

“The First Gospel”

SERIES: The Thread: Finding Jesus in the Old Testament

Genesis 3

Pastor Jarrett Stephens

illus. “Church rat” - I think I’ve told you before that I am a church rat...perhaps you’ve heard it said of athletes that they are “gym rats”. It’s said of men and women who play sports and just love grind of working out. Our man, Bregman from the Stros is reportedly this way showing up as early as 3am in college to workout and swing the bat!

“Gym rats” get up early and they hit the weight room before anyone else gets there...they stay later in the gym to take extra shots – they don’t just love the game, they love everything about the game including practicing and getting ready for it – they are “gym rats”.

Well, something you need to know about your pastor is I am a “church rat”. I love studying about the church. I love reading about the church. I love hearing about what other churches are doing to reach their community. I love looking through church websites just to see how they are doing things. I love going to cemeteries and visiting the gravesites of famous preachers from the past.

Some call it “church rat”, others call it “church nerd” – either way there is something about all this that enralls me - ESPECIALLY reading about and listening to preachers.

Ever since I knew I wanted to preach at seventeen years of age, I’ve been following preachers...listening to their sermons, reading their books and biographies, collecting little trinkets from them if you will.

For example, I have here one of the hand-written sermon pages of Charles Spurgeon. He pastored the Metropolitan Tabernacle in London for 38 years – known as the “Prince of Preachers”, he was a megachurch pastor before there was such a thing! Love me some Charles Spurgeon.

Here is a bullet from the desk of Adrian Rogers, the great pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis, TN. For any Southern Baptist, Dr. Rogers was like the quarterback of a football team – he was looked to for leadership, could preach the stars down and was just a man’s man. He was really the first pastor to hire and coin the term executive pastor. About this bullet, he would say regarding people preaching his sermons and sermon outlines, if my bullet fits your gun, shoot it.

I also have in my collection nearly ALL...very proud of this - the first edition copies of the writings and commentaries of W.A. Criswell.

Now, if you never heard of Dr. Criswell, he was the pastor of the First Baptist Church of Dallas for five decades. He started the Criswell Bible College to train students for ministry and perhaps what he is best known for is his role in what is known as the Conservative Resurgence. The Southern Baptist Convention was drifting theologically and he along with a few others – he was kind of the granddad behind it all fought to steer the ship back from a liberal drift.

I thought of Dr. Criswell, and this first edition copy of this book I have in my library by him called, *The Scarlet Thread Through the Bible*.

Now, what's interesting about this book, is that it is a transcript of a sermon that Dr. Criswell preached on New Year's Eve in 1961. First Dallas used to have a "watch night" service where they would bring in the new year with prayers and singing and a sermon.

Well, that evening, he was encouraged by the leadership in his church to preach beginning at 7:30, and go until midnight!

Now, can you imagine that?! They say the worship center was packed...and for four and half hours Criswell preached! I get nervous when I start to go over my 35 minute mark!

He went on to say that in his five decades of pastoring and preaching that the New Year's Eve message of 1961 was his greatest preaching experience.

I thought about that sermon...this little book when I knew we would be preaching this new series that will take us up into Christmas.

We're calling it: **The Thread: Finding Jesus in the Old Testament**

As **W.A. Criswell** articulated in his message that evening: **"When we preach the cross, when we preach the blood, when we preach the sacrificial death of Christ, we are preaching the meaning of his coming into the world. The sacrifice of Christ consummated the great redemptive plan and purpose of God in the earth. This is the scarlet thread through the ages."**

In pictures...and in people...in symbols and in scenarios throughout the Old Testament, if we will just look – and this series is going to help us do this – we will find what...or I should say, we will find WHO the Bible is all about. And from start to finish, it's about Jesus.

Today's message is one I'm calling: **The First Gospel**

It might surprise you to know that before Jesus ever arrived to earth via his physical birth at Bethlehem, it was first predicted 4000 years before in the Garden of Eden.

Scholars call it the "protoevangelium" – "proto" = first and "evangelium" = gospel. The first announcement of the gospel.

So, let's go back to the Garden and check it out. If you've grown up in church for any amount of time, you know the context. God has created the heavens and the earth and all that is in them. He then created man and woman to have a special relationship with him...they are made in his image:

Genesis 1:27 – “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him...”

They are not only made in his image, but they are given everything they would ever need:

Genesis 1:29-30 – “And God said, ‘Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. And every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.’”

So, Adam and Eve - they are made in the image of God. They had everything they would ever need. They were put in a perfect environment:

Genesis 2:8-9 – “And the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground the LORD God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.”

They did have one stipulation to their freedom...there were limits put on them...and this is very important:

Genesis 2:16-17 – “And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”

Now, sometime after this warning is given, Gen. 3:1 takes place. We see the serpent...and we know that behind the serpent is the Enemy...the devil himself (Rev. 20:2).

Gen. 3:1 – “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 in the garden?’”

Let’s take note here beginning here in v. 1 and going through v. 6 of the process of the Enemy’s scheme because he has not changed his ways, tactics or strategies since he entered the Garden all those years ago. Satan tempts me and you the same way he tempted Adam and Eve.

Illus. Football/Baseball ipads – watching film! Well, let’s watch some film – know our Enemy!

Notice what he does first! v. 1b – “Did God actually say...” – the serpent, questions God! We see Satan seducing...we see him deceiving...we see him creating doubt. He moves God’s Word from being an imperative to an interrogative. And this is where all sin starts!

I've said it before about sin – it always starts with putting a question mark where God put a period. We're get on shaky ground when we question what God has already clearly said in his word!

Illus. Mark Lanier preaching next week – World Religions on Trial – this series is right down his alley. It's interesting to me that every false religion, every cult out there either adds to or takes away from God's Word...this is what Satan does!

This is the strategy Satan uses to get us to sin. He tempts us to question God's Word...he whispers his lies...just read (v. 2-5). He deceives...usually perverts something good, and ultimately he leads Adam and Eve to make a choice – a devastating choice to sin against God - And they immediately know something is wrong!

Look at the consequences of sin. Just look at what takes place!

1. They felt shame

Gen. 3:7 – “Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And the sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.”

Gen. 2:25 – “naked and not ashamed” – now they sew some fig leaves together – they try to cover their shame!

2. They felt guilt

Gen. 3:8 – “And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.”

They once walked in the presence of the Lord and now hiding from him! No innocence here! Talk about silly...Adam and Eve try to hide from God. Amazing what sin does doesn't it...makes us think we can hide from a God who sees everything!

Write this down: sin makes me stupid! It does...sin will make you lose your mind. Look at what else they experienced as a result of sin:

3. The felt fear

Gen. 3:9-10 – “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.”

Listen to me: Choosing to sin NEVER delivers what it promises!

- It promises pleasure – brings pain!
- It promises freedom – brings bondage!

- It promises life – brings death!

And the tragedy is we know this! Sin NEVER leads to life and freedom, but the exact opposite. It leads to misery...to slavery...to hiding!

So, let's look at the strategy of our Adversary and be aware of how he tempts us. He watches film on you, let's watch film on him!

Don't listen to his lies...see behind his deceptions. He is out according to John 10:10 to steal, kill and destroy – and what he destroys in this one instance is Adam and Eve's unbroken communion with God...and just consider for a moment the consequences that come along with this choice Adam and Eve made – to listen to Satan instead of following God.

Let's start with Eve's curse first...she got us in this whole mess!

Gen. 3:16 – “To the woman he said, ‘I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.’”

It's here that we read of the curse upon personal relationships being affected by sin...there will be pain in childbirth and there will be marital strife. Consequence #1 of sin - Those relationships that are nearest and dearest to you will not be absent of conflict.

Gen. 3:17-19 – “And to Adam he said, ‘Because you have 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. 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.’”

At one time man ruled and reigned over the ground, but now man will work it and return to it! Consequence #2 of sin - That land that you worked is going to be a pain. Sin distorts even nature. When you work, it's not going to be easy for you.

But the major consequence of sin is death. Man will one day return to the ground. The odds are against us! We will all die and it's a result of sin. Thank you, Adam and Eve,

Romans 5:12 – “Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned...” (imputed unrighteousness)

We see it in **Romans 6:23a - “For the wages of sin is death...”**

Sin brings death...there is a physical separation from God as a result of sin and UNLESS God does something...UNLESS he intervenes in some way, there will be a spiritual separation from God forever and ever.

And it's here that we have the first gospel...the first signs of hope. It's actually found in (v. 15). God curses the serpent and then gives us this promise (The first gospel) – interestingly he gives us this before he announces the curse on Adam and Eve!

To me this just highlights the mercy and justice of God. See, God's holiness demands that sin be judged...but in this pronouncement we see his incredible mercy. The consequences of sin is bad, but in God's grace he gives hope. In this loss, we read of a coming victory.

Gen. 3:15 – “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.”

This is the first gospel...the first signs of hope...the first signs of a redeemer! God mentions the offspring of a woman will come into the world. This is the only place in the entire Bible where a person is referred to as the offspring of a woman. And notice offspring is singular.

Paul enlightens us in Galatians concerning this “offspring” – he knows WHO this offspring of a woman is – He sees Jesus in this!

Gal. 4:4 - “But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the Law...”

We KNOW who this offspring is – and we know it because of what God says the offspring will do!

(v. 15) - A bruise to the heel is a damaging blow...a bruise to the head is a fatal blow. One hurts, the other kills. In this we begin to see the first picture of the cross! Jesus was bruised on the cross, but Satan was crushed in the resurrection.

Right here in Genesis three, we see Jesus. And let me show you Jesus in three actions God takes. The first action God takes is:

1. Sin is covered

Gen. 3:21 – “And the Lord God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them.”

Adam and Eve deserved physical death. But instead, God killed an animal – before the sacrificial system ever comes into effect, God sacrifices an animal and uses its skin to cloth their shame...he covers their sin.

See, Adam and Eve tried to cover their sin. They sewed fig leaves together – but that didn't cover their nakedness and shame. ONLY a sacrifice would do...only God can cover sin!

How often do we try and do what only God can do. We try to cover our sin. We try to do better to please God...we'll just try harder...work a little more – and these are just feeble attempts to do something that only God can do.

Only God can cover sin and takes blood! Later on once the sacrificial system is in place we see this to a fuller extent, but right here in Gen. 3 is the first “sin substitute”. Right here in Gen. 3, we see the first blood sacrifice.

Heb. 9:22b – “... without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.”

This is why we sing songs about the blood! If you are new to church and just trying to figure it all out, you need to know the Christian faith is a bloody faith – we can't get away from it!

It's why we sing about the blood! “There is power in the blood! Wonder working power in the blood!” It's why we sing: “There is a fountain filled with blood, drawn from Emmanuel's veins and sinner's plunge beneath that flow lose all their guilty stains!”

What can wash away my sins? Nothing but the blood of Jesus! What can make me whole again? Nothing but the blood of Jesus. Oh, precious is that flow that makes me white as snow, no other fount I know, nothing but the blood of Jesus!

Illus. Amazon via CF Connect – preaching with an interpreter – **(show pic)** – “snow” – we know what it means! God in Christ covers our sin. Secondly, we see a picture of Christ in that:

2. Satan is defeated

Listen again to the promise of hope. **Gen. 3:15b – “...he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.”**

Jesus would suffer for our sin...there was no other way. And the brutality of the cross shows us how much Jesus suffered. But the final victory would be his. In his resurrection, he crushed the serpent's head.

Listen to the writer of Hebrews in **Heb. 2:14-15 – “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,¹⁵ and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.”**

See, this victory over Satan is ours to share in. I loved reading this little note on Gen. 3:15 in the NIV Study Bible – **“The antagonism between people and snakes is used to symbolize the outcome of the titanic struggle between God and the evil one, a struggle played out in the hearts and history of mankind. The offspring of the woman would eventually crush the serpent's head, a promise fulfilled in Christ's victory over Satan – a victory in which all believers will share.”**

When we place our faith and hope in Christ, God by the power of the Holy Spirit comes to live in us. And we have victory. We are sealed for the day of redemption. We have a future spiritual victory and practically, we can live in victory every single day.

We don't have to fall prey to the Enemy's tactics anymore. We are victorious over sin and Satan and because of our living Redeemer (Christ in us) we can choose to live in victory today.

And by the way, there is a reason that Jesus is referred to as the second Adam...speaking of a picture of Jesus. What the first Adam did wrong, the second Adam, Jesus did/made right!

1 Cor. 15:21-22 – “For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. ²² For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.”

Rom. 5:12-19 – “Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned— ¹³ for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. ¹⁴ Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come.

¹⁵ But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many. ¹⁶ And the free gift is not like the result of that one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification. ¹⁷ For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ.

¹⁸ Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. ¹⁹ For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.”

We see a picture of Jesus in Gen. 3 in that our sin is covered. Satan is defeated. And then thirdly:

3. Salvation is secured

The great thing about Gen. 3:15 is that it is both a prophecy and a promise. And the one thing about God is he keeps his promises.

When God banishes Adam and Eve from the Garden as a result of sin – look at **Gen. 3:22-24 – “Then the Lord God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil. Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever—” ²³ therefore the Lord God sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. ²⁴ He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life.”**

Once again we see the mercy and grace of God. God did not want Adam and Eve taking of the tree and living forever in their fallen state. He banishes them from Paradise!

However, because of Christ and his dying on the cross as our substitute, we have a way to come back to Paradise...it's ours in Christ. You want to read what ours right now – and will one day be a reality!

Illus. Can't do this justice – Turn with me to the last chapter in the Bible.

Rev. 22:1-5 – “Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal (notice its beauty), **flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month** (This is a place that has been eternally prepared for us and will satisfy us totally and completely...all needs will be met in our heavenly home There is total access to the tree of life...it's no longer guarded and not only can we reach out and touch this tree, we will be able to eat of its fruit that is like the river, life-giving and eternally satisfying). **The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be anything accursed** (absent of pain, suffering, sin and death), **but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him** (unhindered worship – work and our walk will be worship!). **They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads** (only for those in a relationship with God! Denotes ownership – we are his forever!). **And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever** (we will dwell with God forever and ever).”

Rev. 22:6-7a – “**And he** (The angel giving John the tour guide) **said to me, “These words are trustworthy and true** (You can bank on it!). **And the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, has sent his angel to show his servants what must soon take place.” “And behold, I am coming soon...”**

Revelation 22 – our future salvation was secured in a Genesis 3 promise. Jesus. He's the thread throughout scripture. And if you look close enough, you will find him on every single page of the Bible.

Would you pray with me?

Please Note: This document is not meant to be a published, cited, annotated research paper. It is simply a transcript of a spoken message, provided as a resource. Many commentaries, articles, and other sermon helps were likely studied and contributed to the forming of this message.