Teacher's Guide

The 'seed of Eve' prophecy: The Messiah would be a descendant of Eve, the mother of humanity (Genesis 3:15)

"I will put hostility between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring. He will bruise your head, and you will bruise his heel." (Genesis 3:15, WEB)

Background

- The context for understanding Genesis 3:15 can be found in the verses leading up to it, especially Genesis 2:17 and Genesis 3:1-21.
    - Genesis 3:15 is part of God's response to the first sin committed by Adam and Eve.
    - This is the first prophecy in the Bible about the Messiah.
    - It is also the first to address the problem of sin.
    - And it is the first to allude to the promise of a solution, that the promised Messiah, who is the *He* in the middle of this verse, would confront the serpent (Satan) to resolve the problem of sin.
- Genesis 3:15 is the first prophecy to allude to the promised Messiah and his role in resolving the problem of sin, by suffering for the benefit of others. The key points of Genesis 3:15 are revisited and expanded upon in other Old Testament prophecies, especially Isaiah 53 (Isaiah 52:13-53:12).
    - Both prophecies are a response to the problem of sin.
    - Both speak of injury in the context of sin.
    - Both allow for the understanding that they are speaking of a singular individual (the Messiah).
    - Both involve dealing with a spiritual matter that affects other people.
    - Both allude to a worldwide spiritual impact. (Isaiah 53 does this outwardly in Isaiah 52:15, and Genesis 3:15 does this deductively in speaking of Eve's descendants, which is all of humanity).

    - Both prophecies speak of *seed* or *offspring*, depending on the English translation, which is of key importance in Messianic prophecy.
    - Both prophecies were given during a time of imminent exile. (For Genesis 3:15, Adam and Eve would be exiled from the Garden of Eden. For Isaiah 53, the people of Israel would soon be forced into exile).

- The underlying Hebrew word that is translated here as *offspring*, as in *her offspring*, is *zera*, which is the Hebrew word for *seed*. This Hebrew word can refer to seeds that can be planted (Genesis 1:29); offspring, as in children and descendants (Genesis 22:18); and followers (Psalm 112:1-2).
    - In Genesis 3:15, the word *offspring*, as in *your offspring,* is often viewed in the sense of the *followers* of Satan, and the *offspring* in *her offspring* is used in the sense of *descendants*, as in the descendants of Eve.
- In Genesis 3:15, the reference to *your offspring* points to the followers of the serpent (Satan), and the reference to *her offspring* points to humanity.
- The Hebrew word *zera* often appears in Old Testament prophecies about the promised Messiah, including Genesis 3:15, 22:18, 26:4, 28:14; 2 Samuel 7:12; Psalm 89:4,29,36; and Isaiah 53:10.
    - In fact, the presence of the Hebrew word *zera* within the underlying Hebrew text for a prophecy is a strong indication that the prophecy is Messianic.
    - The use of plant-related imagery, including the word *seed*, is common among the Old Testament's Messianic prophecies. Example: The word *branch* in Isaiah 11:1 and Jeremiah 23:5.
- Genesis 3:15 is the first of many *descendancy* prophecies, which foretold that various people in the Old Testament would be part of the bloodline that would lead to the Messiah. Other examples include Abraham (Genesis 22:18), his son Isaac (Genesis 26:5), his grandson Jacob (Genesis 28:14), and King David (2 Samuel 7:12). Each of these examples have the word *zera* within the underlying Hebrew text.
    - The Old Testament also foretold that Judah (Genesis 49:10) and Jesse (Isaiah 11:1), who was King David's father, would be part of that bloodline, but those prophecies do not have the word *zera* in the underlying Hebrew text.

- Relevant New Testament passages: Hebrews 2:14-17; Galatians 4:4-5; Romans 5:12-19, 16:20; 1 Corinthians 15:21-22, 45-49; Colossians 2:13-15; 1 John 3:8; Revelation 12:1-17, 20:1-3, 7-10.

Examine, analyze and understand

1. Adam and Eve are introduced and explained in Genesis 2-3. Who and what are Adam and Eve?
    a. They are the first human beings with souls.
    b. They are created by God.
    c. They reside in the Garden of Eden, a perfect world that has access to eternal life – the Tree of Life (Genesis 2:9, 3:22, 3:24; Revelation 2:7, 22:2, 22:14).
2. What did Adam and Eve do that prompted God to speak the words of Genesis 3:15?
    a. Adam and Eve committed the first sin. They ate from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, despite God's warning in Genesis 2:17.
    b. The problem of sin had entered the otherwise perfect world.
    c. The promise of a solution is the Messiah, alluded to as the *He* who would confront Satan and become injured while dealing with the problem of sin.
3. If we accept that the *He* in the middle of Genesis 3:15 is ultimately an allusion to, and a prophecy of, the promised Messiah, why would God send a descendant of Eve to deal with the serpent (Satan) and to deal with the problem of sin?
    a. Because he would be one of us, he would live among us, he would share in our experiences as people.
    b. We would be able to identify with him.
    c. Several New Testament verses explain that man brought sin into the world and therefore a man (Jesus) would be the one to resolve the problem of sin. Examples: Romans 5:18-19, 1 Corinthians 15:21, Hebrews 2:14–17.
4. What does being a descendant of Eve tell us about the promised Messiah and his relationship to us?
    a. That he is among us, that he is one of us, that we can relate to him.

b. That even though he is fully God, he also is fully human.

5. How does Genesis 3:15 serve as a starting point for understanding other Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament?

    a. All 300-plus Messianic prophecies in the Old Testament point to the Messiah as being a singular individual, rather than a group of people.

    b. The Messianic prophecies show that the Messiah would be human, as is the subject of Genesis 3:15.

    c. Several Old Testament prophecies foretold the suffering of the Messiah, such as Psalm 22, Isaiah 53, and Daniel 9:24-27. Genesis 3:15 is the first to allude to this suffering when it reveals that the *He* would be injured when dealing with the problem of sin.

6. Genesis 3:15 shares connections with many other Messianic prophecies. How might we use this information to educate someone who does not view Genesis 3:15 as a Messianic prophecy?

    a. Because it shares connections with so many other Messianic prophecies, it should be viewed as being a Messianic prophecy.

    b. Isaiah 53 is a highly detailed Messianic prophecy and it shares many details with Genesis 3:15.

7. Genesis 3:15 is the first of many *seed* and *descendancy* prophecies. These prophecies involve many generations of people, including Eve, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and David. What can learn from this? What does this express about God's plan of salvation?

    a. That God's plan of salvation is deliberate. It was carefully planned and carefully executed – for many generations.

8. Moses recorded Genesis 3:15 when he wrote the book of Genesis about 3,400 years ago. But when was this prophecy given? And what does the timing say about God's plan of salvation?

    a. This prophecy was given during the time of Adam and Eve – during the dawn of human history. This shows that God's plan of salvation begins at the very beginning of human history.

9. **Bonus Round**: What happens to the *He* (the promised Messiah) in Genesis 3:15 when he confronts the serpent (Satan)? Given the details provided in Genesis 2:17, does the Messiah die?

a. He is injured. And we should view that injury as fatal, because Genesis 3:15 are the words of God spoken as a response to the problem of sin, and sin leads to death, as established in Genesis 2:17.

This Bible Study is based on Ray Konig's "301 Prophecies Fulfilled by Jesus". The book is optional but helpful. Free resources, including a summary of all 301 prophecies, are available at zealization.com/301.html.