

The Serpent Crusher
Genesis 3:15
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Introduction

Right at the start of Romeo and Juliet, we're told how the play will end. The narrator announces that a pair of star-crossed lovers will take their own lives by the end of the play. Romeo and Juliet are going to die.

And this completely changes how we watch the play. If we didn't know that Romeo and Juliet die at the end, we might think we're watching a nice love story that's going to end happily ever after. Instead, we watch with melancholy because we know it ends with tragedy.

The Bible also starts by telling us the end of the story. The Bible is one big rescue story. God sets out to rescue his people from Satan's control and the terrible fate in store for them. So, we might expect the Bible to describe an evenly matched battle between God and Satan, but God makes a striking prediction just three chapters in. God prophesies that Satan will be defeated.

And because we're blessed to have the whole of God's Word revealed to us, we know that prophecy came true. Satan was defeated by Jesus through his death and resurrection. And then the rest of the New Testament looks forward to Jesus' return when Satan's defeat will be fully realised.

So, this prophecy in Genesis 3:15 sets the tone for the rest of the Bible. The Bible is not the story of an equally matched battle between God and Satan; it's the tale of Satan's continual downfall. This prophecy also sets the tone for our Christian lives. Though we are engaged in a spiritual battle, we aren't fighting a losing battle. The Christian songwriters Shane & Shane put it so well, "We're fighting a battle that Jesus has already won."

So, I want to encourage you this morning by reflecting on this incredible prophecy, and we're going to do that by answering four questions: Where does this prophecy come from? What is this prophecy about? How is this prophecy about Jesus? What does this prophecy mean for us today?

Where does this prophecy come from?

So, where does this prophecy come from? Let's go back to the very beginning. The Bible begins with God creating the world. He fills it with light, water, vegetation, and animals. And it's all good in God's eyes. Then God creates a man called Adam and a woman called Eve and he places them in this perfect world in a garden called Eden. And

Genesis chapter 1 finishes with this wonderful conclusion: “God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.”¹

And there’s only one rule in Eden. God says to Adam, “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die.”² Adam and Eve could eat from any tree or plant they wanted except one. They weren’t allowed to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

This wasn’t a problem at first. But then, one day, a particularly crafty snake approaches Eve. This snake wasn’t just any snake. We’re told in the book of Revelation that this ancient snake is called the devil, or Satan, and it’s his mission to lead the whole world astray.³

And sadly, that’s what Satan does in the garden; he leads mankind astray. He approaches Eve and starts by undermining God’s command. He says to Eve, “Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden’?”⁴ God didn’t say that but Satan twists God’s words to make Eve second-guess them.

Eve replies, “We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, ‘You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.’”⁵ You can see doubts begin to form in Eve’s mind. “Oh yeah, there is one tree we’re not allowed to eat from.”

So, Satan takes advantage of this moment of weakness. He says, “You will not certainly die... For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”⁶

And Eve falls for his deception. “When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it.”⁷ Eve is misled but she also doesn’t put up much of a fight. The fruit looks tasty, and apparently, it’s going to make her wise. So, she picks the fruit and eats it. She chooses the selfish path rather than the path of obedience to God.

And Adam isn’t any better. Verse 6 tells us that Eve “also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.”⁸ Adam’s been standing there the whole time. He doesn’t protect his wife from being misled, and he also decides to eat the fruit rather than obey God.

¹ Genesis 1:31

² Genesis 2:16-17

³ Revelation 12:9

⁴ Genesis 3:1

⁵ Genesis 3:2-3

⁶ Genesis 3:4-5

⁷ Genesis 3:6

⁸ Genesis 3:6

And so, we're left with three guilty parties. The deceitful snake who instigated this mini-rebellion against God's command, and the two human beings who broke it. And so, God arrives to judge to them, but he starts with Satan. And here's where we find our prophecy. God says to Satan in verses 14-15, "Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and all wild animals! You will crawl on your belly, and you will eat dust all the days of your life. And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."⁹

What is the prophecy about?

So, that's where the prophecy comes from, but what does it actually mean?

We're going to focus on verse 15 this morning and verse 15 has two halves. In the first half, God makes a declaration of war: "I will put enmity between you and the woman." Literally, God's going to make Satan the enemy of Eve. Moments earlier, Satan and Eve chatted naturally like acquaintances. Now there's animosity between them. God won't allow Satan to talk to Eve without facing hostility.

As I was thinking through examples of allies turned enemies, a recent example sprung to mind. Do you remember the feud between Donald Trump and Elon Musk? These two were good pals. Trump brought Musk on to lead a department of his government in January but just a few months later they were at each other's throats. I think they've reconciled now but the sudden change to their relationship was a good example of what's happening here.

But Satan and Eve won't be the only people involved in this battle. God also says that he will put enmity between Satan's offspring and Eve's offspring. We know who Eve's offspring are, that's us, that's the human race. But who are Satan's offspring?

Satan's offspring are not literal biological offspring. They are spiritual offspring. They're all those who follow Satan in spirit. They're all those who intentionally or ignorantly participate in Satan's dishonesty. So that includes his legion of demons but sadly that includes lots of human beings too. Jesus said to the Pharisees, "You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desires."¹⁰ Jesus also said, "'Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when you have succeeded, you make them twice as much a child of hell as you are."¹¹

So, God reveals there will be an ongoing conflict between the children of Satan and the children of Eve. There will be a collective struggle between these two sides. We refer to this today as the spiritual battle. We feel the pull of Satan's temptations, and the pressure of the unbelieving world, and we have to resist them both. As Paul writes to the Ephesians, "Put on the full armour of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers,

⁹ Genesis 3:14-15

¹⁰ John 8:44

¹¹ Matthew 23:15

against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.”¹²

So, this part of the prophecy is a battle cry. Satan won’t be allowed to lead mankind astray without facing opposition. The battle that started with Satan and Eve will be continued by their descendants.

But then the second half of verse 15 reveals how the battle will end. We might assume from the first half of the verse that the two sides will go to war until one side wins. But God says to Satan, “*he* will crush your head.” It won’t be an army that wins this battle, but one man. One male offspring of Eve will champion her descendants in the battle. And he won’t go into battle against the other army; he’ll fight Satan himself. God says, “he will crush *your* head.” Not “*their* heads,” “*your* head.” The war that Satan provoked in Eden will be finished when one man crushes his head.

But, in a surprising turn of events, God says that Satan will strike back. Satan will be defeated but not without landing a significant blow. But then that’s where God ambiguously concludes his judgement. So, Satan is left in perpetual anxiety. The war with Satan will be won by one man, even though Satan will hurt him. So, with every new baby born, Satan’s defeat could be at hand. That’s what this prophecy is all about. God declares that Satan’s defeat is coming.

How is this prophecy about Jesus?

So, who is this man who will squash Satan? If it wasn’t clear already, the Bible makes it clear that Jesus is that man. John puts it plainly, “The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil’s work.”¹³ And you can imagine the author of Hebrews had Genesis in mind when he wrote, “Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil.”¹⁴

As we approach Christmas, we remember that the Son of God came down to earth as a human being. Incredibly, one of the reasons he came as that little baby was to fulfil this prophecy and take the fight to Satan. And like a boxing match, Jesus’ victory is won over three rounds.

The first round has already happened. It took place during Jesus’ life. We read in Luke 4 that “Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil.”¹⁵ Notice there that God sent him to be tempted by Satan, because this was an extremely important part of defeating him. Where Adam and Eve failed to resist Satan’s tricks, Jesus stood up to the test. Three times Satan tested Jesus and every time Jesus rejected him with a verse of Scripture. Round one undeniably went to Jesus.

¹² Ephesians 6:11-12

¹³ 1 John 3:8

¹⁴ Hebrews 2:14

¹⁵ Luke 4:1-2

Round two has also already happened but this round looked like it was going Satan's way. As God predicted, the devil struck back. Jesus was killed on a cross. This wasn't supposed to happen. Jesus was supposed to save God's people and not die trying.

And Satan actually played a key part in getting Jesus killed. We read in John 13 that "Satan entered [Judas]"¹⁶ at the last supper. He was the one who influenced Judas to betray Jesus.

But ironically, getting Jesus killed would be Satan's downfall because Jesus wasn't killed against his will. He let himself be killed because he knew his death was the answer.

Paul writes in Colossians 2, "When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having cancelled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross. And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross."¹⁷

Satan drives a wedge between us and God by encouraging us to sin, but Jesus died to deal with our sins. When we believe in Jesus' sacrifice, our sins no longer count against us. They've been nailed to the cross and forgiven. So, Satan has no hold over us. He's beat. The cross is not a symbol of Jesus' defeat but of Jesus' victory.

And then Jesus triumphed again. Jesus conquered death itself. He came back to life and proved there is life after death for all those who believe in him. The empty tomb is another clear sign that Jesus won this round as well.

So, rounds one and two have already happened. But round three hasn't happened yet. Round three will take place at some point in the future when Jesus comes back to hand Satan his final judgment. We're given a picture of this judgment in Revelation 20. "The devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulphur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever."¹⁸

In round two of this boxing match, Jesus threw a punch that won the bout. Satan wasn't knocked out but he was defeated. The spiritual battle we experience today is Satan's fruitless attempt to stay in the fight. Or, as Roy put it to me, at the end of a war after victory is declared, there are still little skirmishes that need to be settled. One commentator said, "What we're experiencing now are Satan's dying struggles, for when Christ comes again, he will utterly destroy Satan and his power over human beings."

Satan was defeated in round two, but one day he will be removed from the equation. Round three will be the full realisation of Jesus' victory. It's so awesome and incredible

¹⁶ John 13:27

¹⁷ Colossians 2:13-15

¹⁸ Revelation 20:10

that a small prophecy all the way back in Genesis has already been fulfilled by Jesus and will be finally complete when Jesus returns to eliminate Satan once and for all.

What does this prophecy mean for us today?

So, what does all this mean for us today? How is Genesis 3:15 supposed to encourage us on a daily basis? I have two words for you: confidence and hope.

The prediction of Satan's defeat in Genesis should give us great confidence because God has always had Satan's downfall in mind. He hasn't struggled to deal with Satan. He opposed Satan from the very beginning and planned his demise at the very start. He arranged Jesus' arrival on earth, his victorious death and triumphant resurrection, and he has awesome plans for Jesus' return. We can be confident in God because he always has and will always deal with Satan and his evil.

And we can be confident in ourselves when we face Satan's evil because Jesus has already won the battle for us. To quote some more of that Shane & Shane song, "I'm fighting a battle you've already won, no matter what comes my way, I will overcome." That's not just a song lyric, it's a biblical promise. James writes, "Resist the devil, and he will *flee* from you."¹⁹

Picture a lion hunting a gazelle. We often think of ourselves as the gazelle because Satan is described as a prowling lion. And whilst we should be wary of Satan's prowling, we shouldn't underestimate him, we have the power to make him flee. Jesus has beaten him for us so we can think of ourselves as the lion. We can face him with the confidence of a lion chasing an injured gazelle.

The prophecy of Satan's defeat can also give us great hope. Maybe you feel like you're an injured gazelle under attack. Maybe you can't face any more temptation. Maybe you're weighed down by the guilt of your sin. I want to say to you this morning that there's hope in your ongoing battle. Satan's defeat means there will be relief in your life. As Paul says to the Corinthians, "God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it."²⁰

And then Satan's defeat points us to the greatest hope of all. One day, Jesus will return and evil will be banished. Satan will be locked up, and we'll never have to face his schemes again.

Paul writes to the Romans, "The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet." In the battle between Satan's offspring and Eve's offspring, Jesus represents us; me and you. Satan won't just be crushed beneath Jesus' feet; he'll be crushed beneath our feet.

"When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: 'Death has been swallowed

¹⁹ James 4:7

²⁰ 1 Corinthians 10:13

up in victory.' 'Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?' The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."²¹

Until Jesus returns, this hope is held out to everyone to take hold of. Maybe you'd never thought about the impact Satan has on your life until today, but now you're wondering how you can be part of Jesus' winning team. Well, here's how. The Bible says, "Everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God."²²

If you believe that Jesus is the Son of God, then you have overcome the devil. All who believe in Jesus can have total confidence and certain hope because they're part of the winning side. Our victory was promised at the dawn of the world, it was won by Jesus on the cross, and it will be fully realised soon – hallelujah.

Thank you, Father, for this wonderful prophecy that points us to Jesus' victory over Satan on the cross. Thank you for Jesus' death for our sake. In the midst of our spiritual battle against Satan's dying struggles, please give us confidence in our victory over him. Please give us hope in each moment of the battle and an expectant hope of Jesus' return. Thank you Lord that Jesus is coming back to banish evil for good. Thank you, Lord, that this has been your plan from the very start. To you be all the glory. Amen.

²¹ 1 Corinthians 15:54-57

²² 1 John 5:4-5