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WHO DOES THE OFFSPRING (אֶרְבֵּי) REPRESENT IN GENESIS 3:15 IN THE LIGHT OF
ROMANS 16:20?

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WHO DOES THE עֲרֵפֶי REPRESENT IN GENESIS 3:15 IN THE LIGHT OF ROMANS 16:20?

In the perfect Eden, the devil himself, masquerading as a serpent (Rev. 12:9), beguiles Eve into disobeying the plain command of God. Then, using her as his agent, Adam joins in on their transgression. Aware of their innocence slipping away, they are found hiding from God, whose company they once used to love. But under God's investigation they find themselves blaming each other. After His investigation, God pronounces the verdict in a monologue found in Genesis 3:14-19. This passage contains three curses from God. There are curses on the serpent, Adam and Eve, and on the ground. A cursory look at these curses reveal that for the most part, they are physical in nature and literal in their meaning. But upon further investigation, especially in Genesis 3:15, the curse goes beyond the serpent and was directed towards Satan himself who was using the serpent as a medium. Inherent in this curse is a promise of grace from God and it also highlights the sovereignty of God. Often, dubbed as the protoevangelium, Genesis 3:15 plays a pivotal role in the salvational history. Dr. Norman Gulley states, “This is the first gospel promise in Scripture, well known and accepted as such by all Christians.”¹ The promise is that the seed of the woman would crush the head of the serpent. Another scholar observes, “The sentence God pronounces upon sin includes grace (3:15) and suggests that he retains sovereign control over his creation even in its rebellion.”² Therefore, this is a promise of grace because God is not caught off guard by the entrance of sin. Instead, He foresees the end of sin and Satan which He will accomplish through the seed of the woman.

¹ Norman R. Gulley, *Systematic Theology: Creation, Christ, Salvation* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2012), 138.

² Daniel Doriani, “Sin,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, electronic ed., Baker Reference Library (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1996), 736.

This seed of the woman who was to crush the head of the serpent has been traditionally applied to Christ. The SDA Bible Commentary states:

The “seed” is put in the singular, indicating, not that a multitude of descendants of the woman jointly shall be engaged in crushing the serpent’s head, but rather that a single individual will accomplish this. These observations clearly show that in this pronouncement is compressed the record of the great controversy between Christ and Satan, a battle that began in heaven (Rev. 12:7–9), was continued on earth, where Christ again defeated him (Heb. 2:14), and will terminate finally with Satan’s destruction at the end of the millennium (Rev. 20:10). Christ did not emerge from this battle unscathed. The nail marks in His hands and feet and the scar in His side will be eternal reminders of the fierce strife in which the serpent bruised the woman’s seed (John 20:25; Zech. 13:6; EW 53).³

This passage is taken to mean that Christ defeated Satan at the cross, and He will finally terminate him at the end of the millennium. This is referred to as the fulfillment of the phrase in Genesis 3:15, “He will bruise your head.” Although He gained the victory, Christ was wounded in this battle when He died on the cross. Here is fulfilled the phrase, “You shall bruise his heel.” But the apostle Paul in Romans 16:20 clearly alludes to Genesis 3:15 when it says, “The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.” Paul, concluding his monumental letter to the church at Rome, promises them that God will soon crush Satan under their feet. This poses several problems to the traditional view because Paul envisions that God will crush Satan under the feet of His followers. Another problem is that Paul is writing this passage after the crucifixion of Jesus Christ which the traditional view holds as the fulfillment of the phrase, “He will bruise your head.” Considering Genesis 3:15 in the light of Romans 16:20 requires us to carefully interpret the meaning of the word, “seed (זָרַע).” A meticulous look at the crucial words, an intertextual study of scriptures, and a look at the context of the allusions to Genesis 3:15 reveal that the seed that would bruise the serpent’s head are the

³ Francis D. Nichol, ed., *The Seventh-Day Adventist Bible Commentary, vol. 1* (Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1978), 233.

true believers, through whom God will defeat Satan with the chief blow coming from Christ's death and resurrection.

The Meaning of the “Offspring (זרע)”

The Hebrew word for seed used here is זרע [zera’]. It is noun, common, singular, construct. Because it is singular, the most common interpretation of this text is that the woman's seed is Jesus who crushed the head of the serpent at the cross, while the serpent bruising the heel of the seed refers to Satan succeeding in crucifying Christ as mentioned above. But zera’ is also used as collective noun. The UBS Handbook on Genesis says, “Seed in both occurrences is singular grammatically in Hebrew. However, in both cases the sense is collective. In those languages that have a collective term for descendants, translators are advised to use the collective term. If there is no collective, a plural form must be used.”⁴ Here the author notes that the word seed in Hebrew is grammatically singular. But in both cases (seed of the woman and the serpent), it is used in a collective sense. Several other lexicons, in their entry for the word zera’, also identify this word to be a collective noun.⁵ Finally, the *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* writes,

Commencing with Gen 3:15, the word “seed” is regularly used as a collective noun in the singular (never plural). This technical term is an important aspect of the promise doctrine, for Hebrew never uses the plural of this root to refer to “posterity” or “offspring.” The Aramaic targums pluralize the term occasionally, e.g. the Targum of Gen 4:10, but the Aramaic also limits itself to the singular in the passages dealing with the promised line. Thus the word designates the whole line of descendants as a unit, yet it is deliberately flexible enough to denote either one person who epitomizes the whole group (i.e. the man of promise and ultimately Christ), or the many persons in that whole line of natural and/or spiritual descendants.⁶

⁴ William David Reyburn and Euan McG. Fry, *A Handbook on Genesis*, UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1998), 91–92.

⁵ Ludwig Koehler et al., *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994–2000), 283; William Lee Holladay and Ludwig Köhler, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 93.

⁶ Walter C. Kaiser, “582 זרע,” ed. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999), 253.

Here it becomes clear that this word is a collective noun in the singular with three possible meanings. 1. It could refer to a whole line of descendants as a unit, 2. It could also refer to one person who typifies the whole group, and finally, 3. It could refer to many persons in that whole line of natural or spiritual descendants. There is nothing in the word itself that is conclusive enough to denote that this seed is solely one person as it has broader possible meanings. Hence, the word offspring could be understood not just as a single individual, but as a whole line of descendants as a unit.

The Meaning of “He (הוּא)”

Dr. Doukhan, in the Seventh-day Adventist International Bible Commentary, argues on the basis of the third person pronoun “He (הוּא)” that it refers to single individual. He claims that “Normally, in the Hebrew phrase, the subject follows the verb, unless emphasis is intended. This strong emphasis on the “He” suggests the idea that this person, who is not clearly identified, is the One who will bring the final solution to the “enmity” that was just mentioned.”⁷ Then, he quotes 2 Samuel 7:12,13 to try and show that the singular personal pronoun in that passage makes the seed refer to a specific individual instead of a neutral collective. Dr. Doukhan continues by saying, “This conclusion is also confirmed by lexical studies of the word “seed” in the Old Testament that have established that when the word “seed” means a collective, the

⁷ Jacques Doukhan, *Genesis: Seventh-Day Adventist International Bible Commentary* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2016), 106.

pronoun that refers to it (referent) is plural, but when the word “seed” means a singular person, then the pronoun that refers to it (referent) is singular.”⁸ This view has some problems.

First, the statement that the word “seed” means a singular person when the pronoun that refers to it is singular is flawed when Genesis 28:14 is considered. This verse reads, “Your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south...” In this passage, while the implied pronoun “you” is singular, contextually the “offspring” is to be taken in a collective sense and it does not refer to a singular person. Also, the UBS Handbook on Genesis commenting on Genesis 3:15 states, “**He shall bruise your head: he** translates the Hebrew third person singular masculine pronoun. However, the reference is to the **seed** of the woman, that is, “her descendants,” which is also masculine singular in Hebrew. TEV has “Her offspring.” Some translations keep the singular pronoun **he**, some use a collective term such as “offspring,” while others use a plural such as “they” or “her descendants.” Translators are advised to use a pronoun or other term that is in accord with the term chosen to translate **seed**.”⁹ Because the clear antecedent to the pronoun is the seed of the woman, the translation of the pronoun should also agree and not vice versa. For these reasons, just by the use of the pronoun alone, it cannot be determined that the seed is singular.

The Identity of the Serpent and the Woman

Now that we have established that the word seed could refer to a whole line of descendants, now it is necessary to understand who the serpent is and who its offspring are. First,

⁸ Jacques Doukhan, *Genesis: Seventh-Day Adventist International Bible Commentary* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2016), 106-107

⁹ William David Reyburn and Euan McG. Fry, *A Handbook on Genesis, UBS Handbook Series* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1998), 92.

the mere fact that the serpent was able to hold conversation with the woman seems supernatural, for it is beyond the natural ability of any serpent to have conversation with human beings. So, the serpent must be understood spiritually. Secondly, the sinister nature of the serpent in deceiving Adam and Eve to go against God, to slander the character of God, and misquoting and taking out of context the word of God, shows that this is the work of Satan. Satan is called a liar (John 8:44) and slanderer (Ezekiel 28:16). Another chief characteristic of Satan is seen in the temptations of Christ when he took out of context the word of God (Matthew 4:6). Finally, the clearest example that this serpent refers to Satan is found in Revelation 12:9 where the scripture says, “And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.” This is the clearest allusion to Satan as he is identified as that ancient serpent. The identity of the woman is straightforward for it refers to Eve.

The Identity of Satan’s and the Woman’s Offspring

The offspring of the serpent, which represents Satan, does not refer to the literal progeny of Satan but to those who exhibit his characteristics. A brief survey of biblical passages proves this point. Jesus, in two instances, Matthew 12:34; 23:33, calls the hypocritical Pharisees “you brood of vipers.” This word brood in Greek is γέννημα which literally means offspring. In John 8:44, Jesus said, “You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and 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 is a liar and the father of lies.” Here again, Jesus is talking to the Jews who claimed that they were the offspring of Abraham. But, in actuality, they were children of the devil because of their rejection of Jesus. Other New

Testament corroboration is found in the book of Acts when Paul in Acts 13:10 calls Elymas, the magician who opposed him and Barnabas, as the “son of the devil.”

As mentioned above, the woman in Genesis 3:15 refers to Eve. The question we need to ask then is, who does the offspring represent? Beginning in Genesis 4:1, “Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, “I have gotten a man with the help of the LORD.” In this passage when Eve conceived Cain, her statement reveals how she understood the promise in Genesis 3:15. The Hebrew literally says, “I have gotten a man, the Lord.” This seems to indicate that Eve thought Cain was the promised offspring. But later in Genesis 4:25 we read, “And Adam knew his wife again, and she bore a son and called his name Seth, for she said, “God has appointed for me another offspring instead of Abel, for Cain killed him.” In this passage, several things are evident. After Abel was murdered by Cain, Eve conceives another child, Seth whom she understands as the promised offspring given instead of Abel. Here the dynamic nature of the offspring is evident from her understanding. The offspring of the woman then refers to the faithful line and not to her literal progeny. It is fascinating to note that enmity that God promised could be seen immediately in the offspring of Eve, between Abel and later Seth, against Cain.

Perhaps the most instructive passage that illustrates this idea is found in 1 John 3:8-10.

The text says,

8. Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. 9. No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God’s seed abides in him; and he cannot keep on sinning, because he has been born of God. 10. By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother.

This passage not only identifies who the offspring of Satan is, but it also identifies who the children of God are. The scriptures identify the children of God as those who are born of God. Because they are born of God, they do not keep on sinning, and they practice righteousness.

Conversely then, the children of the devil are those who are not born of God, who keep on sinning and do not practice righteousness. Dr. Waltke also echoes the same idea,

The seed of the serpent is not literal, as in little snakes, for it has already been established that the serpent is only a masquerade for a heavenly spirit. Neither is the seed demons, for such an interpretation does not fit the context and Satan does not father demons. Rather, the seed of the serpent refers to natural humanity whom he has led into rebellion against God. Humanity is now divided into two communities: the elect, who love God, and the reprobate, who love self (John 8:31–32, 44; 1 John 3:8). Each of the characters of Genesis will be either of the seed of the woman that reproduces her spiritual propensity, or of the seed of the Serpent that reproduces his unbelief.¹⁰

The author here notes that the offspring of the serpent refers to the natural humanity which is in rebellion against God. He further states that the two offspring are the elect, who love God and the reprobate, who love self. When putting all of this together, a clearer picture emerges. The enmity between the serpent’s offspring and the woman’s offspring refers to the conflict between the faithful and the unfaithful down through the ages.

The Bruising

The Hebrew word for bruising is “**רָחַץ**” which means “bruise, crush,... strike at.”¹¹ Some translations use bruise,¹² crush,¹³ wound,¹⁴ and strike.¹⁵ It is the same Hebrew word that is used for the bruising of the woman’s offspring on the head of the serpent, and the serpent on the woman’s offspring’s heel. Both wound each other but it is the location of the wounding that indicates the severity because a wound on the head is much more severe than a wound on the heel. When the woman’s offspring bruises the head of the serpent, that is a fatal blow compared

¹⁰ Bruce K. Waltke and Cathi J. Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 93–94.

¹¹ Victor P. Hamilton, “2349 רָחַץ,” ed. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999), 912.

¹² KJV, ESV, NASB95

¹³ NIV

¹⁴ NRSV

¹⁵ CSB, ISV

to merely the bruising of the heel. The question that we need to ask at this point is, what is the nature of the bruising that God promised and how would the offspring of the woman and the serpent bruise each other. Do we take these meanings literally? If the bruising is to be taken literally, it would mean that all of the righteous will be wounded in the heel. But because the serpent, the woman, and their offspring are symbolic, it would only make sense to take the bruising as symbolic as well.

So, what does the bruising mean? The IVP Bible Background Commentary remarking on Genesis 3:15, states, “Treading on the serpent is used in these texts as a means of overcoming or defeating it.”¹⁶ So, treading or bruising the serpent on its head is a symbol of overcoming or defeating the serpent, which ultimately represents Satan. This prophecy then foretells that Satan and his followers will be handed a defeat by God and His followers. This defeat of Satan was initiated by Jesus on the cross. Paul in Hebrews 2:14 writes, “Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil.” Paul, talking about Jesus, says that through His incarnation, He partook of human nature that through His death He might destroy the devil. The bruising or defeat of Satan is then initiated on the cross. Jesus, the example for the human race, through His life and death fatally wounded the devil. But how does the death of Jesus on the cross destroy the devil?

To answer this question, we need to go back to the beginning. In Genesis 3, Satan using the serpent as the medium, engaged in a conversation with the woman. In his conversation with the woman, we find Satan leading her to disbelieve God's word with the intention of discrediting God's character so that he could ultimately lead her to disobey God. He lies about God's word

¹⁶ Victor Harold Matthews, Mark W. Chavalas, and John H. Walton, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament, electronic ed.* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), Ge 3:15.

and His character which is why Jesus calls Satan in John 8:44 the Father of lies. Satan's attack on humanity and ultimately attacks God by tarnishing His character. A deeper look at the lies that the devil deceived the woman with, shows that he painted God as a selfish, malevolent being, withholding what was good for man and woman and that His laws are arbitrary.¹⁷ Through these lies Satan attacked God.

The Victory of the Seed

But Christ through His life, death, and resurrection revealed the true character of God. In John 14:9, Jesus revealed, "...Whoever has seen me has seen the Father..." Paul in Hebrews 1:3 said that "He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature..." Here, Paul said that Jesus is the radiance of the glory of God. He is the effulgence; He emits the character of God. He also said that Jesus was the exact impress of God's nature. Paul also wrote in 1 Timothy 2:5, "For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." Jesus serves as the mediator between God and man. John, the beloved disciple, expressed in John 1:18 that, "No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known." Jesus makes known to us who the Father really is. The Greek word that is translated as "made him known" is ἐξηγήσατο. This Greek word means "to relate in detail, tell, report, describe."¹⁸ One of the chief purposes of Christ's incarnation then is to relate in detail or to describe to us who the Father really is. How did Christ reveal to us who the Father is? He did that through His many parables, the many miracles, and ultimately through His death on the cross. Jesus showed the Father's unselfish love in giving us His One and Only

¹⁷ Genesis 3:2-5.

¹⁸ William Arndt et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 349.

unique Son for the salvation of humans (John 3:16). The cross was the epitome of Christ's revelation of the Father's true character. Therefore, this is how, through His death, Christ wounded Satan, and initiating his defeat.

How do the faithful believers of God, the offspring of the woman, bruise the serpent's head as the study of Genesis 3:15 has revealed? Paul clearly alludes to Genesis 3:15 when he writes in Romans 16:20, "The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you." After dealing with great themes of the gospel, salvation, and the practical implications of it, Paul, in his final greetings to the believers in Rome, writes that the God of peace will soon crush Satan under their feet. Here again, Paul interprets the serpent to be Satan and that those who will bruise/crush Satan are the faithful people of God. Dr. Herbert Wolf also comes to the same conclusion in his book, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Pentateuch*. He writes, "Paul alludes to Genesis 3:15 quite clearly in Romans 16:20: "The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet." This implies that believers will play a part in the crushing of Satan."¹⁹ The believers will play a part in the defeat or overcoming of Satan. How do the believers play a part in the defeat of Satan?

The Allusions between Genesis 3 and Romans 16

A closer look reveals that there are actually more allusions between Romans 16 and Genesis 3. These allusions, in turn, will help us to understand the nature of the victory of the faithful followers of Christ. Other than the clear allusion in vs. 20, the backdrop of Romans 16:17-20 is also reminiscent of Genesis 3. In vs. 17 Paul warned the believers to watch out and avoid those who cause divisions and seek to create obstacles by teaching things contrary to the

¹⁹ Herbert Wolf, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Pentateuch* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 1991), 37-38.

doctrine they've been taught. This also reminds us of the warning that Adam and Eve had in the garden of Eden. Ellen White writes, "Our first parents were not left without a warning of the danger that threatened them. Heavenly messengers opened to them the history of Satan's fall and his plots for their destruction, unfolding more fully the nature of the divine government, which the prince of evil was trying to overthrow."²⁰ The warning was there in the Garden of Eden and the warning is there from Paul to the believers in Rome. Along with the warning, Paul also revealed the nature of how the divisions and obstacles would be created. It is through teachings doctrines contrary to what they have learned that division and obstacles will be created. In the temptation of Eve, the devil did exactly that when he enticed Eve by teaching her things contrary to what she has learned. Here Paul warned them of the method through which they will be deceived.

Furthermore, Paul said that "by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the naïve."²¹ Here Paul revealed the manner through which they will be deceived. By smooth talk and flattery, they will deceive the naïve. The Greek word "χρηστολογία" translated as smooth talk is used only once in the New Testament and it is described as, "eloquent and attractive speech involving pleasing rhetorical devices—'attractive speech, fine language.'"²² By smooth, eloquent, and attractive speech, along with flattery, they will deceive the naïve. The word naïve could also be translated as innocent. These characteristics are present in the manner with which the devil, through the serpent, deceived innocent Eve. The word used to describe the serpent in vs. 1 is crafty, which in Hebrew is **ערום**. It is used both in a positive and negative connotation

²⁰ Ellen Gould White, *The Story of Patriarchs and Prophets as Illustrated in the Lives of Holy Men of Old*, vol. 1, Conflict of the Ages Series (Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1890), 52.

²¹ Romans 16:18

²² Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 392.

in the Bible. When used in a negative connotation, it refers to cunningness, wily, and skillful to deceive.²³ The serpent, by being crafty in its speech and through flattery, deceived Eve. Ellen White writes in *Patriarchs and Prophets*, “Eve was surprised and startled as she thus seemed to hear the echo of her thoughts. But the serpent continued, in a musical voice, with subtle praise of her surpassing loveliness; and his words were not displeasing.”²⁴ Here could be seen the full range of the deception. The serpent’s voice was musical, attractive, and He subtly praised her loveliness. His words not displeasing to her. By smooth talk and flattery, the devil overcame Eve.

Another allusion could be found in Paul’s admonition and desire for the believers in Rome. He says in vs. 19, “...I want you to be wise as to what is good and innocent as to what is evil.” Paul wants the believers to be wise with what is good and be innocent of what is evil. This again is reminiscent of Genesis 3, where in vs. 5 the devil enticed Eve to know good and evil, which is what God wanted to prevent from happening in Genesis 2:16,17. In the *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, Dr. Mark Seifrid notes the same observation, “He [Paul] rejoices in the obedience of the believers in Rome, but he wants them “to be wise with respect to the good and pure with respect to evil.” The wording clearly echoes Gen. 3:5: “You will be like God, knowing good and evil [tôb wārā‘ ; LXX: kalon kai ponēron].” Paul’s indication that he wants them to be wise in what is good but innocent in what is evil recalls Eve’s contemplation: she saw that the tree was desirable to make one wise (Gen. 3:6).”²⁵ With this allusion along with the method and the manner of deception discussed above, there can be seen a strong connection between Genesis 3 and Romans 16.

²³ Ronald B. Allen, “1698 עָרַם,” ed. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999), 697;

²⁴ Ellen Gould White, *The Story of Patriarchs and Prophets as Illustrated in the Lives of Holy Men of Old*, vol. 1, Conflict of the Ages Series (Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1890), 54.

²⁵ Mark A. Seifrid, “Romans,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, UK: Baker Academic; Apollos, 2007), 692.

Now, we are prepared to understand how the believers are to play a part in the defeat of Satan. Paul doesn't explicitly say what actions on the part of the believers would cause God to crush Satan under their feet. But there are some implicit clues that inform us of how God will crush Satan under their feet. First, there is an emphasis on the truth by resisting deception. There is an appeal to watch out and an imperative command to avoid those who cause divisions and create obstacles by teaching things contrary to the doctrine they have learned. Second, there is also commendation from Paul for their obedience. Their obedience seems to be evident to all. In Romans 1:8, Paul said that their faith is also known to all. Their faith in Christ is manifested by their obedience which was known to all. After mentioning these two characteristics, it is almost as if Paul is saying to them to keep on doing these things and God will crush Satan under your feet. Against the deceiving power of the enemies of Christ, the believers of Christ are to uplift the truth by avoiding themselves being entangled with deceptions and to maintain their obedience which will result in defeat to the devil. Dr. G. K. Beale, in his prodigious book, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New*, writes,

As in the first covenant community in Eden, so again in the believing community in Rome, there is "deception" and a need to be "wise in what is good and innocent in what is evil." If the Roman Christians continue in their faithful "obedience" (Rom. 16:19, 26) and heed Paul's exhortation not to be deceived by the false teachers in their midst, then "the God of peace will ... crush Satan under your feet," a clear reference to a beginning fulfillment of Gen. 3:15. Genesis 3:15 prophesies that the woman's "seed" will "bruise" the serpent "on the head."²⁶

Dr. Beale notes the same connections as discussed above. The clarity of truth, in the midst of the confusion caused by deceptions, and their obedience to God will result in God defeating Satan through the believers. Commenting further on how the believers defeat Satan, Dr. Beale writes,

²⁶ G. K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011), 219.

No doubt, Paul saw Jesus's death and resurrection as the decisive blow on the serpent's head, but since the devil has yet to be consigned to his eternal prison of punishment, he still "prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour" (1 Pet. 5:8). Thus, Jesus won a "D-day"-like victory over the devil, and the "body of Christ" walks in the wake of that decisive victory in "mopping-up operations" over Satan and his allies, who continue to put up resistance, though the final outcome of "V-day" is inevitable at Christ's final coming. The Roman Christians will participate in these mopping-up operations as a result of Jesus having already defeated Satan, and in this sense they also can be seen as fulfilling the Gen. 3:15 prophecy.²⁷

Using the analogy of World War II, Dr. Beale notes that the decisive blow was placed on the serpent by the death and resurrection of Jesus. But the devil is still active in seeking to devour because though defeated, he is not consigned. But before the V-day when Satan will be annihilated at the eschaton, the believers have mopping-up operations to do. Between the D-day and the V-Day, the believers, the seed of the woman, will put up resistance against the powers of the devil.

In many ways, Paul's counsel to the believers in Rome is almost a reversal of what happened in Genesis 3. In the Garden of Eden, Satan gained a foothold and overcame Eve when she did not "watch out." Eve did not avoid listening to the serpent who was teaching a doctrine contrary to what she had learned. By engaging with the one who was speaking to her in smooth talk and flattery, she disobeyed God and obeyed the serpent which resulted in her being defeated. Now Paul, clearly reflecting on the episode of Eden, admonishes the believers to not do what Eve did, so that the serpent could be defeated. He counsels them to resist the temptation of deceptions and to obey the truth so that the serpent could be overcome. The crushing of the serpent did not happen immediately at the time of Paul's writing. He was looking forward to the eschaton when Satan will be ultimately crushed, but until then the believers, the seed of the woman, must maintain their allegiance to God. How does resistance to the false teachings and

²⁷ G. K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011), 219–220.

obedience through faith lead to the defeat of Satan? Satan introduces false teachings with the intent to discredit God's character. This is evident in the Garden of Eden. By this strategy he seeks to break down trust in God and ultimately lead to disobedience. By resistance to the deceptions that contradict the doctrine, which has already been taught, and by obedience that comes as a result of trust in God, the devil is overcome. His lies about God's character are disproved.

Connection between Christ's victory and the Believer's Victory

While our discovery has revealed the seed of the woman is a collective noun, encompassing all of the believers, this in no way suggests the victory that Christ gained over Satan will be equaled or matched by the believers. The chief role of Christ in defeating Satan cannot be compared to the role of the believers in this endeavor. The incarnated Christ, through His life, death, and resurrection, gave a fatal blow to the head of the serpent. He is the One Who perfectly revealed the Father's character. As referred to earlier, He is the exact imprint of the Father's nature, radiating the character of God. The faithful believers simply share in the spoils that Christ gained at the cross. Their victory is a supportive role. This is evidenced when Paul stated unequivocally in Romans 16:20 that it is the "God of peace" who will "crush Satan" under their feet imminently. It is God who does the crushing of Satan, but He does that through his believers. This is good news because God wants to demonstrate His power over Satan and defeat him using weak, frail humans like us. As David writes in Psalm 36:9, "...in your light do we see light." We, as believers, walk in the light that emanates from Christ who has walked before us.

Theological implications

This has implications for eschatology and the mission of the church. Talking about those who are lost, Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 4:4, “In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.” According to Paul, the lost are those whose spiritual eyes are blinded by Satan to prevent them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ who is the image of God. By preventing men and women through various schemes from seeing the light of the gospel, Satan keeps them in darkness without a real understanding of God's character. This is why the proclamation of the gospel to all the world as Christ commanded (Matthew 24:14; 28:18-20; Revelation 14:6-12) is essential, as it not only hastens the coming of Christ, (2 Peter 3:8-12), but it liberates the people from the darkness that they have been bound in. The truth sets them free from the lies that they have been bound in (John 8:32). This should provide an impetus for the church today to proclaim the Gospel with renewed vigor.

But it is not only through preaching that we anticipate the final crushing of the serpent. John, the revelator, in Revelation 18:1 writes a glorious vision he saw, “After this I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was made bright with his glory.” As Adventists, we have interpreted this fourth angel as the glorious manifestation of final outpouring of the Holy Spirit through which the three Angel’s messages contained in Revelation 14:6-12 would be proclaimed to all the world. Through the power coming from God, the faithful followers of God will go with great authority and John writes that the whole earth was made bright with God's glory. Commenting on this, Ellen White writes, “The last rays of merciful light, the last message of mercy to be given to the world, is a revelation of His character of love. The children of God are to manifest His glory. In their own life and character they are to reveal

what the grace of God has done for them. The light of the Sun of Righteousness is to shine forth in good works—in words of truth and deeds of holiness.”²⁸ Just as how Jesus reflected God's character in its fullest sense, the faithful followers of God do have a role, in their limited scope, to reflect God's character, showcasing to the world the transformative power of God. It is not only the preaching of truth and resisting the deceptions, but it is also through reflecting the character of God by obedience through faith that the devil is overcome.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Genesis 3:15, considered as the protoevangelium, contains the first promise that gives hope to a fallen race. God promised to our first parents that in the ensuing battle between the offspring of the woman and the offspring of the serpent, the offspring of the woman will come up victorious albeit with casualty. A word study of the word offspring reveals that it being a collective noun could describe a whole group of descendants. This interpretation seems to be corroborate with the rest of the scriptures. Paul, in Romans 16, clearly alludes to Genesis 3:15 and its context and promises that God will crush the head of the serpent under the feet of the believers of Rome imminently. This crucial text and its context sheds light on how God would undertake this endeavor. While Christ's supreme incomparable sacrifice on the cross dealt a fatal blow to Satan, God still uses His supporting cast, His followers, to defeat Satan. Through the grace of Christ, His followers will resist the deceptions that tarnish the character of God and will lead an obedient life through faith. Through word and witness, they will reveal the character of God. This glorious truth calls for grandest proclamation as we await and anticipate the second coming of Christ.

²⁸ Ellen Gould White, *Christ's Object Lessons* (Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1900), 415–416.

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