

He Will Crush Your Head, and You Will Strike His Heel

3: 14-15

DIG: Why did God curse the serpent? What had it done? What are the three consequences for snakes in general? How is verse 3:15 an example of double reference? What were the four consequences for Satan Himself? Whose head will be crushed? Whose heel will be bitten? How is this seen as the first Gospel?

REFLECT: From this passage, how would you define sin and its consequences? Is there any Good News here? Is God just or arbitrary in His judgments? Why?

Because God is just, He must judge sin; and because ADONAI is loving, He gives grace to the sinner. It is not surprising, then, that justice and grace intermingle in each case as the Lord God judges the serpent, the woman and the man.⁶⁴ Prose gives way to poetry here as in 2:23 and in all oracles of judgment generally. No question is put to the serpent. Unlike Adam and Eve, he isn't given the opportunity to confess, he only hears his sentence.⁶⁵

When God said to the Enemy of souls, "Because you have done this," He meant *because you have deceived the woman*. The serpent would be cursed because it allowed itself to be used by the Adversary (3:14a). In the creation account, God blessed three times, in 1:22, 1:28 and 2:3, and here in this context He will curse three times, the serpent in 3:14, the ground in 3:17 and Cain in 4:11. Normally an animal is not held morally responsible for its actions. However, if it causes harm to mankind, it must suffer the consequences (Genesis 9:5; Exodus 21:28). Animals are supposed to serve mankind and when this is violated, they suffer the judgment of God no matter what PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals) says. There are three general consequences for snakes.

The first consequence for the tempter is that it is cursed above all the livestock and all the wild animals (3:14b)! Previously, the serpent was craftier than any of the wild animals (3:1), but after participating in the Fall, it is cursed above all the wild animals. The rabbis teach that the snake has a long gestation period (in rabbinic tradition it is seven years long), and was stricken with leprosy. So the cracks in the skin of the snake are signs of its leprosy. They teach that the snake will not be healed even in the days of the Messiah because leprosy is associated with divine judgment.

The second consequence of the curse was that the ancient serpent would crawl on its belly all the days of its life (3:14c). Whatever may have been its beauty or posture before the Fall, from that point on it would slither on its belly and be an object of dread and disgust by all.

Thirdly, **God** said: **You will eat dust all the days of its life (3:14d)**. This is not a command to be obeyed, but a statement of fact. This is how it would be from that point forward. Obviously, **snakes** do not **eat dust**. But in Hebrew terminology, eating **dust** was a figure of speech for being **cursed above all** creatures (**Isaiah 65:25; Micah 7:17**). In addition, it is a figure of speech for defeated enemies (**Psalm 72:9; Isaiah 49:23**). So **Elohim** is using **eating dust** in a figurative sense of being **cursed** and being defeated.

The rabbis teach that the serpent was cursed with ten curses. First, angels cut off its hands and feet because it brought death into the world. Second, up to the Fall, it ate spiritual food, but afterward it would eat the dust of the earth. Third, in place of being king of the animals, it would be cursed above all animals. Fourth, it would always be leprous. Fifth, it would shed its skin every seven years with pain. Sixth, there will be hatred between the serpent and the woman. Seventh, a man can smash a snake's head and in retaliation, the snake would bite the man's head. Eighth, the poison in the snake's mouth will burn. Ninth, it will suffer death. Tenth, when King Messiah comes, everyone will be healed except for the serpent, who will continue to eat dust even in the messianic Kingdom. While **3:14** is about the serpent, the next verse changes focus.

3:15 is an example of double reference, which refers to one person or event, in this case the serpent, followed by a second person, here the devil, blended together in such a way that they form a complete picture. **There are four consequences for Satan Himself.**

First, Eve's offspring would be the Seed of the woman, and mankind would be saved through Him. **Elohim** never abandoned His original blueprint. He never threw out His plan for men and women to bear His image. **Satan's** victory in the Garden would not be the final word. The spiritual catastrophe of **Eve** would be undone by the spiritual deliverance, the childbearing of **Mary**, making salvation possible for all (**First Timothy 2:15**). Because of this, **God** would put enmity, or hatred, between **Satan and the woman**. The evil one hates the Holy One. The Adversary hates the thought of *anyone* being saved, and **Eve's** salvation was secured because **God** promised deliverance through **Jesus Christ, the Seed of the woman**. This is significant language because normally **offspring (NIV)** are spoken of as the **seed (NKJ)** of their fathers. We know that women do not possess **seed**. So this must be supernatural birth, as foretold in **Isaiah 7:14**. This seems to be a reference to the virgin birth of **Yeshua ha-Meshiach**. He was the **offspring** of a woman in a particular sense, but **God** was His only **Father (Luke 1:34-35)**.⁶⁶

Second, there would be continual conflict between the serpent and his seed and the Seed of the woman. There are two seeds here; the battle is between the Adversary's seed and hers. All men and women are *not* brothers and sisters. That is a lie from the pit of hell. There are only two families in the world today, the family of **God** and the family of **Satan**. And if you are not in one, then you are in the other. The hatred between these two families filters down throughout human history, starting with Cain and Abel (**Matthew 13:37-40; First John 3:8-12**), and continuing to the end of the age (**Revelation 12:17**). The devil's seed consists of those who deliberately and gladly set themselves against the seed of the woman. Satan's seed belongs to their father the devil (**John 8:44**), who is the spirit now at work in those who are disobedient (**Ephesians 2:2**). However, the seed of the woman refers to those who believe in **God** and whose faith is credited to them as righteousness (**15:6**). To those He gave the right to become the children of **God** (see my commentary on **The Life of Christ Bw - What God Does for Us at the Moment of Faith**). Behind the scenes the evil one will oppose **Christ, the Savior** of the world. But first there would be a time of conflict and even seeming victory on the part of the great dragon.

Third, the seed of the woman would suffer. The Adversary will strike the heel of **Messiah**. This took place at the cross (**Isaiah 53:5**). Now being bitten on the heel is very painful, but not fatal. The figurative language here is based upon the way snakes are killed in the Middle East. You step on its head and crush it. The picture being conveyed here is that the heel of *the Messiah* is coming down on the tempter's head. But the serpent, controlled by **Satan**, lunges upward and bites the heel of *the Messiah*, causing pain, but not death. Meanwhile, the heel continues to come down crushing the head of the enemy of souls. The great promise in this verse has long been known as the *protevangelium*, or the first gospel, promising the ultimate coming and victory of the **Lord Jesus Christ**. This is the logical place to put the gospel because **Chapter 3** contains the origins of human sin and the purpose of *the Messiah's* coming was to deal with that sin (see **Lw - The Witness of the Stars**).

Fourth, the Savior would gain the ultimate victory. The greatest blessing that is contained in the curse is that the **Seed of the woman, the Messiah**, will crush the head of the evil one. This was done by the death and resurrection of **Christ (Hebrews 2:14-18)**. Rabbi Sha'ul, in **Romans 16:20**, sees the crushing of **Satan's head** as still being in the future. So the final crushing will only come when the great dragon is thrown into the lake of burning sulfur (**Revelation 20:10**). It was not until the prospect of the ultimate victory had been presented, that a sentence of punishment was pronounced upon both the man and the woman because of their sin.⁶⁷ Then **God** turned to the woman for judgment.