Jesus. Trust Him as your Savior and Lord today! He kept His first promise. He'll keep the promises that He's made to forgive you and give you eternal life. Will you come to Him? Will you trust Him?