

THE SEED AND SHILOH
GENESIS 3:15; 12:3; 49:10

INTRODUCTION:

Have you ever watched a picture being focused on a screen? At first the picture is there but the details are blurred. You can tell there is a man standing there, but you cannot identify him. You can tell he is holding something in his hand and is looking toward the South, but that is about all. Then as the picture comes into focus, you begin to pick up more details. The man becomes more identifiable and you are able to recognize him as a friend. You can even tell the type of gun that he holds in his hand. You can then even tell that it is a deer that he has shot. Finally, when the picture is in full focus, you can identify every detail.

This is an example of what you have in Old Testament prophecies. The first prophecies are not real vivid or very exact in details, but they are still part of the picture. The closer you come in the Old Testament to the great event of the appearance of the Messiah, the more vivid God made the picture and the most exact the details.

What were the first things God made known about the coming of the Messiah? They are found in the book of Genesis. It will be worth our while to look at these earliest statements concerning the coming of the Messiah. It is well to remember that we are not looking for Christ in Genesis but for prophecies concerning the coming of Christ in Genesis. If we are looking for Christ in Genesis, we would start with the first page and find Him on almost every page. But we find only three basic prophetic revelations

concerning His future coming as the incarnate Son of God. These are not types and symbols, but actual statements about who He would be and what He would do when He came.

I. THE PROPHECY OF THE SEED OF WOMAN.

The first indication of the gospel was given in the Garden of Eden. It came right after the first human sin and as a part of the first declaration of judgment. It was spoken by the sovereign Creator to the serpent and the man and the woman. All the principal parties involved in the drama of redemption were there. “But I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; each shall bruise thy head and thou shall bruise his heel.”

Exactly what do we find in this statement? Here is a statement concerning the coming struggle between the “seed of the woman” and the “seed of the serpent.” On a physical level this has generally proven to be true. Most men and serpents have been in a state of enmity since the garden incident. But surely this is more than just the statement that man would see snakes as an enemy.

The Lord God moves from talking about serpents and men in a general sense to a personal sense. “It (singular) shall bruise thy head, and thou (singular) shall bruise his heel.” God addresses the serpent as “it” or “he,” one seed of the woman is to crush his head while he is to bruise the heel of the seed.

From ancient days Jewish scholars understood this to be a prophecy concerning the coming of the Messiah. Christian scholars have also understood this to be the first indication about the coming of the Messiah. It has been traditionally called the “First Gospel Message.”

Is there any indication that the New Testament writer so understood it? Listen to these two statements of Paul: “And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly” (Romans 16:20). This surely indicates that the Apostle understood Genesis 3:15 as being a reference to the coming Messiah, Jesus Christ.

And in another place Paul writes, “But when the fullness of time was come, God sent forth His son, made of woman, made under the law. redeemed them that were under the law that we might receive the adoption of sons” (Gal. 4:4, 5).

References to a “seed” in the scriptures are usually the “seed of man.” There is probably an indication here that there was to be something unique in the birth of this one.

However, the chief message given to the serpent, Satan, and the woman was that the seed of the woman would triumph over the serpent. On this particular day the serpent had triumphed over man, but one was coming who would triumph over the serpent. In the process of doing this, the seed of the woman would be wounded by the serpent.

This struggle with the serpent was real in the life of the Lord Jesus. It began even in his birth through Herod and it climaxed in his death upon the cross. It progressed in the

wilderness and in the garden, but in the end Jesus won the battle. Even though he was wounded in the process. But, it is our confidence that while he was wounded in the heel he delivered a fatal crushing blow to the head of the serpent. The relationship of the serpent to the human family has never been the same since the cross. He has received a crushing blow to the head and is forever a defeated enemy of man.

What a word of prophecy! Jesus was uniquely the “seed of the woman.” His life is the only human life that did not involve “the seed of a man.” His is the only virgin birth known in the human family. And furthermore by his life and death, he fatally wounded the head of our enemy. He fulfilled the first word of prophecy found in scripture in an unmistakable fashion.

II. THE SEED OF ABRAHAM

One of the major emphases of the book of Genesis is upon Abraham and his seed. In the old version the word is usually translated “seed,” but the newer versions translate the word “descendants.”

The first word of prophecy that God gave to Abraham concerning his future and that of his descendants says: “Now the Lord had said unto Abram, “Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house, unto a land that I will show thee: and I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing; and I will bless them that bless thee and curse him that curses thee: and indeed shall of the families of the earth be blessed.”

The climatic expression in this prophetic word is “and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed.” This was reaffirmed to Abraham more than once and then later to Isaac and then to Jacob. In the great encounter that Abraham and Isaac had with God on the mountain where he offered Isaac to God as a sacrifice, God said to Abraham: “And through your off-spring all nations will be blessed because you have obeyed me.”

The writers of the New Testament understood the “off-spring” to be one person – Jesus of Nazareth. It is noteworthy that Matthew opens his gospel with these words: “The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. Abraham beget Isaac and Isaac beget Jacob; and Jacob beget Judas and his brethren” (Matthew 1:1,2). Matthew presents Jesus of Nazareth as being the offspring, or “seed” of Abraham.

In his preaching that is recorded in the book of Acts, Simon Peter presented Jesus as the “seed of Abraham;”: “Ye are the children of the prophets and the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, and in thy seed shall all kindreds of the earth be blessed. Unto you first God, having raised up this son, Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities” (Acts 3:25-26).

The Apostle Paul picked up the same theme in his teaching and preaching: “Christ that redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree: that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through

faith” (Gal. 3:13-14). And then in that same chapter the Apostle went even a step further and spoke even more directly: “The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. The scripture does not say, “And to His seeds,” meaning many people, but “and to your seed,” meaning one person who is Christ. (Gal. 3:16-17).

While the “blessing” was not spelled out to Abraham, the New Testament reveals to us that the blessing was Jesus Himself. Through Jesus the blessing that God gave to Abraham has been extended to the whole of the human family. Through Jesus Gentiles, like us, have the privilege of coming under God’s saving protection and blessing. We have the privilege of being adopted into the family of God as sons and daughters. We have the privilege of receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit who enables us to walk in this world as sons of Abraham.

Every blessing that has come to us through Jesus, the seed of Abraham, was prophesied to Abraham at the beginning of God’s saving purpose through the nation of Israel. What a wonder! What a wonder!

III. THE SHILOH OF JUDAH

The third of the Messianic prophecies in Genesis is given in Jacob’s blessings on his twelve sons. When he came to Judah, the third born son, he had a special word concerning the destiny of Judah. “Judah, your brothers will praise you (the name Judah means praise) your hand will be on the neck of your enemies; your father’s sons will bow down to you. You are lion’s cub, O Judah, you return from the prey, my son. Like a lion he crouches and lies down, like a lioness who dares to rouse you, the scepter will not

depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet until he comes to whom it belongs and obedience of the nation is his" The statement translated "until he comes to whom it belongs" is translated in the older version "until Shiloh comes." There has been a lot of debate about the meaning of the word "Shiloh." The translators of the New International Version understand it to mean, "the one to whom it belongs."

This statement to Judah is the only Messianic word in Jacob's blessing upon his sons. He identifies Judah as being the one from whom the rulers of Israel will come. We know that this prophecy received partial fulfillment when David, the son of Jesse, who was a descendent of Judah, was crowned as the king of Israel. Until the end of the kingdom of Judah a descendent of David sat upon the throne of Israel.

However, this reference to "Shiloh" points to one who would be the ultimate fulfillment of the prophecy, the one to whom the throne and the scepter truly belonged.

The New Testament writers understood this "one to whom it belongs" to be Jesus. We have already noticed the opening to the gospel of Matthew: "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham." It is Matthew's way of saying, "Here He is! This is Shiloh! The scepter rightfully belongs to Him."

This Old Testament prophecy reminds us of the incident in the life of John the beloved in the book of Revelation. In his vision John sees a book, which seems to be the title-deed to the earth, and no one can be found to open it. John is deeply grieved by this terrible

plight and weeps out loud. One of the elders comforts him with these words, “Weep not: behold the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, has prevailed to open the book, and to loose seven seals thereof. And I beheld, and lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders stood a Lamb as it had been slain having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent forth into all the earth Rev. 5:5, 6). What John saw in this vision was none other than the Shiloh, the one to whom the scepter belongs. And what happens? Every creature on earth falls down to worship him and to give him praise.

So, in this earliest book in the Bible we learn that the Messiah was to come into the world through the Tribe of Judah. He would come as the one who had the qualities of the Lion of the tribe of Judah. He would come as Shiloh – the one to whom the scepter belongs. Another possible meaning for the word Shiloh is “the one who gives rest.” These are not contradictory understandings of the meaning of that name. For indeed when the one to whom the scepter belongs has the scepter in the world or in your life, then He is able to give rest. Later Isaiah will declare that He will be called “The Prince of Peace.”

Do these Old Testament prophecies seem to be shadowy or uncertain to you? Let me remind you that those to whom they were first delivered believed them and were saved by believing. Evidently Adam and Eve responded in faith to the statement about the coming Redeemer. We do not have to guess about the response of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Their faith response is recorded in the Bible, particularly in the New Testament.

But we have a wonderful advantage. We have not only the prophecy, but we also have the distinct and unmistakable fulfillment of the prophecy. Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of these words of prophecy found in the book of Genesis. Surely He is the only who has the right to rule in your life. He is the one that as you allow Him to rule will bestow upon you the blessings promised to Abraham. Then, as you submit to His rule, you will indeed know victory over the adversary, the serpent. Thank God for the fulfillment of His Word of prophecy.

No wonder Schaff once wrote of Him, “Jesus of Nazareth, without money and arms, conquered more millions than Alexander, Caesar, Mohammed, and Napoleon; without science and learning He shed more light on things that are human and divine than all the philosophers and scholars combined; without the eloquence of the schools He spoke words of life such as were never spoken before, nor since, and produced effects which lie beyond the reach of orator or poet; without writing a single line, He set more pens in motion and furnished themes for more sermons, orations, discussions, works of art, learned volumes, and sweet songs of praise than the whole army of great men of ancient and modern times. Born in a manger and crucified as a malefactor, He now controls the destiny of the civilized world, and rules a spiritual empire which embraces 1/3 of the inhabitants of the globe.” This is Jesus and the Shiloh!