

# The Snake Crusher

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[ 0 : 00 ] So, we're going to get into the sermon now. If you were here last week, this is going to be a little bit different. If you weren't here last week, you can ask somebody about it.

So, we're starting a new sermon series, and it's called Look to the Rock. So, this is a sermon series in the Old Testament where we are going to look for revelations of Jesus. Now, this is not going to be in one book.

We are going to just take passages through the Old Testament, and we're looking for images, pictures, foreshadowing of Christ. The title of this series comes from Isaiah 51.

The prophet Isaiah is writing to the Jews. We're having a very hard time, and he said to them, Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness, you who seek the Lord. Look to the rock from which you were hewn, and to the quarry from which you were dug.

So, these guys are suffering, and he's saying, look, when you're suffering, it's good to remember your story. It's good to remember where you come from. Now, the story of the Old Testament is, in a sense, our story. Now, it's not our cultural story.

[ 0 : 59 ] It's not our national story. But it's our story, and that is the story of the family of God, and we've been grafted into this story. And so, it's important that we understand it, and it's especially important that we understand it in light of Christ, because Christ is our way into the story.

It's through him that we become part of the people of God. And so, it's helpful to understand. This series, I'm hoping, will help illustrate how the Bible works together.

There are four, the Bible, there's a word called metanarrative used for the fact that the Bible is telling one whole story, and it is not always easy to see that. It's sometimes very hard to see that, but there is one big story, and it's kind of got four acts.

There's creation, which is where God makes everything, and it's amazing. There's the fall, which is where people sin, and everything is fractured. Then there is redemption, and that is really the bulk of the Bible, the story of how God is undoing what we did, and it culminates in the death of Jesus and the resurrection of Jesus.

And then there's restoration, which is this forward-looking anticipation of Jesus returning to restore all things. That's a way of thinking about the story of the Bible, but that's not how a lot of us think about the Bible.

[ 2 : 09 ] A lot of us think about the Bible like it's two totally disconnected stories, the Old Testament and the New Testament, right? The Old Testament is very long, confusing, occasionally boring, most often terrifying, and finally it ends when you get to Jesus.

And we really like the second story better, and we feel like it's also a story of two gods. The God of the Old Testament is very angry, feels like he's a bit volatile, and the God of the New Testament, well, we like him a lot more, seems more friendly.

The God of the Bible is the same God, the Trinitarian God, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, and God together is working from the first page of Genesis to the final page of Revelation, and he doesn't change.

But his purposes change, and so one of the things that God, the Father, and the Spirit are doing in Scripture is to highlight Jesus Christ in particular as the hero and champion of this whole story.

In fact, in Luke 24, Jesus takes his disciples who knew their Bibles very well, and it says that he interpreted them going all the way back to Moses and the prophets, the things that were about him. That's why the New Testament writers so often talk about the Old Testament, because they're like, gosh, he's everywhere.

[ 3 : 20 ] We just never saw it before. So that's what we're going to do. We're going to try to look to the story of ancient Israel and understand it in light of Christ. One of the pictures of Christ in the Old

Testament is that of a rock. We're going to look to the rock, look to the pictures and images.

And the first one that we're going to consider, the first passage that we're going to look at today is from Genesis 3. Genesis 1 through 3, these first three chapters of the Bible are the origin story of the universe, of humanity.

And they are profoundly rich. Now, all of the Bible, I would say, is profoundly rich. But the ancient Israelites, they were fantastic storytellers.

And the people who study this say that Genesis chapters 1 through 3 are some of their storytelling at its finest, meaning there is a lot going on.

But if you read the story of creation and Adam and Eve and the Garden of Eden and the talking snake, if you read it and you think, man, that just sounds a bit like a silly myth.

[ 4 : 23 ] Like, doesn't everybody know science has disproved this whole thing? If that's your reaction and that is a lot of people's reaction, just appreciate the fact that you are certainly not reading the story like an ancient Israelite would have read the story.

In fact, the Old Testament scholar John Walton, who is really one of the leading experts on ancient Israelite culture today, and he has written extensively on Genesis, he says that we probably should even call Genesis an origin story.

Because when we hear origin story, we think scientifically. That's how we've been trained to think. He says a better way to talk about Genesis would be as an identity story. It tells us who we are and why we exist rather than how we were physically made.

That was not the point of this story. So he's like John Walton. He says, you know, if you could go back in time and ask an Israelite what they think about the mechanics of how the universe was made, they would just wonder why you even care about that.

That would not have interested them. They wouldn't understand the debates that we have about this today. He uses this analogy. Imagine you go to a play and you show up 30 minutes late. And after the show, you ask your friend, what happened at the beginning of the play?

[ 5 : 39 ] And your friend says, well, 30 years ago, they decided to make a movie theater here. So a construction company was hired and they made some plans and eventually construction began. You're like, whoa, whoa, whoa. Not the information I was looking for.

Or what happened at the beginning of the story in the play? And they said, oh, sorry. Well, when we came in the room, the lights dimmed and the orchestra started warming up and some announcements were made.

Oh, man, you're missing my point. I want to know what happened in the story. That maybe gives us a sense of how we think about Genesis versus how an ancient Israelite would have thought about Genesis.

Now, that doesn't mean that Genesis isn't history. They aren't just made up stories. No, no, by no means. The New Testament writers clearly believed that Genesis is history.

But the way they told stories in those days is not the way that we tell stories. I wish we had more time for this to show this to you. But that is a definitive fact. When you tell a story, there are assumptions about how you tell the story.

[ 6 : 38 ] And the assumptions that they used, the conventions they used were so different. They were very creative in their storytelling. And it doesn't mean that they were being dishonest. They saw storytelling like art.

I think if you can think about one thing is that storytelling for ancient Israelites was an art form. So I want to show you this painting by Monet. Now, you see this painting and you know what you're looking at, right?

This is a kind of a garden. There are flowers and there is a tree. And I don't think you see this and be like, man, doesn't that Monet guy know about science? That is definitely not what a tree really looks like.

You know what I'm saying? Hey, what an idiot to paint. No, you know when you look at a painting like this, you're looking at an artistic expression of something that is real. And that's a great way to approach the first few chapters of Genesis.

Genesis. And we want to hear it as best as we can in that sense. Now, we're going to read today just from Genesis chapter 3. I'll give you the background. What happens right before it.

[ 7 : 43 ] God, if you remember Genesis 1 and 2, creates everything, makes everything. It's delightful. Everything's good. Creates Eden, which is a garden. Puts Adam and Eve there. They're

like kings. They're like a king and a queen.

They rule in this garden. And there are two trees. And God tells Adam and Eve, you can give everything in the garden to include one of these trees, which is called the tree of life. You can eat of all of this.

And you need to eat of the tree of life. But then there's another tree called the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. And God says, if you eat of that, you will surely die. All right? So that's the background. So Genesis 3, verse 1.

We're going to read 19 verses. Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, did God actually say you shall not eat of any tree of the garden?

And the woman said to the serpent, we may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden. But God said, you shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden. Neither shall you touch it lest you die.

[ 8 : 41 ] But the serpent said to the woman, you will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it, your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.

So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food and that it was a delight to the eyes and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate.

And she also gave some to her husband who was with her and he ate. Then the eyes of both were opened and they knew that they were naked and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.

And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day. The man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to the man and said to him, where are you?

And he said, I heard the sound of you in the garden and I was afraid because I was naked and I hid myself. And he said, who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?

[ 9 : 39 ] The man said, the woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree and I ate. Then the Lord God said to the woman, what is this that you have done?

The woman said, the serpent deceived me and I ate. These guys are good at passing the buck. It's like very early on in humanity's story. Really good at blame shifting. The Lord God then said to the serpent, because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field.

On your belly you shall go and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. I'll put enmity between you and the woman and between your offspring and her offspring and he shall bruise your head and you shall bruise his heel.

To the woman he said, I'll surely multiply your pain and childbearing. In pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be contrary to your husband, but he shall rule over you. And to Adam he said, because you've listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, you shall not eat of it.

Cursed is the ground because of you. In pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you. And you shall eat the plants of the field.

[ 10 : 49 ] By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken. For you are dust, and to dust you shall return. And then we're going to stop there, but a few verses later.

Where it says that God sends Adam and Eve out of the Garden of Eden and he places an angel essentially at the gate, at the entrance with a flaming sword.

So this series is called Look to the Rock. We're looking for pictures of Jesus. And some people have said that the passage that we just read contains the earliest prediction of the gospel in scripture.

But in order to appreciate that, you have to appreciate what the passage is saying as a whole. And we're not going to say everything. There's like libraries of books that have been written about these first three chapters of Genesis.

But we can get the sense of things. All right? Genesis in this story tells us why the world went wrong. The why. So the answer to that is simple enough.

[ 11 : 49 ] It's disobedience. The people deciding that they did not want to obey. They wanted to do things their own way. And there is nothing in the world worse than creatures, humans, disobeying their creator.

There's nothing worse. A theology word for that is sin. Everyone's heard that word. That's what sin is. But in our day, I think we have a hard time grasping sin in light of this passage.

So we think of sin and it's like, well, what kind of sin are we talking about? Because we all agree there's some things that are really bad. And there's a lot of things that really aren't that bad and not that big of a deal. Most of the things are the things that we happen to do.

And we're good at sort of doing some diagnosis. And we think we're good at it anyway. And identifying what are the sins that are really a big deal. And then, you know, a lot of sin's not that big of a deal.

You know, we don't want to get too worked up. And frankly, what you see here is even the smallest sin is treason. And here's why that is. In Genesis 1, we didn't read Genesis 1, but you might remember that God tells Adam and Eve, he tells them, he says, let us make man in our image.

[ 12 : 58 ] And there's all kinds of questions about what does that mean? What does it mean that you are made in the image of God? If you've ever thought about that, probably something comes to mind. And a lot of different answers have been given to that.

But do you know what is very interesting? Is that in Hebrew, the same word for image is the word for idol. They're the same word. You could literally translate it to say, let us make man as our idol. Now, we don't say that because when we use the word idol, we typically think of idolatry, which is giving worship to something that is not God. But you have to understand how idols existed in that day.

See, in all these other nations around ancient Israel, there would have been temples. And in a temple, there is an idol. The idol is the representative of the God that you go to worship in that temple.

So you go to the idol who has the agency of representing the God. And you make requests to that idol. But the Israelites, when they made the tabernacle and then the temple, God was very clear there was to be no idol in it.

[ 13 : 59 ] And part of the reason for that is because he already made one. His idol, his image is in you. You don't go to a carving to find out, to receive blessing from the Lord.

You go to one another. We're put on the earth. We're meant to be in Eden as his representatives. And so we represent God to the animals, to the kingdom, but also to each other.

And so that is significant in Genesis. Because when you think of sin, just imagine an ambassador from this country going to another country and then thinking, I see a real opportunity here to do things the way I want to do them.

Imagine an ambassador getting a directive from the president, even a relatively small one, seemingly unimportant and just deciding it's no big deal. That's treason. Listen, your only job as an ambassador is to represent this greater power whom you have been sent to act on behalf of. That is the significance of the betrayal here, of the rebellion of the sin. That's why disobedience is so horrible. The whole creation project is called into question.

[ 15 : 08 ] And the snake, what he's doing is appealing to their self-interest. Genesis is called Genesis. And everything falls apart after that, right? Well, one of the interesting things about Genesis is that it's written in the style of other creation stories and origin stories of the other nations that were around them.

And that's normal. Like, that's to be expected, right? They lived in a culture and they used the cultural language. Like, they're using the ideas that would have been familiar to them. And so a lot can be gleaned about what Genesis means when you compare it to the creation stories of these other religions.

Because there's points of dissimilarity, sorry, there's points of similarity. But then when the story is different, that tells you something about what this story was trying to say to these people. You see, in the other religions, creation was born out of conflict.

The gods fight and now out of the conflict, the world is created. No, no, not our God. Our God, there is no conflict at all. Creation is a moment of rejoicing.

There's no conflict. God is happily making everything. And in other religions, the problem with the world, the reason there are so many problems is because the gods are always fighting. But the

Israelites are saying the problem isn't the gods, the problem is us.

[16:24] We are the problem. This story is crafted to emphasize that point. It says that Adam and Eve, so in chapter 3, verse 1, starts with a snake. That's where we started.

The previous verse has that line about Adam and Eve being naked and unashamed. The next verse says, and the serpent was shrewd. In Hebrew, the word for naked and shrewd, for nude and shrewd, there's wordplay, just like you heard it in the English.

There's wordplay between being naked and being clever. And so what happens is, they're naked, they're unashamed. Then comes along this clever snake. He says, oh, I can make you wise. And they sin.

And what happens? The first thing they do is they realize that they are naked and they are ashamed. You see, that is exactly what happens. That's exactly what sin does to you.

The one thing that we have been given is this right to bear God's image in the world. If you forfeit that, what do you have? You have nothing. You're naked. And anyone, by the way, any Christian, any follower of the Lord, any genuine follower of the Lord has had this experience.

[17:30] What is it that causes you to cry out and say, Jesus, I need you? It's a sense of nakedness. I have nothing. You know, my whole life, maybe, I believed I was the man. But at the end of the day, it's nothing.

A sense of nakedness, of being exposed, that we need him. And that's what's happening here. So this is the story of why the world goes wrong.

The ambassadors of God revolt and decide they want to do things their own way. Now, this doesn't just tell us why it goes wrong. Then also, the story goes on to describe how the world goes wrong. Genesis tells us that. It anticipates all the ways in which this is going to get worked out. So there's the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. In Genesis 2, God says, if you eat of it, you will surely die.

He doesn't say, if you eat of it, I will kill you. Because he didn't kill them. He says, if you eat of it, you will surely die. You are going to pay a price for eating of this tree.

[18:27] The phrase, knowledge of good and evil, in the Old Testament, everywhere else that phrase comes up, it's in regard to children who are in a state of moral immaturity or inexperienced in life.

This tree represents the kind of knowledge that you need God-like maturity to properly steward and handle. You eat of this tree and you're not ready for it, it is going to be a disaster.

And that is exactly what's happened. That's the story of human history. We know things and we could not resist the temptation to use those things that we have learned for the wrong purposes. We've learned how to manipulate people. We've learned how to cheat people. We discovered nuclear energy and couldn't resist the temptation to turn it into a weapon. I mean, that is the story of human history. Knowledge of how the world works without the moral capacity to steward it is devastating.

And that's what happens. They eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God does not kill them. But they're kicked out and when you read the next few chapters, next time you read those chapters, look for how significant violence is in the story.

[19:40] Because immediately people start killing each other. And it's not just Cain and Abel. It's them and then it's their descendants. You eat of this tree too early, you're going to surely die.

Violence comes in. And it's violence of a lot of different kinds. That's what we go on to see is that there's these several different areas where this breaking down of things affects us.

So violence happens to our relationships. Adam and Eve, they're in relationship together, right? So that relationship which is supposed to put on the display of God's glory, we talked about that last week.

Right here we see that that is not going to go well. And then childbearing for women is going to not... That's supposed to be this incredible moment of new life coming out of intimacy. That's got conflict.

That's got violence now. And that whole bit about the ground, everything you do, Adam, all your work. Think about your life. Where does all your energy go? Your job and your relationships.

[20:43] That's everything. That is most of your lived waking experience. And here in Genesis saying all of that is going to be filled with conflict. Trying to grow things out of the ground is going to be hard.

I mean, we all resonate. We're not farmers, most of us, but we resonate with this, right? Like everything in life ends up being hard. Like everything is harder than you think it's going to be. Every home improvement project I've ever done.

I'm like, I know how much money this is going to cost. And I know how much time it's going to take. And I am not even close. Like ever. It's like a parable of life. Life is just hard. I mean, all of this is being anticipated in Genesis 3.

But two of the most significant things about this are even beyond that. The one is the fact that Adam and Eve get kicked out of the garden. That is massive in terms of significance in this story.

That one of the ways the world goes wrong is we no longer live in Eden. No longer live in the presence of God. And John Walton makes a big deal about this. To an ancient Israelite, when they thought about the fall, what they probably were most aware of was that they had been separated from the presence of God.

[ 21 : 51 ] When we talk about the fall, we typically talk about it in different terms and not even wrong terms. We use the New Testament as a lens to talk about these stories. But an ancient Israelite, what would have come to mind for them, most likely is because of the fall, we don't get to be in the presence of God anymore.

Which is why so much of their story is about trying to get back into the presence of God. So you have the tabernacle. And you have the temple. Again, these are distinctives that made the Israelite religion very distinct from the rest of the cultures around them is that they were always wanting to be in the presence of God.

So in Exodus 33 at Mount Sinai, God says to Moses, my presence will go with you and I will give you rest. And Moses said to God, if your presence will not go with me, don't bring us up from here. For how shall it be known that I found favor in your sight, I and your people?

Is it not in your going with us so that we are distinct, I and your people, from every other people on the face of the earth? Like, if you're not with us, we don't want to go anywhere where you're not. The religion, so just appreciate, the religion of the ancient Israelites encapsulated in the Old Testament is incredibly relational.

We miss it, man. We read the Old Testament and we think, gosh, it sounds cold. And it sounds kind of like stiff. It's not at all. If you have eyes to see it, there is so much warmth, especially when you compare it to the religions of the people around them.

[ 23 : 11 ] These were people who wanted to be in relationship with God. But perhaps the darkest thing that we see in chapter 15 is what, sorry, the darkest thing we see in chapter 3, the darkest consequence of the fall is in chapter 3, verse 15, which is where God's talking to the snake.

He says, I will put enmity between you and the woman, between your offspring and her offspring. This is gloomy. The snake represents evil.

And God is saying that man is going to be in a perpetual generational battle with evil. Now, this is not in the sense of good guys and bad guys. When we talk about evil, typically we think of someone else that is evil and we're the good guy and they're the bad guy, like Hitler or the Nazis or something.

That's not what's happening here. That's not what this is about. This is talking about the battle in you. That's what this is about. And in me. This is the battle between the snake, evil, and humanity that goes on and on.

And that battle looks like what we see happen in the garden. What are the two things the snake does when he talks to Eve? He does two things. He slanders God.

[ 24 : 35 ] So he says, God's not really looking out for you. So he slanders God's name. He's an accuser. He accuses God. Slanders God. And then he deceives. He twists truth. He twists the reality of things.

That's what this battle looks like. So what you need to appreciate is that the danger of this world and the danger of the evil in the world is not that something bad might happen to you like you might die or get hurt.

The danger of evil is that it infects you. That's the danger. And we see this play out through the rest of Genesis. Genesis 4, God comes to Cain and says, this is, you know, this conflict brewing between Cain and Abel.

God comes to Cain and says, why are you angry? Why has your face fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is contrary to you, but you must rule over it.

Now, most English translations will actually say this differently. It'll say, its desire is for you. It wants to have you. It wants to control you.

[ 25 : 42 ] It isn't just that it's bad or that it's opposed to you. It wants to turn you into it. It wants to infect you. There's a lot of different ways we can think about this.

Boy, the age of, it's just encouraging to me that in the age of COVID, yeah, there's a lot we can say about an infection and ways that we have even just personally experienced this. But I think even a better one, and I cannot believe I'm going to use this analogy.

I just can't come up with, this is just the best one I got, is like zombies. I'm not into the zombie stuff. I really don't get the fascination with zombies. I don't really watch the TV shows or the movies. But from what I understand, if you get bit by a zombie, you turn into a zombie.

Am I right? Did I at least get that far? Okay. I think I got it. So just appreciate this. The trump, the real problem with getting bit by a zombie isn't that you have a wound that needs to heal.

It's that you have now been turned into the thing that you hate. That is what's being said here in Genesis. We are in a battle with the serpent, and the serpent is venomous, and that venom infects you.

[ 26 : 48 ] And we see this warning, you better watch out, or you're going to end up on the other side of this thing. You're going to end up becoming the snake. The worst thing in your life that can happen isn't that catastrophe strikes and you lose your stuff, or you die an early death, or you lose your loved ones.

The worst thing that can happen is that you turn into a snake. That is also the language now. Think about, oh, this really adds some flavor to what Jesus meant when he called the Pharisees a brood of vipers.

Let me tell you something. Those guys knew what he was saying. And he also made it explicit in John 8, verse 44. You are of your father, the devil. What an awkward conversation this would have been to listen into.

You are of your father, the devil, in case I wasn't clear. And your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning. He does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character for he's a liar and the father of liars.

And you have become like him. You become a snake. It's the worst thing that can happen to anybody. So we're locked in this perpetual battle with evil.

[ 27 : 59 ] And the problem, are there problems out there? Yes, there are problems out there. There's evil out there. But the greatest threat to you is not what's out there. And let me tell you something.

There's a lot of people that want to distract you from what's going on inside by getting you to be very fearful of what's happening out there. I'm not saying it's not important. I'm not saying politics isn't important.

I'm not saying that the culture wars, that you can't have an opinion. What I'm saying is that what's happening in you is of far greater importance than what's happening out there. And there is no greater danger you face in any place in this whole world.

There's no greater danger than the danger of what happens when the snake starts talking to you. This is where we get the doctrine of original sin. The New Testament writers understood this story to mean that we have all been broken, meaning sin is part of our condition now.

As one writer put it, we are born hardwired for selfishness and cruelty. Genesis essentially levels the playing field in a devastating way. In a devastating way.

[ 29 : 02 ] So if you're a Christian, you should not ever be able to condescend or look down on anyone. How could you possibly do that? Oh, well, look, yeah, he's a drug dealer. They're a criminal. Can you believe? Whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa.

The seeds of evil are in you too, buddy. And in me. Except for the grace of God. Any one of us could do any number of those things. We are all capable of the most horrific things.

So capable. In the right environment. The writer G.K. Chesterton, the Christian apologist, said only with original sin can we at once pity the beggar and distrust the king.

Levels the playing field. Now, again, all that's largely from a New Testament perspective. Original sin and all that. For an ancient Israelite, they would have even seen this a little differently.

They probably thought of sin not in terms of what it does to us, but there's a lot of reason to believe when you look at the writings of the Old Testament that they thought about sin primarily in terms of

what it does to God. Now, it doesn't change him, but it dishonors him.

[ 30 : 04 ] It desecrates him. It desecrates him. And in an honor and shame culture, hard to overstate the significance of being the person to dishonor God.

We don't live in an honor and shame society. The closest I've ever come is the Marine Corps. So I spent some time in the Marine Corps. And there's an honor and shame culture there. So, you know, if you join the military and it comes out, like on Twitter, there's a photo that services that you burned a flag.

Good luck, man. I don't think you're going to make it. You know, that's a way of thinking about how the Israelites thought about sin. Sin makes you into a profaner, a desecrator, a flag burner.

So this is the origin story of how the world became broken and what that brokenness looks like. But in the second half of verse 15, there is a really important line.

So it says, I'll put enmity between you and the woman and between your offspring and her offspring. There's going to be this generational battle. And he shall bruise your head and you shall bruise his heel.

[ 31 : 14 ] Now, what does that mean? Well, at a minimum, it means this. Genesis longs for a snake crusher. Genesis anticipates, longs for, hopes for, someone to crush the head of the snake.

Now, I'm going to cut to the chase and tell you the way Christians have historically interpreted this verse for the last 18 to 1900 years. So almost unanimously, Christians have said that this is a foreshadowing of the gospel.

Satan is the snake. Jesus is the offspring who will one day come. And the snake will strike his heel, but it's only a wound because he's going to actually come back, obviously come back from the grave and then he's going to crush the serpent's head and the snake will be destroyed.

Now, even if that is how we want to read it with the hindsight of history, if we want to read it that way, that's okay, that is not how the earliest writers, sorry, that is not how the earliest readers of this would have read it.

And I think this adds a lot of flavor to the ministry of Jesus. See, we read it and we live in the age of anti-venom. You think, oh yeah, the man in this or the offspring of Eve, he only gets bit in the heel, but the snake gets crushed in the head.

[ 32 : 29 ] What is a fatal blow? To be struck in the head by a man or for a man to be struck in the heel by a venomous snake? The point is they can both be fatal and the text, this, if you've been trained to read this as a foreshadowing of the gospel, this might be hard to hear, but the text does not favor a winner.

There is a story in Numbers 21 where the Israelites rebel and God sends a whole bunch of snakes into the camp and a ton of people get bit and a ton of people die. In the story of Israel, snake bites are not a small thing.

They're not a small thing. Getting bit by a snake is a big deal. And so there is actually a considerable amount of tension in this verse. It creates a problem. The battle with evil goes on and on and it anticipates conflict, but it does not anticipate, the text itself does not anticipate a winner. And it doesn't matter how much we want to be a winner, how much we want there to be, it doesn't matter how much people think that one day actually we're going to win this thing, over and over again we see that we haven't.

This happened in Israel's story, it happened, it's happening all the time. The end of the 19th century, beginning of the 20th century, people, especially in the West, really believed that civilization had reached its peak and we were no longer, we were like almost disconnected from the history of wars and barbarism and violence and then look what the 20th century gave us, world wars and genocide.

[ 33 : 58 ] And a lot of those people were devastated in the 1950s because they really thought that we had moved past this. No, the battle goes on. The wickedness of men continues to sabotage everything.

An ancient Israelite reading chapter 3 verse 15 probably just reads it and wonders, man, when is it going to end? But Jesus shows up and he tells his disciples that he's the Messiah.

They think he is going to fix everything and he does not. In fact, he only fixes a few things and then he dies which is remarkable. So if you're going to see Jesus in Genesis chapter 3 verse 15, I think you should just realize it is not as simple as Jesus coming down and smashing the snake.

The story is so much better than that. That story in the book of Numbers where the Israelites are like overwhelmed with serpents that are biting them.

It is a strange story. And one of the strangest things in that story is that God tells Moses to make a bronze snake and lift it up and the people who are being bitten by snakes are supposed to look at the bronze snake and they'll get healed.

[ 35 : 06 ] It's crazy. But maybe the craziest thing about that isn't that Moses was supposed to hold up like a bronze thing. It's that it was a snake. He was meant to make an image of the thing that was causing the problem.

Like if you were going to do this, you and I would probably have made a bronze snake killer like a hawk or something more noble like a lion.

Not like it doesn't quite make sense. And yet Jesus said that is exactly how he came to deal with the snake. See in that story people have to look at the image of their own sin to be saved from the consequences of their own sin.

That's what happened in Numbers. Jesus said that's what's happening with me. In John chapter 3 Jesus is having a conversation with this religious leader named Nicodemus and he says as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness so must the son of man he's talking about himself so must I be lifted up that whoever believes in me may have eternal life.

Jesus tells Nicodemus just you watch I'm not here to simply beat the snake first I'm going to become the snake. I'm going to be the snake. By the way do you know what the next verse says?

[ 36 : 21 ] For God so loved the world God so loved the world he sent his son not simply to defeat sin but to become sin. Scripture literally says that that on the cross Jesus became sin.

Not just to undo the curse of Genesis 3 but to be the curse of Genesis 3. See we were supposed to image God but we didn't.

We imaged evil. We imaged the snake and Jesus said I'm going to I'm going to represent them so I'm going to get up on the cross and I'm going to do what they did. I'm going to I didn't Jesus the only one who never sinned said I'm going to become the very image of sin and it's by looking at him that we can be saved.

Looking at the image of what we've done and saying oh my gosh I deserve that. You see how good Jesus is? You know in the story of redemptive history the priority for Jesus wasn't coming to destroy the serpent the first priority was coming to rescue you.

He's going to get to the serpent one day but first he came for you because he loves you and of course we know he is going to one day get the serpent.

[ 37 : 29 ] Jesus will one day crush the serpent but you get to share in the glory. This is incredible and I never really reckoned with this until this week the significance of this.

Genesis tells how the story begins the book of Revelation tells how it ends and it picks up these themes. Revelation chapter 12 verse 9 and the great dragon was thrown down that ancient serpent who's called the devil and Satan the deceiver of the whole world.

That's one of the things he did in Genesis 3 deceived. He was thrown down to earth and his angels were thrown down with him and I heard a loud voice in heaven saying now the salvation the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come for the accuser that's the other thing he did in Genesis 3 he's accuser and the slanderer the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down he accuses them day and night before our God and they have conquered him by the blood of the lamb and by the word of their testimony for they loved not their lives even unto death. The way of Christ is not just to come down and simply defeat evil it's to give his life and he says if you're going to follow him that's the way to carry your cross according to Revelation the martyrs the ones who follow Christ to the very end they get the privilege of conquering the snake of crushing his head.

You know a lot of people have wondered why we make such a big deal about Genesis 3.15 and the New Testament writers did not. It's actually really there's only one place where it seems like the New Testament writers look back to Genesis 3.15 only one and so it's significant because it's the only one and it's in Romans 16 verse 20 and what we see here is not a reference to Jesus stepping on the snake it's in reference to you stepping on the snake.

[ 39 : 12 ] The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet under your feet you see what this is saying how crazy this is Jesus gets the shame of being the snake which we deserved and we will one day get the honor of crushing the snake the honor that he deserved.

If you're a Christian I want you to appreciate that there is nothing in your life that will ever eclipse the incredible responsibility honor and privilege that you have been given in Genesis 1 to bear God's image to be his representative.

We don't have idols we don't have other things that people can go to as representatives of the living God that's your job that's my job we get to do that.

Nothing else pales in comparison. Not your marital status not your employment status not your social status the most significant thing that you will ever do and the most important thing you do every single day is to represent God to the world around you.

So I am asking you to please don't give up the fight against evil. It is still because the snake has not yet been crushed. We are still fighting.

[ 40 : 29 ] There are battles out there there are there's political battles there's culture battles the biggest battle for you every day and for me is the voice whispering in our ear that our little sins aren't that big of a deal.

You know when you talk about evil and I talk about evil a lot of times we think about really dark twisted things like the Nazis. You know what the serpent did when he came to Eve? He didn't threaten her he flattered her. That's the battle.

The little voice in your head that makes you think like you know that makes you think that you can be wise enough to be the master of your own fate. The voice that flatters you makes you feel shrewd and clever makes you justify all kinds of things because did God really say?

Friends that is the battle every day. It's a battle every day. When you listen to that voice it's a trick.

You can hate evil your whole life and find out at the end oh my gosh I've become the snake.

I hated it and I became the thing I hated. And when that happens here's the worst part Satan is then ready to accuse you. Look at what you've done. Look at who you've become.

[ 41 : 41 ] Who could ever love you? And that is not ever what Jesus says. If you are a Christian and you're feeling some conviction about the evil that's worked its way inside just know that Jesus is always prepared to give you grace and grace never makes light of your sin.

Grace never says it's no big deal. Never says it's just a little thing. On the contrary grace says it's all treason and Jesus dealt with it on the cross and he forgives you for all of it.

So Jesus does not come to accuse you friends. He comes to heal you. That little serpent that's ingrown on your shoulder whispering in your ear he wants to rip it out of you.

To save you from not only the penalty of sin but also from the power of sin. I was reminded of this recently that the Bible talks about saving. It mainly doesn't talk about it past tense.

It mainly talks about it in the present and future tense. Friends you have not just been saved in the past. Today if Christ is in you he is saving you even now from the power of sin.

[ 42 : 44 ] There's a battle happening inside you and he is saving you. He is fighting for you. You need to participate. Please don't give up the fight.

And if you're not yet a Christian we all know we can be snakes. All of us. You are no worse or better than any of the rest of us. We're just saying look at the one who's lifted up for you.

He can save you from the things that you have become. And we can tell you more about how that can happen. Let's pray. Lord we want to thank you for the beauty of your word. Every time we come to it it amazes us.

We want to thank you that you loved us enough. You loved us enough Father to send your son to become the snake. To get on the cross become everything that we are.

Everything we deserve is what you got. God help us help us to never stop being grateful for the gift of the cross. And help us not to give up the fight with evil.

[ 43 : 52 ] Help us to look forward to the day when we also will stand with you in glory and honor and stomp on the head of the snake and finish evil once and for all.

How we look forward to that day Lord Jesus. Amen. Amen. Amen.