

“The Story’s Hero Foretold”

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Earlier the Bible told of a villain who sought, through deception and blatant tyranny, to overthrow the rule of God (Gen. 3:1-7). It is impossible to know why the author included the villain in His story, but his presence will show the power, justice, and grace of the primary character. In our story, God can introduce the antagonist without undermining His person and purpose. In the story, the antagonist, the villain, acts freely yet within the purpose of the author. The creator, author, king, and hero exercises dominion over that which is created.

Because the Bible is a story we can freely speak of author, villain, and hero. Just as the author wrote into the story a villain, so also is the hero spoken of as the antithesis to the evil. The word “hero” comes directly from the Greek language and means “defender, protector.” The hero is distinguished by exceptional courage and nobility and strength. Usually the hero is the principal character and will fight for a cause. wordnet.princeton.edu/perl/webwn

Even though the adversary is strong and inflicts significant damage, God works victory from defeat and hope from despair. God is not threatened by the action of the enemy. In fact, God uses that which works evil for His glory. Inside of this story, God writes in the hero. From the very beginning, God foretells of one who is to come that will bring ultimate defeat to the adversary.

Just as the transgression of all is a part of His story and will bring Him glory, so also is the resultant condemnation. Both the mystery of God and the justice of God are for His glory. Such things are hard to grasp. Yet, just as it is wrong with any piece of literature to view chapters independent of the entire storyline, so also is it wrong to consider transgression and condemnation apart from the larger theme of the story’s purpose. Yet God has not left us without hope. In addition to the villain and the sentence against him, He has written the deliverer, the hero, and deliverance into the story. In this appears the grace of God.

God initiates the prophecy, and for thousands of years keeps the prophecy alive through types and shadows. From the beginning, God wrote into the story the presence of a deliverer. As such, the need for deliverance is presupposed. We have already noted how the story is about the person and purpose of God. His purpose is seen in the presence of a villain and the “advent” of a deliverer or hero. The character of God will be accentuated by the villain and the hero.

When those whom He created rebelled against His wise and good rule, God extended mercy. The prophet Habakkuk remembered God’s mercy when he prayed, “LORD, I have heard the report about You and I fear. O LORD, revive Your work in the midst of the years, In the midst of the years make it known; **in wrath remember mercy**” (Hab. 3:2). This is what God does in Genesis 3:15. In His sentence against the insurgent, He remembers mercy.

“And I will put enmity between you and the woman, And between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel” (Gen. 3:15).

Charles Haddon Spurgeon accurately notes, "Here a blessed promise lies like a pearl in a shell." (*Spurgeon's Devotional Commentary* on Genesis 3:15). Four ideas are prominent in this prophecy. **First**, there is going to be an ongoing animosity between the offspring of the woman and that of the serpent. **Second**, each will inflict the other with injury. The serpent's injury is primary (i.e., "the head") and that to the woman's offspring is secondary (i.e., "the heel"). **Third**, this text speaks of something that is persistent and far-reaching. **Fourth**, the promise will come through the woman and not the man.

This text tells us that a conflict will transpire between the seed of the woman and that of the serpent. Therein is the promise of future justice and grace against the present debacle caused by mankind. In addition to the stated prophecy **God not only speaks, He acts**. Genesis 3:7 describes their shame, guilt and fear and as a result their paltry attempt at addressing this newly "felt" corruption.

"Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings" (Gen. 3:7).

Despite all that man did and what this meant as an affront to God, God acts. He takes the first step and seeks the sinner, the rebel, the fallen, and He extends grace.

"The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife, and clothed them" (Gen. 3:21).

This is an initial act of grace on God's part toward those who stood in rebellion against Him. New Testament Scholar Marcus Dods provides this excellent commentary on what all this meant.

"Adam took leaves from an inanimate, unfeeling tree; God deprived an animal of life, that the shame of His creature might be relieved. This was the last thing Adam would have thought of doing. He had to learn that sin could be covered not by a bunch of leaves snatched from a bush as he passed by and that would grow again next year, but only by pain and blood." (Marcus Dods, *The Book of Genesis*, 25, 26 quoted in Allen P. Ross, *Creation and Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988], 149).

Consider how vain this first attempt was at covering shame, guilt, and fear. Isaiah 64:6 tells us that all of our righteous works are as filthy rags. There is nothing we can do to undo what was done. Our depravity is so great that nothing short of God can undo what was done. What God initially foretold in Genesis 3:15 and "imaged" in 3:21 carries enormous implications as to the hero's character and mission. In this one verse, five ideas can be noted. **First**, there is an established limitation as to what man can and cannot do. Man's response to his shame, guilt, and fear was woefully inadequate. Only God could undo what was done. **Second**, there is the introduction of an innocent victim. The animal from which the skin was taken did nothing to deserve death. **Third**, there was the shedding of blood. When the animal was offered in

sacrifice, its blood was shed. From the beginning God's pattern was established, "Without the shedding of blood there can be no forgiveness of sin" (Heb. 9:22). **Fourth**, there is the idea of substitution. The innocent animal sacrifice took the place of the guilty party. Adam and Eve were the ones deserving death, but their place was taken by another. **Fifth**, there is an acceptable offering that satisfied the immediate demands of the king against His rebellious subjects. God accepted the blood sacrifice of the innocent offering in order that the sin of Adam and Eve could be forgiven.

These five elements help us understand the person and work of the future hero. **First**, the hero will be capable of doing something that the natural man cannot. **Second**, the hero will be blameless of the sentence against Him. **Third**, the hero will offer up His life and shed His blood. **Fourth**, the hero's sacrifice will replace the shame, guilt, and fear of the deserving party. **Finally**, what the hero does will satisfy the eternal demand for justice by the offended party.

From this initial event, God will continue to provide significant indicators to cultivate trust and stimulate hope in His subjects. He will promise to Abraham a seed through which the world would be blessed (Gen. 12:1-3). He will challenge Abraham to offer up his only son, and Abraham's faith will affirm that God will provide for Himself a sacrificial lamb (Gen. 22:8). God will speak of a hero who rules and before whom all will bow (Gen. 49:10; Num. 24:17; Isa. 9:6, 7). He will provide graphic imagery in the delivering of a nation from bondage and the blood sacrifice that will preserve the first born among them (Exod. 12:13, 21-23, 27). He will give daily reminders to address temporal atonement for individual and national sin (the book of Leviticus). Through constant and unbending repetition, God will create a longing for the permanent and eternal sacrifice brought by the hero. All of the sacrifices and feast days are shadows foretelling the greater substance and future fulfillment of the hero who is to come. He will provide prophets who speak with such eloquence as to move future generations to worship (Isaiah 53). Finally, God will speak of a forerunner who will come in the spirit of Elijah before the arrival of the One, the Anointed of God, the Hero (Mal. 3:1, 5, 6). This forerunner is the divine pointer who will cry as the voice in the wilderness, "Behold, the Lamb [i.e., the Hero] of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29).

In the story of God, the condition of man is bleak beyond comprehension... but God. God will provide a way, an only way, and a way that He makes open. All of this prepares us for the coming and leaves us with a spirit of anticipation, of expectancy.

Imagine if we were Old Testament believers: We know in all of the shadows there is something more — something more is to come, something more than what we have. We live contented, but yearning. We live with promise, but unrest. There is a restless faith. There is uneasiness, there is something more, and we die in hope having not yet attained the promise. All of this leaves us with a spirit of hope. It is with joy we can now consider, "The Arrival of the Story's Hero."