

## When the Time is Right, God answers – Genesis 3:15 & Galatians 4:4

What is more discouraging, you failing to keep a promise with someone or someone else not keeping a promise with you? Have you ever arrived at the airport and the person that promised you that they would be there was not? How did that make you feel? Has someone ever promised you that they would stand up for you in a meeting, but when that time came they did not?

I read this week about a man who was a very qualified TV meteorologist but did a terrible job at forecasting the weather. He became something of a local joke when a newspaper began keeping a record of his predictions and did a story that showed he had been wrong almost 300 times in a single year. Because of the bad press, he was fired from his job. He eventually moved to another part of the country and applied for a similar job at another TV station. The job application asked him to state his reason for leaving his previous position. Do you know how he answered the question? This is what he wrote, “The climate didn’t agree with me.”

Niels Bohr, a noted physicist, has said, “Prediction is a very difficult art...especially when it involves the future.”

This morning, we’re launching a brand new series called, “When the Time is Right, God Answers.” While it is difficult, if not impossible for any of us to forecast the future, the Bible is packed with predictive prophecies. This means that God always tells the truth. God always answers right at the right time. We think it is a problem that God is on His schedule, not ours. The fact is, however, that God answers right at the right time.

Did you know that if you listen closely, you can hear the sounds of the cross in the Old Testament? Written over a 1,000-year period, the first part of the Bible contains about 300 references to the Messiah that were fulfilled in Christ. We will tackle four of them found in the first 15 chapters of your Bible this month to help us understand who Jesus is and why His coming is so important.

Galatians 4:4 – *But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law.*

Before we jump into our Old Testament verse this morning, let me make sure you grasp the significance of Galatians 4:4.

The coming of Christ and thus fulfillment of prophecy by Christ is no accident and is certainly not a coincidence.

THE TIME WAS READY – “In the fullness of time”

There was 400 years of silence between the Old Testament and the New Testament, between Malachi & Matthew. There were no Prophets, no Scripture was written, Heaven seemed silent. God was preparing the earth for the coming of His Son, Jesus.

God was preparing the earth so that WHEN Jesus came, the Gospel could be spread throughout the whole world. God spent the “silent” 400 years preparing HISTORY for Jesus.

How did God prepare the world for the birth of His Son, Jesus?

- God Used The Greeks

Alexander the Great conquered the Persian Empire, thus ruling over the Jews in 333 BC. God said: “I want a UNIVERSAL LANGUAGE, so when Jesus is born, everybody can hear about My Son’s birth.”

When the Greeks conquered the world, the Greek language became the universal language. Everybody knew a little Greek. They read and wrote Greek. All legal documents were in Greek. I studied Greek in Bible College. WHY? Because the New Testament is written in Greek.

The Disciples could take the message of Jesus to the whole world BECAUSE there was a UNIVERSAL LANGUAGE.

- God Used The Romans

In 63 BC, the Romans conquered the Greeks. God said: “I want a UNIVERSAL PEACE so the news of My Son Jesus can be spread easily throughout the world.”

When the Romans took power, there was one government over the entire world. No need for Passports, no fear of going into enemy territory, no fear of wars to avoid. The Disciples were free to travel the world with the Gospel, because there was only one Government.

“In the fullness of time” God sent forth His Son, Jesus, when God had it all planned out.

God said: “I want a good ROAD SYSTEM, so people can travel easily to spread the Gospel.” The Romans were famous for pioneering a road system. There is a phrase that said “All roads lead to Rome.” Roman roads were everywhere so that their army could easily transport from one spot to another.

God uses the roads, however, not for war, but to make it easy for the disciples to spread the message of peace.

God said: "I want the world to know that there is only ONE GOD." SO ... God had used the Jews for 4000 years to spread the idea that there was only ONE GOD. At the time of Jesus' birth, the world was a Pagan world. The GREEKS had their many gods & goddesses. The ROMANS had their many gods & goddesses. The ROMANS even brought to the world the idea of worshipping a MAN. Caesar said that he should be worshipped as a god.

In the midst of 1000's of petty gods, for 4000 years God had been preparing the world, through the Jews, that there was only ONE God, Yahwah. The Jews proclaimed to the world that the MESSIAH would come, to save the world from their sins.

God had spent 4000 years planning the birth of His Son, Jesus. That's why, when Jesus was born, the blueprint had already been drawn. A universal LANGUAGE, a universal PEACE, a universal ROAD SYSTEM, the concept of ONE GOD, the MESSIAH. The world was ready for Jesus!

Why did God choose 4 AD to send Jesus into this world? Why did God do it during that year? Why not sooner? Why not later?

Galatians 4:4 describes the year that God choose as:

- "the time was full", it was "the fullness of time"
- "ripe", like fruit
- "pregnant" & about to give birth
- gestating for centuries
- planned for centuries
- "RIGHT".

The world was expecting, full, ripe, pregnant, and ready! The term 'fullness of time' implies 'gestation', but we have to realize that the seed for Jesus had been sown 1400 years earlier (that is a lot longer than nine months!)

The people had to remember that God keeps His promises. The Bible tells us that God is faithful and just and will keep His promises, for He does not lie, He is never late, and He does not CHANGE! The Bible also tells us that "he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus" (Philippians 1:6). The people waited 1400 years for God to answer in the right time.

After the disobedience of Adam and Eve, God pronounced a promise to man. A simple, yet wonderful promise provided a ray of hope for mankind.

Let's begin by reading the very first prophecy or promise from God found in your Bible. Turn with me to Genesis 3:15. READ

This is the first promise given after Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden. It's also the first gospel sermon ever preached on the face of the earth. Theologians call it the "first gospel." These words spoken by God contain the earliest promise of redemption in the Bible. Everything else in Scripture flows from this one verse. As the acorn contains the mighty oak, so these words contain the entire plan of salvation. The great English preacher Charles Simeon called this verse "the sum and summary of the whole Bible." (Sermon Outlines, vol. 1, p. 36)

Some people discount the first eleven chapters of Genesis. They don't think it has anything to do with Christ. That's not true. Jesus came to overturn the curse of Genesis 3. We can't ignore the clear teaching of the opening chapters of the Bible if we hope to understand the true meaning of why Jesus came to earth.

Although you may not see it at first glance, Christ is in this verse. He is the ultimate Seed of the Woman who would one day come to crush the serpent's ugly head. In the process his "heel" would be bruised and his body would be broken on the cross. In short, this verse predicts that Jesus would win the victory over Satan but would himself be wounded in the process.

Because this verse is so important in the history of redemption, we need to understand what exactly this verse says.

### **What the Verse Predicts**

Genesis 3:15 is a promise from God for Satan, for Christ, and for us. It tells us three important things. First, this verse tells us there will be an:

1. **Continual Conflict.** "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers."

The first word that we need to understand is "enmity," which means "hostility" or "animosity." One translation says, "I will set a feud." Another puts it this way, "There will be war." The New Living Translation says, "You and the woman will be enemies." God himself takes responsibility for this state of affairs by promising an endless conflict in our lives.

This is telling us that Eve and the serpent will never get along. If the devil thought that by deceiving her he had her in his back pocket, he was greatly mistaken. Eve made a huge mistake but she would never join the serpent's fan club.

As C.S. Lewis once put it, “There are two mistakes that Christians often make regarding Satan....one is to not believe that he exists, and the other is to have an unhealthy interest in him. For, with both, Satan is equally pleased.”

Let’s face it, a lot of people do not know what to do during conflict. People think we fight a battle of flesh and blood, not a spiritual one. Consider the Pacers-Pistons basketball game last November (2004), where players charged into the stands to punch out the lights of some drink-throwing fans. Commenting on the melee, former NBA star Charles Barkley said, “Any time a fan touches you, you have the right to beat the hell out of him .... I’m a man. I’m not going to let anybody disrespect me.”

Satan wants you to believe that there is no real spiritual conflict. He wants you to believe that if you believe hard enough, if you pray long enough, you will have no problems. He wants you to believe that there is conflict in your life, because the problem is you. Sometimes, however, great tragedies occur because Satan and his demons are real.

Some are trapped by: Drugs and Alcohol, False Religion, Hedonism, The Love of Money, Darkness, because of Satan’s traps and tricks and temptations and trials. He is real and he wants to take you out.

But Genesis 3:15 says that there will not just be a conflict between Eve and the Devil, but also “her seed.” This phrase is really important to understand because In the Hebrew world, the male is considered the one who has the seed. Children are normally referred to as the “offspring” of the father or the “seed” of the father, not the woman.

Why does it say “her seed” or “her offspring” here? I think its because this verse is predicting the virgin birth of Christ. When the Messiah was born, he was the “seed of the woman” because in His conception by the Holy Spirit, there was no male seed! He didn’t come in the usual way; he came by means of a miraculous virgin birth. Genesis 3:15 was speaking of Mary and Jesus.

Jesus clearly fulfilled Genesis 3:15. The bruised and broken Messiah destroyed the power of death and the devil.

Hebrews 2:14 (NLT) - *Because God’s children are human beings—made of flesh and blood—Jesus also became flesh and blood by being born in human form. For only as a human being could he die, and only by dying could he break the power of the Devil, who had the power of death.*

Ravi Zacharias, in his book, “Jesus Among Other Gods,” paints a vivid description of what Christ accomplished on the cross: “He bore the brunt of the pain inflicted by the wickedness of His prosecutors - and showed us the heart of God. He displayed in His

own suffering what the work of God is all about in changing our hearts from evil to holiness” (page 135).

This means that God kept His promise: there would be endless conflict outside of Christ. Genesis was written 1400 years before Christ came. God’s people waited that long for God to answer this promise.

Genesis 3:15 tells us there will be an:

1. **Continual Conflict**, and...
2. **Temporary Defeat**. God says to the serpent, “He will crush your head and you will strike his heel.”

If you’ve ever had a heel spur, or pulled your Achilles’ tendon, you know how painful this can be. We normally don’t think about heels until we start having problems. But what happens? You end up on crutches, taking painkillers and perhaps having surgery. Heel trouble slows you down. But it doesn’t kill you. You can live with heel problems even through you have to hobble around.

When Genesis says “you” will strike “his” heel, it is talking about two things. First, it refers to the fact that in this life Satan sometimes wins the battle. He has many tools in his arsenal and he shoots them at the people of God 24 hours a day.

Interestingly, according to the WebMD web site, the most frequent causes of heel pain do no result from a single injury, but by repetitive or excessive heel pounding.

Sometimes we are “wounded” by excessive discouragement, repetitive criticism, unbridled anger, full-blown bitterness, or perhaps by cherished plans that go astray, dreams that never come true, projects that never come to fruition, goals that somehow are frustrated despite our best efforts. This verse reminds us that the Christian life is not a bed of roses. Not only is there continual conflict, but the bad guys win a fair number of the battles. The evil one uses repetitive and excessive blows to break us down.

There is another meaning, however. When Christ died on the cross, Satan struck his heel. Where on his body were the nails pounded in? His hands and his feet--right through his heels. On Friday about sundown, when they took the dead body of Jesus down from the cross, it appeared that Satan had won the battle.

Satan delivered a terrible blow to Jesus on Good Friday. No doubt he thought he had thrown a knockout punch. But he was wrong. All he did was strike Jesus on the heel. As painful as it was, that suffering was nothing compared to what Jesus did to Satan. On Sunday morning, the true Victor walked out of the grave, alive from the dead.

Genesis 3:15 tells us there will be an:

1. **Continual Conflict**, and
2. **Temporary Defeat, but also**
3. **Eventual Victory.**

First, it's the heel vs. the head and second, it's striking vs. crushing. When Jesus died on the cross, he delivered a crushing blow to Satan. It was a total mismatch. Heel wounds are painful but they don't kill you. No one survives a crushed head. The Cross was God's deathblow against Satan. It was the payback for the Fall and more besides. Victory belongs to the woman's seed!

## THE SCENE FROM THE MOVIE THE PASSION

Think about what Christ has CRUSHED:

- Satan's ability to exhaust you - Hosea 14:5-7
- Satan's ability to burden us – Matthew 11:29-30
- Satan's ability to sicken you – Luke 5:31-32
- Satan's ability to make you thirst - John 4:14
- Satan's ability to starve you – John 6:48
- Satan's lies – John 6:68
- Satan's ability to attack you like a wolf – John 10:11
- Satan's ability to make us lose our way – John 14:6
- Satan's ability to rob our peace – John 14:27
- Satan's ability to bind you – John 14:30
- Satan's ability to have power over you – Acts 26:17-18
- Satan's ability to accuse us – Romans 8:1
- Satan's ability to overwhelm us – 2 Corinthians 1:3-5
- Satan's ability to blind you – 2 Corinthians 4:4
- Satan's ability to steal your forgiveness for others – 2 Corinthians 2:10-11
- Satan's ability to weaken you - 2 Corinthians 12:9
- Satan's curse over you - Galatians 3:13-14
- Satan's imprisonment of you – Galatians 5:1
- Satan's ability to kill your spirit and soul – Ephesians 2:1-5
- Satan's ability to alienate you – Ephesians 2:19
- Satan's ability to stop our growth – Philippians 1:6
- Satan's temptation to be proud – Philippians 2:7
- Satan's ability to keep you in his kingdom - Colossians 1:13
- Satan's debt over us – Colossians 1:14
- Satan's attraction in this world – Philippians 3:8
- Satan's ability to wear us out – Philippians 4:13
- Satan's ability to sap your strength - 2 Thessalonians 3:5

- Satan's ability to enslave you – Hebrews 2:14
- Satan's ability to toss you around like the waves at sea – Hebrews 6:19
- Satan's ability to confuse you – James 1:5
- Satan's temptation to anger us – James 1:19-22
- Satan's trials that he throws at you – 1 Peter 1:6-7
- Satan's ability to make you suffer - 1 Peter 5:8-10
- Satan's ability to make your world dark – 2 Peter 1:19
- Satan's ability to make you impure - 1 John 1:7
- Satan's work all around you - 1 John 3:8

In the end Satan will be destroyed even though the Christian life will always be a struggle. Struggle implies effort, sweat, exertion, and difficulty. That's why the apostle Paul uses the image of a runner, of a boxer, of a wrestler, and of a soldier. The Christian life isn't easy; it's hard work that demands your full commitment and the full engagement of your soul.

Until the day we die we will struggle against temptation. Sometime we'll win, other times we'll lose. But, we have to be in the fight. Unfortunately, many believers have taken themselves out of the game. George Barna reported in November 2000 that in a large-scale nationwide survey of adults in which people were asked to identify their most important goal in life, not a single person said they wanted to be a committed follower of Christ.

Don't get discouraged because the Christian life isn't easy. Determine to be fully devoted to Christ no matter how hard it gets. It's not supposed to be easy. We're at war. Life is hard, times are difficult, and the enemy is attacking on every side.

Romans 16:20 – *The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you.*

Our victories will not come without wounds. Even Jesus, our Lord, faced the cross, so what makes us think that we will escape the abrasions of life? If Jesus suffered in doing the will of God, so will we. At the Cross, Satan struck a blow and wounded Christ on his heel. And even after his resurrection his body bore the marks of his suffering.

You will struggle big time in this life and you will be wounded. But don't despair because life is hard. Be thankful and struggle on! Remember that God is large and He's in charge! If you feel like running away from your struggles, remember that there is an end to the conflict.

Revelation 20:10 – *The devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.*

Jesus died in our place to not only defeat death and the devil; He also died to deliver us. He wants to change us from the inside out. He offers each of us a gift, a gift that was wrapped way back in Genesis 3:15.

Genesis 3:15 tells us there is:

1. **Continual Conflict**, and
2. **Temporary Defeat, but also**
3. **Eventual Victory.**

You see God keeps His promises. God always tells the truth. God always answers right at the right time. We think it is a problem that God is on His schedule, not ours. The fact is, however, that God answers right at the right time.

You need to receive the ultimate promise of Christ.

*John 1:12 – Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.*

Will you receive Him today?

Believe

Repent

Confess

Be Baptized

Give Your Life