

The Skull Crushing Seed of the Woman: Inner-Biblical Interpretation of Genesis 3:15

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Introduction

The use of the OT in the New has been much discussed, with some coming to the conclusion that, to put it simply, the authors of the NT wrongly interpreted the OT.¹ This being the case, their exegesis cannot be legitimately imitated today. Those who come to this conclusion are sometimes mystified as to how the authors of the NT could possibly see a reference to the Messiah in texts the NT applies to him, at points even arguing that particular applications of OT texts to Jesus in the NT do not actually refer to him at all.² Another argument against the imitation of apostolic use of the OT is that their hermeneutical methods are not valid today.³ This means that while an understanding of the hermeneutical milieu can help us make sense of what the authors of the NT were doing, it does not validate their method for us. Others would agree with Moisés Silva's objection to this conclusion: "If we refuse to pattern our exegesis after that of the apostles, we are in practice denying the authoritative character of their scriptural interpretation—and to do so is to strike at the very heart of the Christian faith."⁴

It seems to me that certain presuppositional starting points have the potential to ameliorate every intellectual difficulty with the way that the NT interprets the OT, regardless of the hermeneutical tools employed. I have in mind one thing in

particular, namely, the hypothesis that from start to finish, the OT is a messianic document, written from a messianic perspective, to sustain a messianic hope.⁵ Adopting this perspective might go a long way toward explaining why the NT seems to regard the whole of the OT as pointing to and being fulfilled in the one it presents as the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth. Further, it might be in line with texts such as Luke 24:27, 44–45, which could indicate that Jesus read the OT in precisely this way (cf. also Matt 5:17 and John 5:46).⁶ If Jesus and the authors of the NT did read the OT in this way, they were apparently not alone. Craig Evans notes, "The saying of Rabbi Yohanan, though uttered in the post-NT era, probably reflects what was assumed by many in the first century: 'Every prophet prophesied only for the days of the Messiah' (*b. Ber.* 34b)."⁷

The only way to verify such a hypothesis is to test it against the data. The evidence is, of course, disputed. I am not suggesting that we should look for "Jesus under every rock" or in every detail of the description of the temple, a straw man which at times seems to be the only thing conceivable to certain "OT only"⁸ interpreters when they hear the kind of suggestion I am making. We need not abandon the discipline of looking carefully at what the texts actually say to see the OT as a messianic document.⁹ Nor is the objection that there is proportionally

very little about the messiah in the OT necessarily devastating to this proposal, for it is always possible that a certain feature is not everywhere named in the text because it is everywhere assumed.¹⁰ Still, such suggestions are greatly strengthened by evidence.

A full scale demonstration of the hypothesis is beyond the scope of this article, so this study will examine one foundational element of the theory. If, for instance, we were to argue that the Messianism of the OT is introduced in Gen 3:15, such an assertion would be more plausible if the influence of this text could be shown through the rest of the OT and into the New. Here I will put on these lenses—lenses that assume that the OT is a messianic document, written from a messianic perspective, to sustain a messianic hope—and point to the ways that Gen 3:15 is interpreted in the Old and New Testaments.¹¹

The Context of Genesis 3:15

God's first act of judgment in the Bible is accompanied by his first promise of salvation, and the salvation will come through the judgment. As the serpent is cursed, he is told that he will proceed on his belly and that he will eat dust (Gen 3:14). Further, enmity is placed between him and the woman, and between his seed and the seed of the woman. This enmity will issue in the seed of the woman crushing the head of the serpent (3:15). This salvation from the serpent's sneaky ways (3:1) is a salvation that comes through judgment. Obviously, judgment falls on the serpent as his head is crushed, but there is also judgment on the seed of the woman as the serpent crushes his heel. There is judgment for the woman, too, for the bearing of the saving seed will be painful

(3:16a); and, the relations between male and female, which are necessary for the seed to be born, will be strained (3:16b). Judgment falls on the man as well, as the ground from whose fruit the seed will be fed is cursed, and in painful, sweaty toil he will labor until he eventually returns to the dust (3:17–19).

In the short span of Gen 3:14–19, the God of the Bible is shown to be both just and merciful. The scene puts God on display as one who upholds righteousness and yet offers hope to guilty human rebels. He is a God of justice and so renders just condemnation for the transgressors. Yet he is also a God of mercy, and so he makes plain that his image bearers will triumph over the wicked snake.¹²

My aim in the present study is to highlight the theme of the head crushing seed of the woman in the Bible.¹³ Even if at many points my interpretation of the data is disputed, this study will nevertheless contribute a catalog of the intertextual use of the theme of the smashing of the skulls of the enemies of God.¹⁴

In order to understand the Bible's presentation of the victory of the seed of the woman over the seed of the serpent, we must first discuss the tension between the one and the many in the Bible. Is the seed of the woman to be understood as a particular person, or is it to be understood as a group of people? I will suggest that the texts indicate that the answer is "yes" to both questions. The seed of the woman can be *both* a particular descendant *and* the group of descendants who hope for the victory of their seed. Having pointed to evidence for this conclusion, I will note the conflict between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent in the Bible in broad terms, before narrowing in on the use of the imagery arising from

Gen 3:15 in the rest of the Bible. Perhaps one reason Gen 3:15 is generally excluded from discussions of the use of the OT in the OT or in the NT is that scholars have explored “intertextuality” mainly on the basis of verbal connections. Meanwhile imagery—such as a crushed head or an enemy underfoot, which, as will be seen below, can be communicated in a variety of ways—has not received as much attention.¹⁵

The Collective-Singular Seed

The noun *zera'* (seed) never occurs in the plural in the OT.¹⁶ Accordingly, the singular term can be used “collectively,” that is, the singular form is used for both an individual seed and a group of seeds.¹⁷ In the case of humans, it can refer to a single descendant or to multiple descendants. Jack Collins, however, has demonstrated through a syntactical analysis that “when *zera'* [seed] denotes a specific descendant, it appears with singular verb inflections, adjectives, and pronouns.”¹⁸ This leads Collins to conclude that “on the syntactical level, the singular pronoun *hû'* [he] in Genesis 3:15 is quite consistent with the pattern where a singular individual is in view.”¹⁹

T. Desmond Alexander builds on the data presented by Collins to suggest that these conclusions are also relevant for interpreting Gen 22:17–18a and 24:60.²⁰ Genesis 22:17–18a will serve to illustrate the point being pursued here. It is clear that the first use of the term seed in 22:17 has a collective referent, for the text reads, “I will make your seed to be many, like the stars of the heavens or as the sand which is upon the lip of the sea.”²¹ Because of a singular pronominal suffix in the next statement (*'ōybāyw*, his enemies, not their enemies), the referent of the next two

uses of the term seed could be a singular descendant. In this case, we might render 22:17b–18a as follows: “and your seed (one descendant, not all of them this time) will possess the gate of his enemies. And they will be blessed by your seed (one descendant, not all of them)—all the nations of the earth.” I agree with Alexander’s argument that the text switches from a collective referent to a singular one,²² and I introduce this consideration here to point out this flexibility between the individual “seed” and the collective “holy seed” (cf. Isa 6:13) found in the OT.²³

This ambiguity between the one and the many is witnessed in the variation between the singular and plural forms of second person address in Deuteronomy: “the singular emphasizes Israel as a unity . . . the plural is an arresting variation, focusing (paradoxically perhaps) on the responsibility of each individual to keep the covenant.”²⁴ This interplay could also be what opens the door to the possibility of one person standing in place of the nation, as when Moses offers himself for the people (Exod 32:30–33), or when we read of a servant who at places appears to be the nation (Isa 41:8; 44:1) and at others an individual (42:1; 52:13).²⁵ As Dempster states, “An oscillation between a group and an individual within the group as its representative is certainly common in the Tanakh.”²⁶

The possibility of an individual or a collective whole being in view can also be seen in the way that Paul interprets OT seed texts. On one occasion, Paul emphasizes the singularity of the seed: “It does not say, ‘and to seeds,’ as to many, but as to one, ‘and to your seed,’ which is Messiah” (Gal 3:16). On another occasion, Paul can take the seed text of Gen 3:15 and apply it collectively to the people of God: “Now

the God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet” (Rom 16:20).²⁷ Though some might not be willing to credit the “Hebrew of Hebrews” with respect for OT context and an ability to recognize a tension between the collective and the singular in these seed texts, it seems at least plausible that Paul has recognized the dynamic to which I am pointing—namely, that the OT bears witness to an ambiguity between an individual and a group.²⁸ Another example of this dynamic in the NT is the way that Jesus is presented as “recapitulating Israel’s history” in the early chapters of the Gospel according to Matthew. A poignant example is Hos 11:1, which in its OT context referred to the nation, but Matthew claims it is fulfilled in Jesus (Matt 2:15).²⁹

Conflict Between the Seeds

Almost immediately after the judgment is announced that there will be enmity between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent (Gen 3), the text recounts that one who pleased God, Abel, was slain by one who did not please God and then rejected a divine warning, Cain (Gen 4:1–16).³⁰ The escalation of hostility seen in Cain’s descendants (see esp. 4:23–24) points to his line as representing those whose actions mirror the one who “was a murderer from the beginning” (John 8:44).³¹ The point here is not that Cain’s line has been physically sired by Satan; rather, the Bible commonly describes people figuratively as children of those whose characteristics they emulate.³²

The conflict between Isaac and Ishmael can also be seen as enmity between the respective seed—one the seed of the promise and the other of a failure to believe (Gen 21:9–10, 12; Rom 9:7).³³

Egypt’s attempt to destroy the male children of Israel also continues this battle between the lines of descent (Exod 1:16, 22). Both the collective singularity of Israel and their place as the chosen seed can be seen in the statement in Exod 4:23, “And I say to you, send my son that he may serve me, but if you refuse to send him, behold, I am about to kill your son, your firstborn.” The conflict between the seeds continues throughout the OT, and seems to be one of the main points of the book of Esther, where the genocidal enemy of the people of God, Haman, is an Agagite (Esth 3:1), which in the book’s canonical context calls to mind the statement in Num 24:7, “and his king shall be higher than Agag,” as well as Saul’s failure to kill Agag (1 Sam 15). As Dempster writes, “Esther’s opposition to Haman continues the major theme running through the narrative, that of the woman against the beast: Eve versus the serpent.”³⁴

From the statements to be discussed below, which I am suggesting reflect the influence of Gen 3:15, it seems that the authors of the Bible regard the enemies of the people of God as those whose heads, like the head of the Serpent (the father of lies), will be crushed. Those who are understood as opposing the purposes of God and his people appear to be regarded as the seed of the serpent.³⁵ This would inform the depiction of John the Baptist denouncing the Pharisees and Sadducees as a “brood of vipers” (Matt 3:7; Luke 3:7). Can such an identification be a mere coincidence of language? Jesus is shown repeating this denunciation of the Pharisees in Matthew’s Gospel (12:34; 23:33),³⁶ and John shows him telling those who seek to kill him (John 8:40) that they do the deeds of their father (8:41), the devil (8:44).³⁷

Salvation through Judgment: The Skull Crushing Seed

Perhaps the word-study fallacy has closed many ears to the echoes of Gen 3:15 that run through the Bible.³⁸ Even though nearly everyone is aware of the potential pitfall, it remains true that often in the modern academy discussions of “messianic hope in the OT” give too much space and weight to word studies of the term “anointed” and/or limit themselves to examination of the ideas surrounding the promises to David. Whereas older and/or more conservative discussions began their treatments of messianic hope with Gen 3:15,³⁹ modern self-consciously academic approaches sometimes mention this text and its influence only in passing, if at all.⁴⁰ Further, until recently, there has been a widespread tendency to ignore a text’s canonical context and minimize what one book or author may add to another.⁴¹

In fact there are a number of thematic images that, taking the biblical text in its final, canonical form, are introduced in Gen 3:14–15 as God pronounces the curse on the serpent. The enmity between the respective seed has been noted above. The serpent will have his head damaged, and the seed of the woman will have his heel damaged. In many biblical texts this is interpreted to mean that the seed of the woman will trample on the seed of the serpent. It is true that the term *šûp* (“bruise,” “cover”) is not used to designate the defeat of the evil seed other than in Gen 3:15,⁴² but the use of several terms for crushing/shattering/breaking seems to indicate that the biblical authors understood the damage in view to be a smashing of the serpent’s skull.⁴³ Often we read of the enemies of the people of God being “broken,” or, more specifically, of

their craniums being crushed. Bad guys get broken heads in the Bible. In some texts it is specifically stated that the ones shattered are serpents. The serpent was told he would eat dust (Gen 3:14), and in several places the rebellious eat or lick dust. At points, a number of these images are used together, but the enmity between the seeds and some aspect of the curse are present in them all.⁴⁴ We now turn to a discussion of each of these thematic images that, it seems to me, reflect the biblical authors’ interpretation and application of the primeval curse on the serpent. I will discuss the use of these images in the OT first, grouping them as they appear in the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings. Possible allusions to Gen 3:15 in the NT will then be briefly discussed.

Broken Heads

In the Law

Several messianic themes are sounded in the Balaam oracles,⁴⁵ but most prominent for the present is what appears to be the interpretation of Gen 3:15 in Num 24:17.⁴⁶ There is enmity between Israel and Moab, and fearing Israel’s numbers (22:3) Balak king of Moab summons Balaam to curse Israel. As Balaam’s oracles are recounted, the text indicates that a male Israelite will arise whose coming is associated with the arrival of a star and the rising of a scepter, pointing to his royal status. The Targum on this text seems to interpret the star as “the King” (*malkā*) and the scepter as “the Messiah” (*mēšīḥā*). This individual will “crush the forehead of Moab” (Num 24:17).⁴⁷ The words used in Numbers are not the words used in Genesis,⁴⁸ but the image of the crushed head of an enemy is clearly invoked.⁴⁹

In the Former Prophets

The story of Jael “crushing the head” of Sisera is told in Judg 4 and then celebrated in song in Judg 5. The terminology of Judg 5:26 might allude to Numb 24:17, as the verb *māḥaṣ* (“crush,” “shatter,” “smite through”) is used with several synonymous terms⁵⁰ to describe this gruesome deed. Once again, the collective seed of the woman through Abraham, Israel, is at enmity with another seed, the Canaanites. Interestingly, the text argues that Israel has been subjugated to Jabin king of Canaan because Israel did what was evil in the sight of Yahweh (Judg 4:1–2). As in Gen 3, one of the causes of enmity between the respective seeds is the rebellion of those who are supposed to be loyal to Yahweh. Yahweh has judged his rebels, and now one of their seed will deliver them from Yahweh’s judgment by crushing the head of Jabin’s general, Sisera (cf. Judg 4, esp. 4:21, where Jael drives a tent peg through Sisera’s temple as he sleeps).⁵¹ The theme of the salvation of the seed of the woman through judgment—judgment that the seed experiences and renders—is sounded here as the seed of the woman crushes the head of the enemy seed.

In some cases those who have their heads crushed are physically descended from Abraham, but by their actions they show themselves to be at enmity with those who are faithful to Yahweh. Like Cain, who was physically a seed of the woman but showed himself to be the seed of the serpent by killing his brother, Abimelech shows the lineage of his ethical character by killing seventy of his brothers (Judg 9:1–5; cf. also 9:34–49, where he slaughters his subjects [9:6]). Judgment falls on the seed of the serpent (Abimelech), however, when a woman throws a millstone on Abimelech’s head (*rō’s*) and

his skull (*gulēggōlet*⁵²) is crushed (*rāṣaṣ*⁵³) (9:53).

It is surely no coincidence that when the seed of the woman named David lets fly his stone, the uncircumcised Philistine seed of the serpent who defied the armies of the living God gets struck (*nākāh*) on the forehead (*mēṣaḥ*). The stone sinks into his forehead (*wattitba’ hā’eben bēmishō*), and with a crushed head the Philistine falls dead (1 Sam 17:49). The collective seed of the woman are delivered from the seed of the serpent by the judgment administered through the singular seed of the woman.⁵⁴

In the Latter Prophets

When we come to the latter prophets, we find that Isaiah employs the imagery of Gen 3:15 as he addresses the sinful nation as the “seed of wicked ones” (*zera’ mēreyim*), and then asks why they should continue to be struck when the whole head is sick (Isa 1:4–5). Here it seems that Isaiah is depicting the divine discipline upon the nation of Israel in terms of their heads being struck, seed of the serpent that they have become.

It is possible that Isaiah returns to imagery from Gen 3:15 in the exchange with Ahaz in chapter 7, using the term “head” (*rō’s*) four times in two verses in reference to Ahab’s enemies as he describes them being “shattered” (*ḥātat*) (Isa 7:8–9). In this context, Isaiah is challenging Ahaz to be firm in faith (7:9). If this head-shattering language is alluding to Gen 3:15, then we might conclude that Isaiah is not calling for an abstract, undefined “faith,” but for trust in the specific promises Yahweh has given to his people beginning from Gen 3:15.⁵⁵ Messianic overtones are perhaps made more likely in this text because it is set between the

reference to the “holy seed” in 6:13 and the “Immanuel” prophecy in 7:14. Further, with the messianic tenor of chapters 9 and 11, Isa 7–12 is sometimes referred to as the “book of Immanuel.”

Imagery from Gen 3:15 again shows up in the prophecy of Isaiah, and again it seems to be ironically directed against Israelites. Isaiah 28:3 states, “The majestic crown of the drunks of Ephraim will be trampled by feet.” Heads trampled by feet as God’s judgment falls. This seems to assume a well known image: a heel damaged from stomping on a serpent’s head.

Moving to Jeremiah, in the very chapter that describes the righteous Davidic branch who will reign as king and execute justice and righteousness (Jer 23:5, the Targum uses the noun *mšyḥ* twice in this verse), we also read “Behold the storm of Yahweh: rage goes forth, and a tempest excites itself; upon the head (*rōš*, sg.) of the wicked ones (pl.) it shall dance.” This chapter is an oracle against shepherds who scatter the people (23:1), false prophets who do not speak from Yahweh (23:9–22, esp 16). The remedy for these shepherds who do not care for the sheep appears to be the good shepherd, the Davidic branch (23:5). Significantly, in Jer 23:19 the punishment visited upon the wicked shepherds is described in imagery that reflects Gen 3:15. Thus, Jer 23 seems to weave together the threads of promise having to do with a Davidic ruler (23:5) who will save the people and restore them to their land (23:6–8), with a simultaneous divine justice that is visited upon the head of the wicked (23:19). If the verb in 23:19 is translated “dance,”⁵⁶ then the raging storm on the head of the wicked is depicted as being wrought by dancing *feet*, perhaps alluding to the crushed heel of Gen 3:15. If this is the case, the justice visited upon

the head of the wicked is rendered by the heel of the storm of Yahweh.

The likelihood of this interpretation would seem to be strengthened if there are indeed numerous allusions to Gen 3:15 peppered through the OT (the point this study is hoping to establish). For this reason, it is important that a very similar collocation of Davidic and head-crushing themes recurs in Jeremiah in the restoration prophecies of chapter 30 (cf. 30:3). After Yahweh has broken the foreign yokes from the necks of his people (30:8), he declares through Jeremiah that “they shall serve Yahweh their God and David their King, whom I will raise up for them” (30:9). Toward the end of the same chapter, we read, “And it shall come about that the majestic one of him [Targum: “their king”] shall come from him, and the one who rules him [Targum: “their Messiah”] will go forth from his midst . . . Behold the storm of Yahweh: rage goes forth; a tempest excites itself; upon the head (*rōš*, sg.) of the wicked ones (pl.) it shall dance” (30:21a, 23).⁵⁷ Like Jer 23, in chapter 30 we find interwoven promises of a Davidic ruler (30:9, 21) and justice visited upon the head of the wicked (30:23). Once again, the justice visited upon the head of the wicked is rendered by the heel of the storm of Yahweh. These texts in Jeremiah seem to promise the triumph of the future Davidic ruler, and the judgment visited when he reigns is described in imagery reminiscent of Gen 3:15. Both Jer 23:19 and 30:23 are followed by the intriguing statement, “In the latter days you will understand this” (23:20; 30:24).⁵⁸

Another image of head-crushing is found in Hab 3:13. In a description of the coming of Yahweh in wrath and mercy (Hab 3:2), Yahweh threshes the nations in anger (3:12). Habakkuk then moves

from just wrath to merciful salvation in 3:13, as Yahweh is addressed with the words, “You went out for the salvation of your people, for the salvation of your anointed [or, Messiah]; you crush (*māḥaṣ*)⁵⁹ the head from the house of the wicked, laying bare from tail to neck. Selah.” Ralph Smith provides a helpful comment: “‘Your Anointed’ probably refers to the Davidic king in Jerusalem. ‘From tail to neck’ (v 13) appears to be a reference to the enemy in the form of a dragon.”⁶⁰ The serpentine quality of the enemy in Hab 3:13 is heightened by the possible allusion to the description of the snake in Gen 3:1. The snake is described as “crafty” with the term *‘ārūm* in Gen 3:1. In Hab 3:13 the word *‘ārāh* (“lay bare,” “make naked”) is used to describe the “laying bare” of this creature (cf. also Gen 2:25, where the man and woman are both “bare,” i.e., naked, and the term is *‘arôm*).

Just as Yahweh promises a crushed head to the serpent in Gen 3:15, Yahweh is described crushing the head of the wicked in Hab 3:13. If it is correct to see dragon imagery in Hab 3:13,⁶¹ this text brings together the Messiah and divine justice in the form of a serpent with a crushed head. Further, in this text Yahweh’s head-crushing justice is side by side with the salvation of his people.

In the Writings

Psalm 68 sings the triumph of God over his enemies for the benefit of his people. In verses 21–22 (ET 20–21) judgment and salvation are placed side by side, and we read, “The God for us is a God of deliverances, and to Yahweh our Lord belong escapes from death. But God will crush (*māḥaṣ*) the head (*rō’š*, sg.) of his enemies (pl.), the hairy crown of the one who walks in his guilt.” Yahweh then says he will

bring back his enemies from Bashan and the sea (68:23, ET 22), “that your feet (sg.) may stomp (*māḥaṣ*) in blood . . .” (68:24, ET 23). Thus, Ps 68 describes the enemies of God having their heads crushed by Yahweh (68:22, ET 21), but it also indicates that Yahweh will deliver up his enemies so that his people will stomp in the blood of their foes (68:24, ET 23).⁶² This is reminiscent of the way that the OT often speaks of Yahweh giving a nation to the Israelites in battle—Yahweh determines that Israel will prevail, but Israel actually goes out and physically defeats the enemy (e.g., Deut 2:30–37; 2 Sam 8:1–14). In Ps 68, the victory is described with the imagery of Gen 3:15, with the seed of the serpent receiving a crushed head from the feet of the seed of the woman.

Several images from Gen 3:15 seem to be brought together in Ps 110. The statement in 110:6 that is sometimes translated, “he will shatter chiefs” (cf. ESV, NASU, NIV, NKJV, RSV), could just as well be translated, “he will crush (*māḥaṣ*) the head (*rō’š*, sg.) on the broad land” (cf. JPS, NAB, NJB, NLT, NRSV). This is a Davidic Psalm (110:1), and the use of the verb *māḥaṣ* (crush, shatter) and the term *rō’š* in a number of head-crushing contexts in the OT (cf. Num 24:8, 17; Judg 5:26; 2 Sam 22:39; Job 26:12; Ps 68:22, 24; Hab 3:13) would seem to color the use of these terms in Ps 110. The statement that the enemies will be made a footstool for the feet of the Davidic king (110:1) seems to draw on the connection between the damaged heel and head in Gen 3:15.⁶³ The reference to the scepter being sent forth (110:2) calls to mind texts such as Gen 49:10, Num 24:17, and Ps 2:9 (though a different term is used for “scepter” in those texts).⁶⁴ And finally, the Lord will also do some shattering in 110:5 (*māḥaṣ* again). Yahweh smashes, the

Messiah smashes, and the enemies are under the feet. Genesis 3:15 is not directly quoted, but it is not far away.⁶⁵

Broken Enemies

The texts looked at in the previous section connected the judgment of Yahweh to the head of the enemy, with some having Davidic/messianic overtones. The texts to be considered in this section designate shattered enemies, but they do not limit the smashing to the skull. This constitutes a loosening of the image of the crushed head of the seed of the serpent in Gen 3:15, but it still seems related.

In the Law

In the song of triumph celebrating Yahweh's deliverance of Israel from Egypt, we read that Yahweh's right hand "shatters (*rā'as*) the enemy" (Exod 15:6). Several statements from Num 24 have been discussed above, the context also contains the words, "and as for their bones, he will break (*gāram*) them, and his arrows will crush (*māḥas*) them" (Num 24:8).

In the Former Prophets

The books of Samuel may be book-ended by interpretations of Gen 3:15. The first half of the *inclusio* may be seen in 1 Sam 2:10, where the conclusion of Hannah's prayer reads in part, "Yahweh will shatter (*ḥātat*) the ones who contend with him; upon them he will thunder in the heavens. Yahweh will judge the ends of the earth, and he will give strength to his King. And he will exalt the horn of his Anointed." The second half of the *inclusio* comes in David's song of deliverance in 2 Sam 22, which ends with statements about Yahweh's anointed (messianic) king and the seed of David (2 Sam 22:51). As he extols the capability Yahweh gave to him

(22:40), David describes what he did to his enemies, "I grind them as the dust of the earth. As clay of the streets I crushed (*dāqaq*) them; I stamped (*rāqa'*) them" (22:43; cf. Ps 18:43, ET 42).⁶⁶ Since they are likened to the clay of the streets, it seems that David crushed his enemies with his feet (cf. the NET, "I crush them and stomp on them"). Dust, crushing, and feet are all mentioned in the curse on the enemy of the seed of the woman found in Gen 3:14–15. First Sam 2 and 2 Sam 22 would seem to be linking David with the seed of the woman, and describing his victories in terms reminiscent of the curse on the seed of the serpent.

In the Latter Prophets

The imagery of Gen 3:15 appears again in Isa 14:25, where Yahweh declares that he will "break (*šābar*) Assyria" and "trample (*bûs*) them." Because they have broken the covenant, Jeremiah proclaims what Yahweh will do to "the kings who sit on David's throne, the priests, the prophets, and all who dwell in Jerusalem" (13:13), "I will dash them to pieces (*nāpaš*), a man against his brother, fathers and sons together,' declares Yahweh, 'I will not spare, and I will not show pity, and I will not show compassion while destroying them'" (13:14). Jeremiah 23:29 describes Yahweh's word in terms of a hammer that shatters (*pāsaš*) rock. Jeremiah 48:4 states that Moab is broken (*šābar*). In Jer 51:20–23, Babylon is called Yahweh's weapon, his war club, and nine times the verb "dash in pieces" (*nāpaš* in the piel) is repeated as all the things that will be smashed are enumerated.

In the Writings

The conflict between the seed of the woman and the seed of the ser-

pent appears again in Ps 2:1–3. Yahweh responds to the plotting of the nations with the decree that he has installed his king on Zion (2:4–6), and then the king tells of how Yahweh proclaimed to him, as in 2 Sam 7:14, that he would be Yahweh's son (Ps 2:7). Further, the king, son of Yahweh, will break his enemies (*ra'a*⁶⁷) with an iron rod and dash them to pieces (*nāpaš* in the piel) like pottery (2:9). If the thesis of this essay is on the mark, Ps 2 connects the smashing of Gen 3:15 to the sonship of 2 Sam 7.

Psalms 72 appears to be a prayer of David for the prosperity of Solomon's reign as the latter ascends the throne (72:1, 20). Verse 17 echoes Gen 12:3, and there are at least two places where Gen 3:14–15 might be invoked. Verse 4 concludes with the words, “and may he crush (*dāka'*) the oppressor.” Then verse 9 ends with the wish, “and as for his enemies, may they lick (*lāḥak*) the dust.”⁶⁸ The licking of the dust calls to mind the fact that the serpent was told that he would eat dust (Gen 3:14).⁶⁹

Psalms 89:20 speaks of the anointing of David, and then verse 29 refers to the establishment of his seed forever. Between these two statements are the words, “And I will crush (*kātat*)⁷⁰ his adversaries before him, and the ones who hate him I will strike (*nāḡap*)” (89:24, ET 23). In Ps 89 the promises of 2 Sam 7 seem to be aligned with Gen 3:15.⁷¹

If I am correct in what I am arguing, the gruesome statement in Ps 137:9, though perhaps not softened, is at least given a context. Apparently in exile (137:1), the psalmist concludes with a frightful blessing: “Happy is the one who seizes your children that he might dash them in pieces (*nāpaš* in the piel) against the rock” (137:9). There is no mitigating this

brutality, but if the statement partakes of the age old conflict between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent, and if the psalmist is here longing for God's judgment to fall on the seed of the serpent, then vicious as this text may be, it righteously expresses a desire for God to save his people by triumphing over their enemies. The Babylonian children in this text are the seed of the serpent, and the dashing of them against the rock expresses the crushing of the serpent and the realization of the hopes of the seed of the woman. Since the verbs for grasping and smashing here are singular, and given the Davidic tinge to the Psalter, perhaps the individual who accomplishes this triumph is the Davidic Messiah.⁷²

Daniel 2:34–35 describes the smashing of a statue that represents the kingdoms of the earth by a small stone that becomes a great mountain (cf. 3:26–45). The shattering of the earthly kingdoms brings in the Kingdom of God. Job 34:22–25 depicts God breaking (*ra'a*) and crushing (*dāka'*) those whom he judges. This is a common image in biblical texts, and in the final form of the canon, Gen 3:15 prepares the reader for such statements.⁷³

Trampled Underfoot

As noted above, the damage done to the head of the serpent and the damage done to the heel of the seed of the woman in Gen 3:15 both seem to be interpreted in later biblical texts as resulting from the stomping of the serpent. The seed of the woman tramples on the head of the serpent, crushing the serpent's head and incurring damage to his own heel.⁷⁴ This reality lends significance to references to the enemies of the people of God being “trodden down” or “placed underfoot.”

When Joshua leads Israel to victory,

their triumph over their enemies is celebrated by the placement of their feet on the necks of the defeated kings (Josh 10:24). The seed of the serpent is under the foot of the seed of the woman. Similarly, David proclaims that his enemies fell under his feet (2 Sam 22:39/Ps 18:39, ET 38), and the conquering warrior in Isa 63 boasts of the way that he has “trodden (*dāarak*) the winepress alone” (63:3a). It is clarified that there were not grapes but rebellious people in the winepress: “I trod (*dāarak*) them in my anger, and I trampled them down (*rāmas*) in my fury; and their blood spattered on my garments” (63:3b–c).⁷⁵ This thought is reiterated in verse 6, “I trampled down (*bûs*) the peoples in my anger.”⁷⁶

In Mal 3 (ET 4), the seed of the woman crushing the head of the serpent takes the form of the ones who fear the name of Yahweh (3:20, ET 4:2) trampling down (*āsas*) the wicked, and the wicked being ashes under the soles of their feet (3:21, ET 4:3). This image is also employed in Ps 44:5, where the psalmist states, “In your name we trample down (impf. of *bûs*) those who rise up against us.” The same verb appears in Zech 10:5, where the “cornerstone,” the “tent peg,” the “battle bow,” “every ruler” comes from the house of Judah (10:3–4), trampling foes in the clay of the streets (*bôsîm bēṭîṭ hûṣôṭ*) (10:5).

In Ps 60:14 (ET 12) we read, “With God we shall do valiantly, and *he shall trample* (imperfect of *bûs*) *our foes*” (emphasis added, same text as Ps 108:14, ET 13). And then among the blessings enumerated by the psalmist in Ps 91 we find a statement about protection for the foot of the one who trusts in Yahweh (91:2): “he will command his angels concerning you, to guard you in all your ways (*derek*). On their hands they will bear you lest you smite

(*nāḡap*) your foot on the stone. Upon the lion and the venomous serpent you will tread (*dāarak*); you will trample (*rāmas*) the young lion and the dragon” (91:11–13). This text appears to interpret Gen 3:15 such that Yahweh will command his angels so that when the seed of the woman goes on its way (*derek*) to tread (*dāarak*) on the head of the serpent, though the foot of the seed of the woman is in danger and might suffer harm, the angels will bear it up so that it is not destroyed.⁷⁷

Licking the Dust

As the restoration of Zion is proclaimed in Isa 49, Yahweh announces the return of the sons and daughters of Israel (49:22). The next statement articulates the subjugation of the enemies of the people of God: “Kings shall be your foster fathers, and their princesses shall be your nursemaids. Noses to the ground, they shall bow down to you, and the dust of your feet they shall lick (*lahak*). And you shall know that I am Yahweh; the ones who wait for me shall not be put to shame” (49:23). Here the triumph of Yahweh in restoring his people will result in the nobility of the seed of the serpent licking their father’s food, dust. Incidentally, their heads are close to the feet of the righteous, as it is the dust of the feet of the righteous that they lick.⁷⁸ Micah 7:1–7 details a woeful condition (cf. 7:1). But verse 7 transitions with an expression of trust, and, beginning in verse 8, hope dawns through the rest of the chapter. In the midst of these statements describing the triumph of Yahweh in the salvation of Israel and the judgment of her enemies, as the subjugation of the seed of the serpent is described, we read, “And they shall lick the dust (*lahak*) like serpents, like the crawling things of the ground” (7:17). With Ps 72:9, which was

noted above, these texts seem to draw on the imagery of Gen 3:14.⁷⁹ When the Bible describes the defeat of enemy nations, it uses language reminiscent of the curse on the serpent.

Stricken Serpents

Along with the broken heads of broken enemies who are trodden underfoot and lick dust, there are several references in the OT to serpentine foes whom Yahweh has pierced, broken, crushed, or otherwise defeated. The image of the defeated worm seems to reflect the snake of Gen 3.

Isaiah 27:1 refers to “Leviathan” as both a “serpent” and a “dragon.” The text reads, “In that day Yahweh will bring visitation—with his sharp, great, and strong sword—upon Leviathan, the fleeing serpent, even upon Leviathan, the crooked serpent, and he will slay the dragon in the sea.” Here the eschatological victory of Yahweh amounts to killing the dragon, slaying the snake.

In Isa 51:9 “Rahab” and “the dragon” are set side by side, and Yahweh’s victory at the exodus seems to be cast in terms of his victory over the dragon. We read,

Arise, arise, clothe yourself with strength, O arm of Yahweh. Arise as in the days of old, generations of long ago. Are you not he, the one who cleaved Rahab, piercing the dragon? Are you not he, the one who dried up the sea, waters deep and wide, who made the depths of the sea a way for the redeemed to pass over?⁸⁰

From this text and Isa 27:1, it seems that Isaiah can describe Yahweh’s victories past and future as the killing of the great snake. Psalm 74:12–14 is very similar to Isa 51:9. The psalmist states, “God is my king from of old, working salvations in the midst of the land. You divided by your

strength the sea, you shattered (*šābar* in the piel) the heads of the dragons (*tannîn*) upon the waters. You crushed (*rāsaš*) the heads of Leviathan” (Ps 74:12–14a).⁸¹ The same note is sounded in Ps 89:11 (ET 10): “You crushed (*dākā’*) Rahab as one who is profaned.”⁸²

In Ps 44:19 the psalmist claims that instead of breaking the dragon, Yahweh broke his servants. The text reads, “For you have crushed (*dākāh*) us in the place of dragons,⁸³ and you cover us with the shadow of death.”⁸⁴ Psalm 58:5–7 (ET 4–6) describes the wicked as having venom like that of a serpent (58:5, ET 4) who cannot be charmed (58:6, ET 5), and then God is called upon to break (*hāras*) their teeth (58:7, ET 6).⁸⁵ Psalm 58 then concludes with the words: “The righteous (sg.) will rejoice (sg.) because he sees vengeance; he will bathe (sg.) his feet (sg.) in the blood of the wicked” (58:11, ET 10). Here those who are likened to a serpent in verse 4, whose teeth God is called upon to smash in verse 6, have apparently been trampled down under the feet of Israel’s warrior king (cf. the superscription and the singulars), who bathes his feet in their blood in verse 10.

Twice in Job we read of God’s power over the serpent. First, in Job 26:12 we find the verb “shatter” (*māḥas*), which we have seen at numerous points in this study. We read, “By his power he smoothes the sea, and by his understanding he shattered Rahab. By his breath the heavens are fair, his hand pierced the fleeing serpent” (26:12–13; cf. Isa 27:1).⁸⁶ Again in Job 40:25–41:26 (ET 41:1–34) Yahweh’s uniqueness is stressed by an elaborate description of the power of Leviathan (40:25, ET 41:1).⁸⁷ The text is forcing the realization that only Yahweh can triumph over this grand dragon.⁸⁸

Saving Smashing

Thus far I have briefly commented on a number of texts that, it seems to me, reflect the imagery of Gen 3:14–15. We have seen skulls crushed, enemies broken, the rebellious trodden underfoot, the defeated seed of the serpent licking the dust, and we have seen serpents smashed. Before looking to the use of these motifs in the NT, we will briefly note an unexpected development in this idea of the crushing of the enemy of God.

In Isa 42:3 we read in reference to the servant, “A crushed (*rāṣas*) reed he will not break (*šābar*).” We have seen both of these verbs used in texts that seem to echo Gen 3:15, and here it seems that the judgment that elsewhere falls on the seed of the serpent is going to fall on Yahweh’s servant. This judgment, however, will not break him. This could allude to the fact that in Gen 3:15 the heel of the seed of the woman is damaged like the head of the serpent (the same verb describing both injuries). A blow to the head can be fatal, but one to the heel rarely is. Isaiah 42 goes on to indicate that this “crushed reed” who is nevertheless not “broken” will establish justice (42:3–4), and this resembles the painful triumph over the serpent described in Gen 3:15–17.

Twice in Isa 53 we read that the servant was crushed: first in verse 5, “he was crushed (*dākā’* in the pual) for our sins;” and then in verse 10, “Yahweh was pleased to crush (*dākā’* in the piel) him.” Here again the crushing judgment first announced in Gen 3:15 seems to be due to Israel because of its sin, but the servant takes their sin upon himself and is crushed for their iniquity, with the result that Yahweh is satisfied (cf. 53:4, 5, 6, 10, 11, 12).⁸⁹

Genesis 3:15 in the New Testament

We can be confident of several allusions to Gen 3:15 in the NT. For instance, in Luke 10:18–19 we read, “[Jesus] said to them, “I was beholding Satan falling as lightning from heaven. Behold, I have given to you the authority to tread upon snakes and scorpions,⁹⁰ and upon all the power of the one who is at enmity.”⁹¹ Luke 10 portrays Jesus telling his disciples that they will tread upon snakes and overcome the enemy, and in Rom 16:20, as noted above, Paul tells the Romans that God will soon crush Satan under their feet.⁹² Earlier in Romans, Paul wrote that “the creation was subjected to futility . . . in hope” (Rom 8:20). If, as most commentators think, the subjection to futility in view is the curse of Gen 3, the corresponding hope would appear to be the promise of one who would defeat the serpent in Gen 3:15.⁹³

The scene in Rev 12 is also surely influenced by Gen 3:15.⁹⁴ As a woman is giving birth to her seed (12:1–2), a dragon appears hoping to devour the child (12:3–4). Clearly there is enmity between the seed of the woman and the snake. She gives birth to a male child, who is identified as a scion of David through an allusion to Ps 2, and child and mother are supernaturally protected from the dragon (12:5–6). The dragon is thrown down to earth after a battle in heaven (12:7–12), whereupon he again pursues the woman and her seed (12:13). They again benefit from divine protection (12:14–16), so the dragon leaves off pursuit of the singular seed that he might make war on the rest of the collective seed of the woman—those who obey God and hold to the testimony of Jesus (12:17).⁹⁵ In Rev 13:3 we read of a beast with a head that seems to have a mortal wound, and as Beale comments, “Such a wound on the head of the grand

nemesis of God's people reflects Gen. 3:15, especially when seen together with Rev. 12:17."⁹⁶

Alexander, Schreiner, and Wifall have rightly noted other passages in the NT that incorporate imagery from Gen 3:15. These texts mainly describe the enemies of the seed of the woman (or in some cases, "all things") being placed under his feet (Matt 22:44 and parallels; Acts 2:35; 1 Cor 15:25; Eph 1:20–22; Heb 2:5–9, 14–15; 10:13).⁹⁷ Wifall also notes the relevance of the fact that Jesus is named as being born of (i.e., the seed of) the woman (Gal 4:4) and the seed of David (Rom 1:3; 2 Tim 2:8).⁹⁸

Conclusion

I began this study with the suggestion that if we adopt the hypothesis that the Old Testament is a messianic document, written from a messianic perspective, to sustain a messianic hope, we might find that the interpretive methods employed by the authors of the NT are legitimate hermeneutical moves that we can imitate today. This hypothesis would work under the assumption that in the Bible's metanarrative,⁹⁹ from the moment God uttered his judgment against the serpent, the seed of the woman (the collective of those who trust God) were hoping for *the* seed of the woman (the man who would achieve the ultimate victory over the serpent).¹⁰⁰ If the books of the Bible were written by and for a remnant of people hoping for the coming of this person, we would expect to find in these texts various resonations of this promise of God. I have argued that we do, in fact, find imagery from Gen 3:15 in many texts across both testaments. We have seen the seed of the woman crushing the head(s) of the seed of the serpent, we have seen shattered

enemies, trampled enemies, dust eating defeated enemies, and smashed serpents. I find this evidence compelling. Hopefully others will as well, even if they do not entirely agree with the thesis that the OT is, through and through, a messianic document. There are no doubt those who will remain unpersuaded. We do not yet see all things under his feet. May that day come soon.¹⁰¹

ENDNOTES

¹Extensive bibliography could be cited. See esp. Greg Beale, "Did Jesus and His Followers Preach the Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts?" *Themelios* 14 (1989), 89–96, and the volume of collected essays he edited, *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts?* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994).

²Commenting on Peter's citation of Deut 18:15–19 in Acts 3:22–23, Daniel I. Block writes, "New Testament scholars generally adduce Peter's citation as evidence for a messianic interpretation of Deut. 18:15, but this interpretation of Peter's citation is less certain than it appears." Block continues to parry the thrust of Acts, writing, "We should be equally cautious about finding a reference to a prophetic messiah in Stephen's citation of Deut. 18:15 in Acts 7:37." Perhaps recognizing the implausibility of his position, Block asks, "Even if Peter and/or Stephen viewed Jesus as a messianic prophet 'like Moses,' are we thereby authorized to read their use of Deut. 18:15 back into the original context?" Block then counters the rise of Messianism in the intertestamental period and the common suggestion that Deut 34:10–12 points to an expectation for a unique prophet like Moses ("My Servant David: Ancient Israel's Vision of the Mes-

siah,” in *Israel’s Messiah in the Bible and the Dead Sea Scrolls* [ed. Richard S. Hess and M. Daniel Carroll R.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003], 29, 30, 31). Both respondents to Block’s essay, J. Daniel Hays and M. Daniel Carroll R., effectively refute Block’s attempt to reinvent the meaning of Deut 18 in Acts 3 and 7 (ibid., 61–62, 74–75).

³See Richard N. Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), xxxviii: “I do not, however, think it my business to try to reproduce the exegetical procedures and practices of the New Testament writers, particularly when they engage in what I define as ‘midrash,’ ‘pesher,’ or ‘allegorical’ exegesis.” Longenecker also interacts with Richard B. Hays’s argument that apostolic exegesis should be imitated (xxxiv–xxxix).

⁴Moisés Silva, “The New Testament Use of the Old Testament: Text Form and Authority,” in *Scripture and Truth* (ed. D. A. Carson and John D. Woodbridge; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983), 164.

⁵Two caveats here. First, I wish to make plain the inductive steps that led to this hypothesis. We inductively observe that there is much messianic speculation in second temple Judaism (both in the NT and the intertestamental literature). We add to this the observation that this speculation is anchored in the OT. We then set aside the possibility that ancient people were stupid, which seems to be an implicit assumption of a good deal of modern scholarship, and we seek a hypothesis that explains the data. Since the authors

of these texts are presumably seeking to be persuasive to their contemporaries (see, e.g., John 20:31), it seems to me unlikely that their contemporaries would grant the imposition of new meanings onto these texts. One hypothesis that explains the fact that “Early Christians, rabbinic sources, and the sectarians at Qumran cite the same biblical texts in their portrayals of the royal messiah” (J. J. M. Roberts, “The Old Testament’s Contribution to Messianic Expectations,” in *The Messiah* [ed. J. H. Charlesworth; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992], 41 n. 2) is that the OT is a messianic document, written from a messianic perspective, to sustain a messianic hope. This would mean that these disparate groups are not *imposing* a messianic interpretation on these texts but rightly interpreting them. This is not the only available hypothesis, but it seems to me to be the most convincing. I agree with John Sailhamer, who writes, “I believe the messianic thrust of the OT was the *whole* reason the books of the Hebrew Bible were written. In other words, the Hebrew Bible was not written as the national literature of Israel. It probably also was not written to the nation of Israel as such. It was rather written, in my opinion, as the expression of the deep-seated messianic hope of a small group of faithful prophets and their followers” (“The Messiah and the Hebrew Bible,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 44 [2001]: 23). The variations in messianic expectation show that the developing portrait of the coming

Messiah was not crystal clear, but the pervasive expectation supports the hypothesis.

My second caveat is that though I am calling this “messianic,” I do recognize that this term seems not to receive a technical meaning until the second temple period. But as Rose has written, “It is a matter of confusing language and thought . . . to conclude on this basis that one can speak of messianic expectations properly only after a particular word was used to refer to the person at the center of these expectations” (W. H. Rose, “Messiah,” in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch* [Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2003], 566). Cf. also John J. Collins, *The Scepter and the Star: The Messiahs of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Other Ancient Literature* (New York: Doubleday, 1995), 11–12. For an essay that is almost entirely at odds with the claims of the present study, see J. H. Charlesworth, “From Messianology to Christology: Problems and Prospects,” in *The Messiah*, 3–35.

⁶See E. Earle Ellis, “Jesus’ Use of the Old Testament and the Genesis of New Testament Theology,” *Bulletin of Biblical Research* 3 (1993): 59–75. See too Roy A. Rosenberg, “The Slain Messiah in the Old Testament,” *Zeitschrift für die alt-testamentliche Wissenschaft* 99 (1987): 259–61. Cf. also Collins, *The Scepter and the Star*, 20, 22–28; and Maurice Casey, “Christology and the Legitimizing Use of the Old Testament in the New Testament,” in *The Old Testament in the New Testament* (ed. Steve Moyise; JSNTSupp 189; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2000), 63–64.

⁷Craig Evans, "The Old Testament in the New," in *The Face of New Testament Studies* (ed. Scot McKnight and Grant R. Osborne; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 136. Evans describes this kind of interpretation as typological resignification that reinterprets Scripture in light of what God has accomplished/fulfilled in the Messiah (cf. *ibid.*, 137). But if the OT was indeed *written from a messianic perspective*, that is, if the perspective attributed to Jesus and Rabbi Yohanan (and Peter, Acts 3:24) is the correct one, then no *resignification* and *reinterpretation* has taken place. Rather, the NT can be understood as claiming that the original messianic meaning of the OT texts has been fulfilled in Jesus.

⁸Cf. Hays's response to Block, "Sometimes he seems to be pushing for an 'Old Testament only' concept of Messianism, one in which it is not valid to use New Testament or even intertestamental interpretation of Old Testament texts" (J. Daniel Hays, "If He Looks Like a Prophet and Talks Like a Prophet, Then He Must Be . . . A Response to Daniel I. Block," in *Israel's Messiah in the Bible and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 59).

⁹I tried partially to flesh out what I have in mind in a paper presented at the annual Society of Biblical Literature meeting in November, 2004, "The Messianic Music of the Song of Songs: A Non-Allegorical Interpretation" which will appear in the fall 2006 issue of *Westminster Theological Journal*. Cf. also Nicholas Perrin, "Messianism in the Narrative Frame of Ecclesiastes?" *Revue biblique* 108 (2001): 37–60.

¹⁰As Walther Eichrodt argued regarding the concept of the covenant in the OT (*Theology of the Old Testament* [2 vols.; trans. J. A. Baker; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1961, 1967], 1:13–14). E. P. Sanders argued the same for extra-biblical Jewish literature (*Paul and Palestinian Judaism* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1977], 420–21).

¹¹There is extra-biblical evidence for what I am arguing, but space considerations permit only pointing to it in the footnotes. Further, this is a study in *inner-biblical* interpretation in the service of biblical theology, and I agree with Scobie and others that biblical theology is to be based on the canon of Scripture. I am in general methodological agreement with recent arguments for "canonical biblical theology." For several expositions of this method, see B. S. Childs, *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 70–79, 91–94; Stephen G. Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty: A Theology of the Hebrew Bible* (New Studies in Biblical Theology 15; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2003), 15–43; Paul R. House, *Old Testament Theology* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1998), 54–57; John H. Sailhamer, *Introduction to Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993), 197–252; and C. H. H. Scobie, *The Ways of Our God: An Approach to Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 49–76. I recognize that there are variations among these authors, but they all agree on working with the final form of the canon rather than with a critically reconstructed account of

what happened. I am going to deal with the canonical form of the OT text, and I am going to study the texts on the basis of the story that the text tells. I will not engage the reconstructed story told by critical scholarship. There are many ways to justify this kind of decision, but I will simply quote the following judicious words: "We are Old Testament scholars, then, who . . . operate out of the context of Christian theism; and it is we who are writing this book, not some other people possessing a different set of core beliefs and convictions. . . . We have no interest in simultaneously being metaphysical theists and methodological non-theists. . . . Indeed, if we were never able to read books with profit unless we shared the presuppositions of their authors, we should read very few books with profit at all" (Iain Provan, V. Phillips Long, and Tremper Longman III, *A Biblical History of Israel* [Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2003], 102–03, the section whence these words come is attributed in the preface to Provan). See too V. Phillips Long, "Renewing Conversations: Doing Scholarship in an Age of Skepticism, Accommodation, and Specialization," *Bulletin of Biblical Research* 13 (2003): 234 n. 30: "What we do write should be compatible with our core convictions."

¹²Thus, this passage fits with the thesis of my forthcoming essay, "The Center of Biblical Theology: The Glory of God in Salvation through Judgment?" *Tyndale Bulletin* 57 (2006). As a side note, though I think that the OT is a messianic

document, written from a messianic perspective, to sustain a messianic hope, I do not think that Messianism/Christology is the center of biblical theology. Rather, I see the center of biblical theology as the manifestation of the glory of God in salvation through judgment. The Messiah is, of course, central to the manifestation of the glory of God in salvation through judgment. If it did not make the phrase too long, I might argue that the center of biblical theology is the glory of God in salvation through judgment *accomplished by the Messiah*. But this is too cumbersome, and certain texts show that the glory of God is primary, central, and ultimate (e.g., Num 14:21; Ps 19:1; Isa 6:4; John 17:1; Rom 11:33–36; 1 Cor 15:24, 28; Eph 1:6, 12, 14; Phil 2:11; Col 3:17; Heb 1:3; 1 Pet 4:11; Jude 1:25). Many of these texts give God glory *through* Jesus Christ.

¹³My attention was drawn to this theme by the allusions made to it in two short articles: Thomas R. Schreiner, “Editorial: Foundations for Faith,” *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 5, no. 3 (2001): 2–3; and Walter Wifall, “Gen 3:15—A Protevangelium?” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 36 (1974): 361–65. I wish to thank my friend Jason S. DeRouchie for alerting me to Wifall’s piece.

¹⁴There are different ways to account for the existence of the interpretations of Gen 3:15 in the rest of the Bible that I will argue for here. For instance, T. Desmond Alexander argues that the whole of Genesis–Kings was brought together at one time (“Authorship of the Penta-

teuch,” in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch*, 70), so he could explain these phenomena as the work of the redactor of this literary unit. John Sailhamer might attribute such things to the “canonicler” (*Introduction to the Old Testament Theology*, 240). As another type of example, Lyle Eslinger has criticized Michael Fishbane for the fact that “Fishbane’s categorical analysis is already premised on the diachronic assumptions of historical-critical literary history” (“Inner-Biblical Exegesis and Inner-Biblical Allusion: The Question of Category,” *Vetus Testamentum* 42 [1992]: 52). Eslinger proposes “a self-consciously literary analysis of the textual interconnections in biblical literature. In it, we continue to use the indications of sequence that historical-critical scholarship has (improperly) relied on, but in full awareness of this reliance and without the conceit that we use a ‘scientific’ historical framework independent of it” (56). Eslinger seems to be saying that historical-critical conclusions are unscientific and unreliable but should be assumed anyway. If this can be suggested, there should be no objection to my decision to take the biblical texts at face value, bypassing the tortuous tangles of the purported redactional histories of the texts. I have my opinions on these matters, but they are not the issue here. I am in agreement with Scobie’s repeated assertion that biblical theology “focuses on the final form of the text” (*The Ways of Our God*, 49, 130, 144, 166, *passim*).

¹⁵I use the term “intertextuality”

here as an “‘umbrella’ term for the complex interactions that exist between ‘texts,’” as recommended by Steve Moyise, “Intertextuality and the Study of the Old Testament in the New Testament,” in *The Old Testament in the New Testament*, 41. The failure to attend to imagery, it seems to me, explains the absence of Gen 3:15 from Ian Paul’s discussion of the OT in Rev 12 (“The Use of the Old Testament in Revelation 12,” in *The Old Testament in the New Testament*, 256–76). For Paul’s list of possible allusions, which underlines verbal correspondences, see 275–76. Paul does cite Gen 3:13, but the crucial enmity between the seeds is announced in Gen 3:15, and it is this enmity that explains why the dragon is interested in the male child (Rev 12:13) as well as the rest of the woman’s seed (12:17). See further below.

¹⁶A. Even-Shoshan, ed., *A New Concordance of the Old Testament* (Jerusalem: Kiryat Sefer, 1997), 340–42.

¹⁷For discussion of this aspect of Hebrew grammar, see E. Kautzch, ed., *Gesenius’ Hebrew Grammar* (rev. A. W. Cowley; 2nd English ed.; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1910), § 123b; Paul Joüon, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew* (trans. and rev. T. Muraoka; 2 vols.; Rome: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico: 1996), § 135b.

¹⁸Jack Collins, “A Syntactical Note (Genesis 3:15): Is the Woman’s Seed Singular or Plural?” *Tyndale Bulletin* 48 (1997): 144.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, 145. See also Max Wilcox (“The Promise of the ‘Seed’ in the New Testament and the Targumim,”

Journal for the Study of the New Testament 5 [1979]: 13–14) who notes that Targums Onkelos, Neofiti, and Pseudo-Jonathan seem to interpret Gen 3:15 in a messianic way. Contra John Goldingay, *Israel's Gospel* (vol. 1 of *Old Testament Theology*; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2003), 141 n. 14: “the passage offers no pointer to the ‘offspring’ being singular rather than collective.”

²⁰T. Desmond Alexander, “Further Observations on the Term ‘Seed’ in Genesis,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 48 (1997): 363–67.

²¹Unless otherwise indicated, translations of biblical texts are my own.

²²Alexander (“Further Observations on the Term ‘Seed’ in Genesis,” 365–66) argues for this understanding of the passage from the syntax of the passage (the clause “does not begin with a *vav*-consecutive; rather it is introduced by the imperfect verb *yiraš* preceded by a non-converting *vav*”), the allusion to this text in Psalm 72:17, and the fact that “the entire book of Genesis is especially interested in highlighting the existence of a unique line of male descendants which will eventually give rise to a royal dynasty.” For this last point, see T. D. Alexander, “From Adam to Judah: The Significance of the Family Tree in Genesis,” *Evangelical Quarterly* 61 (1989): 5–19.

²³Wifall sees this dynamic in the reference to David’s seed in 2 Sam 7:12: “the term ‘seed’ has a ‘collective’ meaning, it is also applied ‘individually’ to each of the sons of David who assume his throne” (“Gen 3:15—A Protevangelium?”

363).

²⁴J. G. McConville, *Deuteronomy* (Apollos Old Testament Commentary; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2002), 38.

²⁵See also the interplay between the individual and the nation in Num 23:9; 24:17.

²⁶Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 69 n. 26.

²⁷Similarly Wilcox, “The Promise of the ‘Seed’ in the New Testament and the Targumim,” 2–3.

²⁸See also *Pss. Sol.* 18:3, *hē agapē sou epī sperma Abraam huiou Israēl* “your love is upon the seed of Abraham, the sons of Israel” (my translation). R. B. Wright renders this, “your love is for the descendants of Abraham, an Israelite” (in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (cited hereafter as *OTP*) [ed. James H. Charlesworth; 2 vols.; Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1983], 2:669, see discussion in his note b, where he writes, “Lit. ‘of a son of Israel,’” misrepresenting the plural *huiou* as a singular. He then refers to the syntax as “awkward,” but this is apparently because he does not see the dynamic between the collective and the singular in the word *seed*, as witnessed in his consistent translation of it as “descendants.” A more fitting translation, which would capture the collective-singular, would be something like “offspring,” which like “seed” can refer to one or to many).

²⁹Cf. the comments of W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew* (International Critical Commentary; 3 vols.;

New York: T & T Clark, 1988–97), 1:263, 352. See also C. H. Dodd, *According to the Scriptures* (London: Nisbet & Co., 1952), 103, where he refers to “this far-reaching identification of Christ, as Son of Man, as Servant, as the righteous Sufferer, with the people of God in all its vicissitudes.”

³⁰Cf. T. Desmond Alexander, “Messianic Ideology in the Book of Genesis,” in *The Lord’s Anointed* (ed. P. E. Satterthwaite, R. S. Hess, and G. J. Wenham; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995), 24; Schreiner, “Foundations for Faith,” 2.

³¹This statement in John’s Gospel could be meant to indicate that Jesus interpreted Satan as the force of wickedness driving Cain’s murder as recounted in Gen 4. Cf. J. H. Bernard (*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to St. John* [International Critical Commentary; 2 vols.; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1928], 314) who also notes that this could be “a reference to the Jewish doctrine that death was a consequence of the Fall, which was due to the devil’s prompting.” He cites Wis 2:24. The reference to Gen 4, in view of 1 John 3:8–12, seems more likely. So also R. E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John* (Anchor Bible; 2 vols.; New York: Doubleday, 1966, 1970), 358.

³²For some of the expressions, see *zera` mēre`im* “seed of wicked ones” in Isa 1:4; 14:20 (cf. 57:3–4). *Bênê-Bēliyyā`al* “sons of worthlessness” in Deut 13:14 (ET 13:13); Jdg 19:22; 20:13; 1 Sam 2:12; 1 Kgs 21:10, 13; 2 Chr 13:7. Righteous men could be in view when we read of *Bênê-*

hā'ēlōhîm “sons of God” in Gen 6:2, 4, but it is more likely that, as in Job 1:6 and 2:1, the reference is to angels. Nevertheless, the statement in 2 Sam 7:14 that David’s heir would be a “son” to God could have been interpreted not as a reference to the divinity but to the character of the coming King. We also read of *Ben-hayil* “son of valor” in 1 Sam 14:52 and 2 Sam 17:10. This manner of speaking is not limited to the OT. For example, Matthew shows Jesus telling the Pharisees that when they make a convert they make him “twice as much a son of hell as yourselves” (Matt 23:15), and in Ephesians we read of the “sons of disobedience” (Eph 2:2). See also the designations “sons of light” and “sons of darkness” in the Qumran scrolls, especially since the “sons of darkness” are equated with the “army of Belial (1Q33 [1QM] 1:1; cf. also 1Q28 [1QS] 1:9–10). The subjection of the evil seed is also seen in 1Q33 [1QM] 1:14–15, “God’s great hand will subdue [Belial, and all] the angels of his dominion and all the men of [his lot.]” Unless otherwise noted, all Qumran texts cited herein are from Florentino García Martínez and Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar, eds. *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Study Edition* (2 vols.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997, 1998).

³³The emphasis on the important line of descent is also attested to in Heb 11:11, though translations usually obscure it. The text is almost universally translated, “Sarah received power to conceive” (ESV, NAB, NASU, NET, NIV, NJB, RSV). This is one more reason to reject “dynamic

equivalence,” because the text “woodenly” reads, “barren Sarah received power for the foundation of the seed.” In view of the Bible’s interest in the “holy seed,” the statement that “Sarah received power for the foundation of the seed” carries more freight than “Sarah received ability to conceive.” This common rendering of the text obscures all connection to the Bible’s “seed” theme. KJV and NKJV include the word “seed,” and the HCSB has “offspring.”

³⁴Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 223.

³⁵This seed conflict might help us to understand the holy wars of total destruction in Deuteronomy and Joshua. Though Tremper Longman does not develop the notion at length, he does cite Gen 3:15 at the end of his essay in *Show Them No Mercy: Four Views on God and Canaanite Genocide* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003).

³⁶Cf. David R. Bauer, *The Structure of Matthew’s Gospel* (JSNTSupp 31; Sheffield: Almond, 1989), 69: “If the opponents of Jesus are children of Satan, they are also understood by Matthew to form a unity of evil.”

³⁷The concern with “seed” is not limited to the Old and New Testaments. See, for example, the comments on the seed of Lot in *Jub.* 16:9; the blessing on Jacob’s seed in *Jub.* 22:10–30; and the cursing of the seed of Canaan in *Jub.* 22:20–21.

³⁸Cf. J. Daniel Hays, “If He Looks Like a Prophet,” 59–60, esp. 59 n. 1. See too R. E. Clements, “The Messianic Hope in the Old Testament,” *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 43

(1989), 6: “The changing attitudes to the subject of the messianic expectation in the Old Testament have been strongly reflective of changing methods in studying it.”

³⁹R. A. Martin (“The Earliest Messianic Interpretation of Genesis 3:15,” *Journal for Biblical Literature* 84 [1965]: 427) concludes, “If the above explanation is correct, the LXX becomes thereby the earliest evidence of an individual messianic interpretation of Gen 3 15, to be dated in the third or second century B.C.” See also Justin’s *Dialogue with Trypho* in *Ante-Nicene Fathers* (hereafter cited as ANF) (10 vols.; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 1:250; Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* in ANF 1:548 [5.21]. The *Westminster Confession of Faith*, 7.3, in reference to the “second” “covenant of grace,” refers to Gen 3:15 in a footnote. In covenant theology, the *protoevangelium* of Gen 3:15 is understood as the first outworking of the “eternal covenant of redemption” between the members of the Godhead. Thus, Fred Malone writes, “I believe . . . That God did reveal historically the ‘promise of grace’ in Genesis 3:15, commonly called the Covenant of Grace” (*The Baptism of Disciples Alone: A Covenantal Argument for Credobaptism Versus Paedobaptism* [Cape Coral, FL: Founders, 2003], xxxiii). Dispensationalists also include this text in their treatments of messianic hope, see Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock, *Progressive Dispensationalism* (Wheaton, IL: Bridgepoint, 1993). While Bock’s comments are very cautious (81, but see 99), Blaising’s words are robust (216).

⁴⁰The issues raised by Gen 3:15 are not considered by Marinus de Jonge (“Messiah,” in *Anchor Bible Dictionary* [ed. David Noel Freedman; 6 vols.; New York: Doubleday, 1992], 4:777–88), nor does the text even appear in the index of Donald Juel’s *Messianic Exegesis: Christological Interpretation of the Old Testament in Early Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988). Block does not mention Gen 3:15 until the last paragraph of his essay, “My Servant David,” 56. It is amazing to me that Sigmund Mowinckel, to name one prominent exponent of the position, can summarily dismiss the possibility of Gen 3:15 being a messianic text in one paragraph (*He that Cometh* [trans. G. W. Anderson; Nashville: Abingdon, 1954], 11). See the far more plausible, thought provoking discussion in Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 68–72.

⁴¹Alexander writes, “By atomising the received text into short sections and interpreting these as self-contained units, we may fail to appreciate adequately the impact of the larger literary context upon our understanding of these smaller units” (“Messianic Ideology,” 32).

⁴²Apparently the LXX translator did not know what to do with this term, rendering it with future forms of *tēreō*, “I keep/watch over” (!), and this is matched by the verb *nmr* in the Targum, which also means “keep/watch.” Unless otherwise noted, all references to Targumic material in this project are to the text provided by *BibleWorks 6*, whose Targum material is derived from the Hebrew Union College

CAL (Comprehensive Aramaic Lexicon) project.

⁴³The fact that the judgment is visited upon the serpent’s head could also have given rise to the idea of the wicked having their evil deeds “returned upon their own heads,” as in Judg 9:57; 1 Kgs 2:32–33, 37, 44; 8:32; 2 Chr 6:23; Neh 3:36 (ET 4:4); Esth 9:25; Ps 7:17 (ET 16); 140:10 (ET 9); Ezek 9:10; 11:21; 16:43; 17:19; 22:31; Joel 4:4, 7 (ET 3:4, 7); Obad 15. Related to this, not a few of the wicked in the OT have their heads conquered, that is, cut off, see Judg 7:25; 1 Sam 5:4; 31:9; 2 Sam 4:7; 16:9 (threatened); 20:21–22; 2 Kgs 10:6–7; 1 Chr 10:9–10.

⁴⁴Wifall suggests that these images are common in Ancient Near Eastern (ANE) art and literature (“Gen 3:15—A Protevangelium?” 363–64). It is possible that the imagery in the texts I will discuss simply derives from a common milieu, but I find the view I am arguing more persuasive than that explanation. According to the Bible’s presentation of human history, these images in the ANE could find their ultimate source in what is narrated in Gen 3, for the Bible provides an account of the descent of all the earth’s nations from Adam and Eve in Gen 5, 10, and 11. I should note also that the images I am discussing do not exhaust the possible influence(s) of Gen 3:15 in the Bible. For instance, I do not discuss Gen 49:17, which seems to have given rise to a Jewish tradition that the antichrist would come from Dan (cf. *T. Dan* 5:6–7). I owe this reference to G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation* (New Inter-

national Greek Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 420 n. 133.

⁴⁵In my view, the seed promise of Gen 3 gave rise to the hope for one who would restore an edenic state (cf. Gen 3:17 with 5:29). Genesis then carefully traces a line of male descent to Abraham in the genealogies of chapters 5 and 11 (see T. D. Alexander, “From Adam to Judah”). The promises to Abraham in Gen 12:1–3 and elsewhere (esp. the royal promises in Gen 17:6, 16; 49:9–11) are then layered onto the earlier ones, beginning from Gen 3:15. If this is not clear from Genesis itself, the Balaam oracles bring these statements together. Thus, we find numerous comments about blessing and cursing (Num 22:6, 12, 17; 23:8, 11, 25; 24:9–10), an individual who seems to represent the nation (23:9), indications that a great king will arise in Israel (23:21; 24:7, 17, 19), citations of the blessing of Judah in Gen 49:9–11 (23:24; 24:9), overtones of a return to Eden (24:8; cf. Gen 2:8) and smashing of enemies (Num 24:8), even the crushing of their heads (24:17). See John Sailhamer, “Creation, Genesis 1–11, and the Canon,” *Bulletin of Biblical Research* 10 (2000), 89–106. The imagery of Gen 49 and Num 24 is also present in 1Q28b (1QSb) 5:24–29, and Gen 3:15, refracted through 2 Sam 22:43 (see note 66 below), might also be reflected in the trampling of the nations (1Q28b [1QSb] 5:27).

⁴⁶The overtones of Gen 3:15 in Num 24 may have influenced the Greek translation of Num 24:7, “A man shall come forth from his seed, and

he shall rule many nations. And his King shall be higher than Gog” (emphasis added). Cf. the MT, “Water shall flow from his buckets, and his seed shall be on many waters. His King shall be higher than Agag.” See Craig Evans’s discussion of this text’s relevance for understanding the use of Hos 11:1 in Matt 2:13–15 (“The Old Testament in the New,” 136).

⁴⁷This text is cited in the War Scroll in connection with the felling of the “hordes of Belial” (1Q33 [1QM] 11:6–8). See also 4Q175 (4Q Testimonia) 1:12–13, 19. Dempster (*Dominion and Dynasty*, 116) takes Num 24:17 as I do.

⁴⁸Genesis 3:15 has a form of *šûp* for “bruise” and *rôš* for “head,” whereas the phrase in Num 24:17 reads, “and he will crush (*ûmāḥaṣ*) the corners of Moab (*pa’atê mō’āb*), and break down (*wēqarēqar*) all the sons of Sheth.” As will be seen below, the verb *māḥaṣ* is used in a number of texts that seem to be alluding to Gen 3:15, and “corners” (*pē’āh*) seems to be used here for “corners of the head” (cf. Lev 13:41) as reflected in most English translations (e.g., ESV, HCSB, NASU, NET, NJB, RSV). For another text that describes justice upon the head of Moab with the same language, see Jer 48:45.

⁴⁹Cf. B. S. Rosner, “Biblical Theology,” in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology* (ed. T. Desmond Alexander and Brian S. Rosner; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2000), 6: “Concepts rather than words are a surer footing on which to base thematic study such as that involved in biblical-

theological synthesis.” So also Schreiner, “Foundations for Faith,” 3. See too *Sir.* 36:10, “Crush the heads of the rulers of the enemy.”

⁵⁰Judges 5:26 reads, “she struck (*ḥalam*) Sisera; she crushed (*māḥaq* 1x in OT) his head; she shattered (*māḥaṣ*) and pierced (*ḥālap*, only time with this meaning in the OT) his temple (*raqqāh*).”

⁵¹Similarly Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 132.

⁵²This term occurs in other texts that could reflect judgment on the seed of the serpent; see its use in 2 Kgs 9:35 and 1 Chr 10:10. See also note 88 below.

⁵³This term is also used in relevant texts which will be noted below, Isa 42:3–4 and Ps 74:14.

⁵⁴Cf. Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 140: “The seed of the woman has arrived, and in David’s first action as king he is a warrior, an anointed one who conquers and beheads a monstrous giant, whose speech echoes the serpent’s voice.”

⁵⁵As noted above, the term *rāṣaṣ* is used in several head-crushing texts (Judg 9:53; Isa 42:3–4; Ps 74:14). In Isa 7, the king of Syria is several times named as “Rezin” (*rēšîn*) (7:1, 4, 8). E. J. Young writes, “Lindblom suggests that the king was tendentiously called Resin, ‘pleasure,’ suggesting the root *rātatz*, ‘crush’” (*The Book of Isaiah* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965], 1:274 n. 19).

⁵⁶The verb is *ḥûl*, and “whirl, dance, writhe” are listed as possible glosses in Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, eds., *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1906), 296

(cited hereafter as BDB). They list Jer 30:23 under the meaning “whirl” (297). Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, eds. (*The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* [Leiden: Brill, 1994–2000], 297 [cited hereafter as HALOT]) list the use of the verb in Jer 30:23 under “dance . . . to whirl.” For a similar use of the verb, see 2 Sam 3:29.

⁵⁷Jeremiah 23:19 and 30:23 are identical except for a single conjunctive *waw* in 23:19 which begins the phrase “and a tempest excites itself.”

⁵⁸The only difference between the two statements is the addition of the term *bînāh* (“understanding,” which results in the addition of the word “clearly” in several translations) at the end of Jer 23:20.

⁵⁹We have seen the term for “crush” (*māḥaṣ*) in several other head-crushing texts: Num 24:8, 17; Judg 5:26; and we will see it in several more: 2 Sam 22:39; Job 26:12; Ps 68:21, 23; 110:6. These will be discussed below.

⁶⁰Ralph L. Smith, *Micah-Malachi* (Word Biblical Commentary; Waco, TX: Word, 1984), 116.

⁶¹In my translation I follow Smith (*Micah-Malachi*, 113–14, 116, citing W. F. Albright, “The Psalm of Habakkuk,” in *Studies in Old Testament Prophecy* [ed. H. H. Rowley; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1950], 1–18) in translating *yēsôr* as “tail” to bring out the dragon imagery. BDB offers “foundation, base, bottom” as possible glosses (414), and HALOT suggests “foundation wall, base” (417).

⁶²Cf. also 68:31 (ET 30), where the

text might be translated “Trample underfoot those who lust after tribute” (ESV) or “Trampling under foot the pieces of silver” (NASU). The other option is to take the hitpael of *rps* differently, as it is in the only other occurrence of this verb in the hitpael in the OT, Prov 6:3, and with the NET read, “They humble themselves and offer gold and silver as tribute.” See the discussion in HALOT, 1279–80.

⁶³Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 200; Wifall (“Gen 3:15—A Protevangelium?” 363) notes this text and Ps 8:6 in this regard (with Schreiner, “Foundations for Faith,” 3).

⁶⁴Rosner’s words (“Biblical Theology,” 6) are relevant here as well (see note 49 above). These concepts—all things under the feet of the Messianic King (see also Ps 8) and him ruling with a scepter—could have grounded statements such as the one a demon is depicted making to Solomon in *T. Sol.* 18:3, “But you, King, are not able to harm us or to lock us up; but since God gave you authority over all the spirits of the air, the earth, and (the regions) beneath the earth, we also have taken our place before you like the other spirits” (*OTP* 1:977, emphasis added).

⁶⁵Schreiner, “Foundations for Faith,” 3.

⁶⁶As noted above (note 45), the language of 2 Sam 22:43 might also be reflected in 1Q28b (1QSb) 5:27, where the text reads, “May you trample the nations as clay of the streets” (*ymktythwšwt* [*r . . . wtrmws’m*]). The verb in 2 Sam 22:43 is not *rms* (note that the Qumran text is uncertain here as the brackets designate), but

the phrase “as clay of the streets” (*kēṣīt-ḥûṣôt*) is identical.

⁶⁷HALOT, 1270: “II r’ . . . 1. a. to smash, shatter.”

⁶⁸Cf. Schreiner (“Foundations for Faith,” 2) and Wifall (“Gen 3:15—A Protevangelium?” 363).

⁶⁹See the discussion of licking/eating dust below.

⁷⁰This term is also used in 1Q33 (1QM) 18:2–3: “the Kittim shall be crushed (*ktt*) . . . when the hand of the God of Israel is raised against the whole horde of Belial.”

⁷¹So also Wifall, “Gen 3:15—A Protevangelium?” 363.

⁷²It might be observed that Israel’s king is viewed as their deliverer (cf. 2 Sam 25:28), and the OT is not reticent to cast the savior of Israel in bloody terms (1 Sam 18:27; Isa 63:1–6). Another pointer in this direction is Bruce Waltke’s argument that all of the Psalms should be read with reference to Israel’s hoped for king, “A Canonical Process Approach to the Psalms,” in *Tradition and Testament: Essays in Honor of Charles Lee Feinberg* (Chicago: Moody, 1981), 3–18. In support of this, see “*Midr. Ps.* 24:3 (on Ps. 24:1): ‘Our Masters taught: In the Book of Psalms, all the Psalms which David composed apply either to himself or to all of Israel.’ The midrash goes on to say that in some instances the Davidic psalm may have application for the ‘Age to Come’ (the messianic age)” (Evans, “The Old Testament in the New,” 136).

⁷³There is also a reference to enemies being crushed/shattered in the twelfth benediction of the *Shemoneh Esreh*, the Eighteen Benedic-

tions (Babylonian version). In 1 Macc, four times Judas is depicted speaking of his enemies being “crushed” (*suntribō*) (3:22; 4:10, 30; 7:42). Further, “the most popular explanation” of Judas’ nickname is “that ‘Maccabeus’ derives from the word ‘hammer’ (Heb *mqbt*)” (Uriel Rapaport and Paul L. Redditt, “Maccabeus,” in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 4:454).

⁷⁴See the above discussions of the following texts: 2 Sam 22:43/Ps 18:43 (ET 42); Isa 14:25; 28:3; Jer 23:29; 30:23; Ps 68:23 (ET 22); 110:1; Rom 16:20.

⁷⁵Cf. the words of the Targum of Pseudo-Jonathan on Gen 49:11, “the king, Messiah, . . . With his garments dipped in blood, he is like one who treads grapes in the press” (as cited in Charlesworth, “From Messianology to Christology,” 15).

⁷⁶Depending on how Isa 41:2 is translated, it too might fit with the motif being explicated here. The phrase in question reads, *ûmēlakîm yard*. If the form *yard* derives from either *rdđ* or *rdh*, it can mean something like “trample down” (see BDB, 921–22). This seems to be the way several translations take it: “he tramples kings underfoot” (ESV, NRSV, RSV). The reading *ywrd* appears in 1QIs^a, which could derive from *yrd* (go down). Thus, other translations render the phrase, “he subdues kings” (KJV, NIV, NASU, NET).

⁷⁷See the discussion of Ps 58:11 (ET 10) below. Cf. also the imagery from Gen 3:15 in *T. Sim.* 6:6, “Then all the spirits of error shall be given over to being trampled underfoot;” *T. Levi* 18:12, “And Beliar shall be bound

by him. And he shall grant to his children the authority to trample on wicked spirits” (cf. *T. Dan* 5:10); and *Jub.* 31:18, “And to Judah he said: ‘May the LORD give you might and strength to tread upon all who hate you. Be a prince, you and one of your sons for the sons of Jacob; may your name and the name of your son be one which travels and goes about in all the lands and cities’” (emphasis added throughout).

⁷⁸See too the allusion to *Gen* 3:14 in *Isa* 65:25, “And as for the serpent, dust is his food.”

⁷⁹Several of these images (enemies licking the dust, enemies underfoot, enemies crushed, and the righteous triumphantly reigning forever) appear in the Qumran War Scroll. The text is partially in brackets, but 1Q33 (1QM) 12:14–15 reads, “Open your gate[s] continuously so that the wealth of the nations can be brought to you! Their kings shall wait on you, all your oppressors lie prone before you, the dust [of your feet they shall lick (*lhk*)].” These lines are addressed to the “war hero” (*gbwr hmlh̄mh*), who is also called “Man of Glory” (*yskbwd*) and “Performer of Valiance” (*wsyhyl*). This individual is urged to put his foot on the piles of the slain and to crush (*mh̄s*) the peoples (12:9–11). The passage climaxes, after the statement about the enemies licking the dust, with the words, “Rule over the king[dom of . . .] [. . . and] Israel to reign for ever” (12:15–16). This text is repeated in part in 19:1–8 and 4Q492, where the licking is corroborated.

⁸⁰This text could be influencing *T. Sol.* 25:7, where the demon from the Red

Sea, who claims to have hardened Pharaoh’s heart and performed signs and wonders for Jannes and Jambres (25:3–4), explains that he was buried beneath the waters with the defeated Egyptians.

⁸¹Cf. *T. Ash.* 7:3, “Until such time as the Most High visits the earth. [He shall come as a man eating and drinking with human beings,] crushing the dragon’s head in the water” (emphasis added, brackets indicate suspected Christian interpolation). Perhaps this imagery gives rise to the imprecation in *Pss. Sol.* 2:25, “Do not delay, O God, to repay to them on (their) heads; to declare dishonorable the arrogance of the dragon” (trans. R. B. Wright, *OTP*, 2:653, emphasis added). See also the reference to the subversive serpent in *Pss. Sol.* 4:9. In *Pss. Sol.* 17:4 we read, “Lord, you chose David to be king over Israel, and swore to him about his seed forever, that his kingdom should not fail before you.” Verses 5–6 speak of a rival monarchy set up in place of the “throne of David,” whose destruction is described by verse 7: “But you, O God, overthrew them, and uprooted their seed from the earth, for there rose up against them a man alien to our race” (I have altered Wright’s translation emphasizing *seed* for *spermatos* in v. 4 and *sperma* in v. 7—Wright renders both as “descendants”). The “man alien to our race” (Pompey?) is perhaps viewed as Yahweh’s agent of judgment, and yet this judgment is both purging and defiling (17:11–20). In response to this, the psalmist calls on God to raise up the “son of

David” (17:21) who will “smash the arrogance of sinners like a potter’s jar” and “shatter” them “with an iron rod” (17:23–24; cf. *Ps* 2:9). With the reference in *Pss. Sol.* 17:32 to the Lord King Messiah, this seems to set up a picture of a Davidic King whose seed has been challenged by those who are likened to a “dragon,” on whose head God is implored to visit judgment (2:25), and whose seed God is described as overthrowing (17:7). The author of the Psalms of Solomon seems to be reading reality through a lens colored by *Gen* 3:15.

⁸²Wifall, “*Gen* 3:15—A Protevangelium?” 363.

⁸³BDB suggests that this form, *tannîm*, is erroneous for *tannîn*, “serpent, dragon, sea-monster” (1072). But it could be the plural of *tân* “jackal.” Some manuscripts do read *tannîn*.

⁸⁴Cf. 2 *Esdras* (4 *Ezra*) 5:29, which voices a similar complaint regarding being trodden underfoot, “And those who opposed your promises have trodden down on those who believed your covenants” (*OTP* 1:533).

⁸⁵Another text dealing with the defeat of the serpent is *Ps* 91:13, which has been noted above, where the serpent is trodden underfoot. See also 1 *En.* 46:4, “This Son of Man whom you have seen . . . shall . . . crush the teeth of the sinners.”

⁸⁶The descriptions of Yahweh as one who has power over storms in this context (see the statements on clouds in 26:8 and the thunder in 26:14) may be a polemic against the Hittite world-view reflected in “The Storm-God and the Serpent

(Illuyanka)” in *Canonical Compositions from the Biblical World* (trans. Gary Beckman; vol. 1 of *The Context of Scripture* [cited hereafter as *COS*], Leiden: Brill, 1997), 1:150–51. In Job Yahweh is the Storm God who triumphs over the serpent.

⁸⁷Cf. Robert S. Fyall, *Now My Eyes Have Seen You* (New Studies in Biblical Theology 12; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2002), 157: “when Leviathan fills the picture he is no newcomer, nor is he simply an inflated picture of the crocodile. Rather . . . he is the embodiment of cosmic evil itself.”

⁸⁸It might be significant for this discussion that we read in 2 Kgs 18:4, “And he beat to pieces (*kātat*) the bronze serpent that Moses made.” See too the Targum on the Song of Songs at Song 8:2, where the King Messiah will be led into the temple and the righteous will feast on Leviathan, drinking wine from the day of creation and eating fruits prepared in the Garden of Eden.

⁸⁹For discussion of this text within its Ancient Near Eastern context, see John H. Walton, “The Imagery of the Substitute King Ritual in Isaiah’s Fourth Servant Song,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 122 (2003): 734–43. On another matter, it was noted above that the term *gulëggolet* (skull) is used to describe the crushing of Abimelech’s head in Judg 9:53. This term appears to have been transliterated (perhaps via Aramaic) into Greek as *Golgotha* (cf. BDAG, 204), which is transliterated into English as Golgotha, and the three Gospels that use the term observe that it means “the place of

the skull” (Matt 27:33; Mark 15:22; John 19:27; cf. Luke 23:33). Davies and Allison acknowledge the possibility that the place could have in some way resembled a skull, but state that the reason the place “was named ‘Golgotha’ is unknown” (Matthew, 3:611). The *Testament of Solomon* depicts a “three-headed dragon” reporting to Solomon that he would be “thwarted” by a “Wonderful Counselor” who would “dwell publicly on the cross” at the “Place of the Skull” (12:1–3 [OTP, 1:973]). It is interesting that the one born of woman (i.e., her seed, Gal 4:4) who “nullified the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil” (Heb 2:14)—one might say he crushed the serpent’s head—did so at “the place of the skull.” Perhaps this gave rise to the name?

⁹⁰Cf. the collocation of snakes and scorpions in Deut 8:15, as well as in “A Ugaritic Incantation against Serpents and Sorcerers” (trans. Dennis Pardee; *COS*), 1:327–28, lines 1–8 (interestingly, this text seems to link sorcerers with serpents), and in “The London Medical Papyrus” (trans. Richard C. Steiner; *COS*), 1:328–29, Numbers 30–31 (Number 33 makes reference to a “demon”).

⁹¹I am taking *echthros* substantivally, but instead of translating this “the enemy” with other translations (ESV, NASU, NET, NIV, RSV), I am rendering it “the one who is at enmity” to bring out the connection to Gen 3:15. See too the subjugation of the “Prince of Demons” to the son of David, Solomon, in *T. Sol.* Greek title; 1:7; 3:1–6. See further D. C. Duling, “Solomon, Exorcism, and

the Son of David,” *Harvard Theological Review* 68 (1975): 235–52. This tradition of Solomon, son of David, triumphing over the demonic host could have been fostered through the kind of interpretation of Gen 3:15 being offered in this study. See too Solomon’s authority over evil spirits in *Jos. Ant.* 8.2.5 and in Targum Sheni to Esther (cited by Duling, *OTP* 1:947).

⁹²See Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans* (Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 804–05.

⁹³So also C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (International Critical Commentary; 2 vols.; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1975), 1:414; and D. J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* (New International Commentary on the New Testament; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 516.

⁹⁴Cf. Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 679–80, who cites P. S. Minear, “Far as the Curse Is Found: The Point of Rev. 12:15–16,” *Novum Testamentum* 33 (1991): 71–77.

⁹⁵Beale (*The Book of Revelation*, 640) notes that “*Odes Sol.* 22 is one of the earliest interpretations of Revelation 12,” and that this text (*Odes Sol.*) alludes to Gen 3:15 in 22:5, “He who overthrew by my hands the dragon with seven heads, and placed me at his roots that I might destroy his seed” (*OTP* 2:754).

⁹⁶Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 688. So also Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation* (Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 496. See too what appears to be an interpretation of

Gen 3:15 in *T. Sol.* 15:10–12, where the stretching of the Son of God on a cross thwarts the whole demonic host. The text states that this man’s mother will “not have sexual intercourse with a man” (15:10) and that he is the one “whom the first devil shall seek to tempt, but shall not be able to overcome . . . he is Emmanuel” (15:11). Cf. also *T. Sol.* 22:20.

⁹⁷Alexander, “Messianic Ideology,” 27–28; Schreiner, “Foundations for Faith,” 3; Wifall, “Gen 3:15—A Protevangelium?” 364–65.

⁹⁸Wifall, “Gen 3:15—A Protevangelium?” 364.

⁹⁹See Richard Bauckham’s defense of the term “metanarrative” with reference to the Bible (he prefers to call it a “Nonmodern Metanarrative”) in his essay “Reading Scripture as a Coherent Story,” in *The Art of Reading Scripture* (ed. Ellen F. Davis and Richard B. Hays; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 47–53.

¹⁰⁰A shadow of the biblical story of the one who vanquishes the serpent (Jesus) and wins for himself a bride (the church) may be reflected in the West Semitic “Ugaritic Liturgy against Venomous Reptiles” (trans. Dennis Pardee; *COS*), 1:295–98, where the god Horanu defeats the venomous serpents and gains for himself a bride (lines 61–76).

¹⁰¹I wish to express my gratitude to my research assistant, Travis B. Cardwell, for transliterating the Greek and Hebrew terms in this essay. I am also grateful for those who read this piece and offered helpful feedback, especially Profs. Thomas R. Schreiner and Scott R. Swain. Deficiencies or errors that

remain are, of course, my responsibility.