

PREMILLENNIALISM AND MISTAKEN IDENTITIES
IN GENESIS 3–4

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By Jason Coke
PhD Student, Department of Bible Exposition
Dallas Theological Seminary
jasoncoke@dallaseminary.edu

Abstract

Our English Bibles are hiding clues to premillennialism in Genesis 3–4. The end of Genesis 3:16 should read, “Your desire will be for your man because he will rule with you.” The “man” in this verse is not the husband who has failed her, but the promised seed who will come forth from her and strike the serpent (just announced in 3:15), thus restoring rule of the earth back to God’s image bearers. This is confirmed in 4:1 when she brings forth “a man” (Cain) whom she hoped would be the promised seed. Regarding Cain, the end of 4:7 is best translated, “But if you do not do good, sin is a crouching one at the door, and his desire is for you, because you will rule with him.”

The fall resulted in humanity giving their rule of the earth to the serpent. When the promised seed strikes the serpent, those who share the woman’s desire will rule the earth with the promised seed (the millennial kingdom). In the meantime, the serpent entices humanity to rule with him (4:7) in a kingdom opposed to God, the promised seed, the woman, and all who share her desire. *None* of our modern English versions correctly translate 3:16 or 4:7, and unfortunately this obscures the resolution to the biblical story involving humanity ruling the earth on God’s behalf, as per his original intent (Gen 1:28). Correct translation and correct identification of the characters in Gen 3–4, then, show how dispensationalism doesn’t destroy the unity of the Bible, but is the only interpretive grid that actually resolves the Bible’s narrative arc in a unified fashion.

The Biblical Story

All 66 inspired books of the Protestant canon relate to the progressively revealed Messiah-redeemer-ruler metanarrative of the Bible, but not in the same way. Each book either *carries* the metanarrative,¹ *contributes* to the metanarrative,² or *contemplates* the metanarrative.³ A book’s placement into one of these three categories does not necessarily depend on genre, even though a correlation frequently exists. Rather, a book’s categorization depends on its

¹ The carrier category refers to biblical books that carry the primary plotline of the Messiah-redeemer-ruler metanarrative of the Bible. Many books of historical narrative and certain parts of prophetic books fall into this category because they carry the Messiah-redeemer-ruler metanarrative. Such books describe the outworking of the promise in Genesis 3:15-16.

² The contributor category refers to biblical books that contribute to, but do not carry, the plot of the Messiah-redeemer-ruler metanarrative of the Bible. Most prophetic books and certain parts of the NT epistles fall into this category because while they do not carry the Messiah-redeemer-ruler metanarrative, they contribute important (often prophetic) information about that metanarrative. Additionally, certain historical narratives run in parallel to one another (e.g., Kings and Chronicles, the four Gospels). In these cases, 1-2 Kings function as the carrier and 1-2 Chronicles as the contributor. Among the Gospels, Matthew functions as the carrier and the other three as contributors.

³ The contemplator category refers to biblical books that neither carry nor contribute to the plot of the Messiah-redeemer-ruler metanarrative of the Bible. Rather, these books reflect upon (contemplate) the realities of that narrative. Books of wisdom, poetry, and most NT epistles fall into this category, because in light of the Genesis 3:15 promised seed having come, they address how the people of God should live until he returns to establish his kingdom.

contents and its relationship to other books.⁴ While belief in a unified metanarrative may sound like a presupposition, it is actually a conclusion which, for the sake of this paper, will be taken as a given.⁵

In the Messiah-redeemer-ruler metanarrative of Scripture, the following composes the major elements of the story:

Table 1: Elements of the Metanarrative of Scripture

Setting:	Heaven and earth	Gen 1–2
Hero:	God the Father	Gen 1–2
Hero’s desire:	Image bearers to rule the earth	Gen 1:26-28
Problem:	Image bearers gave their rule to the serpent	Gen 3
Solution (the plot):	Promise seed will strike the serpent and restore rule to image bearers	Gen 3:15–Rev 19
Turning point:	The Cross	Gospels
Climax:	The Great Tribulation	Rev 6–19
Resolution / denouement:	Image bearers again rule the earth	Rev 20–22

As shown above in Table 1 which summarizes the biblical metanarrative, Genesis 1–2 establishes the setting (heaven and earth) and the hero of the story (God). The hero’s desire in creation was for humanity to rule the earth on his behalf as image bearers (Gen 1:26-28). In *any* story, the plot revolves around a “problem”—defined as the elements which prevent the fulfillment of the hero’s desire.⁶ In the biblical story, the plot problem is introduced when God’s image bearers submit to the serpent (Gen 3:6). In doing so, God’s image bearers gave their rule to the serpent, a beast of the earth (Gen 3:1). Since God intended his image bearers to rule the beasts of the earth (Gen 1:26, 28), this represents an inversion of the created order and the introduction of the plot problem: a serpent ruling the world instead of God’s image bearers. This plot problem, however, does not change the hero’s desire that his image bearers rule the world on his behalf. The solution to that problem, which will bring about the fulfillment of the hero’s desire, is introduced in Genesis 3:15—the seed of the woman will strike the serpent, thus ending his rule of the earth and so restoring it to God’s image bearers.

The plot of the biblical metanarrative, then, revolves around how God restores his image bearers to their rightful place of ruling the earth on his behalf. The outworking of this solution (i.e., the plot) takes place from Genesis 3:15 all the way to Christ’s return in Revelation

⁴ For this reason, certain biblical books fit into more than one of these three categories.

⁵ The way to disprove ideas regarding the disunity of the Bible is by demonstrating the opposite: how each book in a unified fashion relates to the biblical metanarrative. Such is the focus of the Bible Exposition PhD program at Dallas Theological Seminary. As such, other unpublished works by the present author detail how each of the 66 biblical books either carries, contributes, or contemplates the biblical metanarrative.

⁶ Elements preventing the hero’s desire typically involve internal obstacles, like challenges within the hero himself, or external obstacles such as an antagonist, or natural or supernatural forces. In the biblical metanarrative, the serpent of Genesis 3 functions as the antagonist to God, the hero. Furthermore, as per Genesis 3:15, the serpent seed (all who share the serpent’s desire to rule the earth in opposition to God) function antagonistically to the woman’s seed (all who share her desire for the promised seed to restore rule of the earth to God’s image bearers).

19. Christ's crucifixion and resurrection represent the turning point in the story, and the Great Tribulation is the climax because plot tension reaches its peak.⁷ The resolution of the plot conflict thus demands a period where God's image bearers rule the earth created in Genesis 1–2, where edenic conditions are restored, and without interference from the serpent. The first time this occurs in the metanarrative is in Revelation 20 where glorified saints—by then conformed to the image of Christ—reign with Christ, who is himself the perfect image bearer of God. Such a reign fulfills the hero's desire that his image bearers rule the earth on his behalf. This millennial phase of the eternal kingdom (Rev 20) prior to the new heaven and earth (Rev 21–22) is understood as part one of the metanarrative's denouement.⁸ The new heaven and earth serve as part two of the denouement.

The Narrative Unity of Genesis

Given the narrative unity of the entire biblical story,⁹ one would expect each biblical book that *carries* the metanarrative to likewise contain narrative unity. Perhaps no book has faced more attack in this regard than Genesis. Interpretation of the book of Genesis over the past two centuries has been marred by anti-supernatural biases and the application of biological evolutionary thinking to biblical texts. Such critical / liberal scholarship is embodied in the Graf-Wellhausen hypothesis for composition of the Pentateuch, a theory which persists today despite gaping logical holes and ample evidence to the contrary.¹⁰ In any case, most scholars follow the conclusions of the Graf-Wellhausen hypothesis and thus assume the disunity and composite nature of Genesis. For example, Speiser, author of the Anchor Yale Commentary on Genesis, declared, "The conclusion which virtually all modern scholars are willing to accept, is that the Pentateuch was in reality a composite work, the product of many hands and periods."¹¹ Likewise, the International Critical Commentary on Genesis by Skinner noted, "That the Book of Genesis

⁷ In the Great Tribulation, plot tension reaches its peak because the serpent achieves the pinnacle of his rule, where *his* image bearer—the final Gentile world ruler, frequently called the "Antichrist"—rules the world and is worshiped as God, in the city of God (Jerusalem), in the temple of God (on the Temple Mount), by the chosen people of God (the Jews). This represents an absolute inversion of the hero's intention for the reign of the earth, for humanity, for the city of Jerusalem, and for the Jewish people.

⁸ The earthly rule by image bearers of God is known as the "mediatorial kingdom." This mediatorial kingdom is distinguished from God's non-mediatorial, universal kingdom which is characterized by (1) eternal existence without interruption, (2) the inclusion of all that exists in space and time, (3) providential divine control over everything, (4) continual existence regardless of the attitudes of its subjects, and (5) administration through the Eternal Son (Alva J. McClain, *The Greatness of the Kingdom: An Inductive Study of the Kingdom of God* [Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 1974], 22–36). Neither the non-mediatorial kingdom of God, nor humanity's rule in the new heaven and new earth (Rev 21–22) satisfy the requirements for the resolution of the plot problem and the fulfillment of the hero's desire.

⁹ Again, metanarrative unity is actually a *conclusion* rather than a *presupposition*.

¹⁰ See R.K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1969), 505–41.

¹¹ E. A. Speiser, *Genesis* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1964), xxi.

is a composite work is now so generally recognized that it would be hard to name a writer of importance who denies it.”¹²

Assumptions of disunity have led to interpretive efforts which segment the text rather than examine it as a literary unity. Indeed, “A point on which everybody is agreed today is that the real meaning of Genesis is to be sought, not so much in the literary form of the whole book, as in the literary form of *the parts* which compose the book” (emphasis added).¹³ As this paper will demonstrate, general assumptions of disunity and presumed etiological purposes for early Genesis lead to interpretive translations which function to (1) conceal the narrative unity of Genesis, and (2) obscure a premillennial understanding of the Bible’s metanarrative. Possibly the most glaring examples are (mis)translations and (mis)interpretations of Genesis 3:16 and Genesis 4:7.¹⁴

The Importance of Genesis 3:15-16

By Genesis 3:16, several important aspects of the metanarrative have been established. First, the setting of the story includes heaven and earth (Gen 1–2). Second, the hero of the story is God (Gen 1–2). Third, the hero’s desire is that his image bearers rule the earth on his behalf (Gen 1:26-28). Fourth, the serpent is identified as the antagonist because he first distorts (Gen 3:1), and then speaks in direct opposition to (Gen 3:4), the words of God. Fifth, the plot problem / plot conflict is identified as a serpent ruling the earth instead of God’s image bearers. By submitting to the serpent, the image bearers had abdicated their rule and transferred it to him. And sixth, the solution to the plot problem is revealed in Genesis 3:15.

One cannot overstate the pivotal importance of Genesis 3:15 to the metanarrative. This verse identifies several key aspects of the metanarrative. First, the solution to the plot problem will be the promised seed of the woman, a son, striking the serpent. This implies the end of the serpent’s rule of the earth and its restoration to God’s image bearers. Second, there will be two “teams” in the metanarrative—those who share the woman’s desire for the promised seed, and those who share the serpent’s desire to rule the earth in opposition to God.¹⁵ Third, ongoing conflict will characterize the relationship between these two teams. Genesis 3:15, then, is the kernel of the entire biblical metanarrative because the outworking of its promise drives the plot of the story. The entire plot, then, revolves around the conflict between these two teams who have two opposing desires.

¹² John Skinner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Genesis*, International Critical Commentary (New York: Scribner, 1910), xlii.

¹³ Lucien Ouellette, “Woman’s Doom in Genesis 3:16,” *CBQ* 12, no. 4 (January 1, 1950): 389.

¹⁴ At this time, I wish to extend thanks and credit to my professor at Dallas Theological Seminary, Dr. David R. Klingler, who wrote an unpublished manuscript titled, “Genesis 3:16; 4:1, and 4:7: A Case of Mistaken Identities?” His paper is highly technical, and in the present work I seek to simplify his explanations regarding the (mis)translation of these verses and subsequently, to extend his work by demonstrating how his conclusions connect to the Bible’s unified metanarrative in a way that leads to dispensational premillennialism. His paper is available for download at <https://www.teachmethebible.com/books-articles>.

¹⁵ The two teams are identified as אֶלְצָרְךָ, “your [the serpent’s] seed,” and אֶלְצָרַי, “her [the woman’s] seed.” The relationship between these two sides of the conflict will be characterized by אֶלְצָרְךָ, “enmity.” More will be discussed about the desire to rule the world with the serpent in the section below on Genesis 4:7.

As an important observation, the promise of God in Genesis 3:15 would offer the man and the woman *immense* hope. God had previously portended certain death on the day they ate from the forbidden tree (Gen 2:17). But now, God would graciously extend their lives long enough to produce offspring such that a son could strike the serpent and thus resolve the problem they initiated. It is a shame, then, that most commentaries on Genesis bury this very hopeful verse in the context of judgment. For example, section headings suggested by various commentaries around Genesis 3:15 include, “God Announces Punishment (3:14-19),”¹⁶ “The Verdict (3:14-20),”¹⁷ “God’s Judgments Pronounced (3:14–21),”¹⁸ “Sentence (3:14-19),”¹⁹ and, “Judgment and Expulsion (3:8-24).”²⁰ True, God placed a curse on the serpent (Gen 3:14). But in light of the hope promised in 3:15, should 3:16 be read as a judgment, or, as an optimistic promise?

Misinterpretations of Genesis 3:16a and 3:16b

The virtually universal understanding of Genesis 3:16a and 3:16b is that women will experience pain in childbirth.²¹ In fact, only with difficulty does one find dissent from this standard view. While women do indeed experience pain in childbirth, this paper proposes an alternative understanding of Genesis 3:16a and 3:16b which aligns more closely to the narrative unity of the biblical story.

Genesis 3:16a: אֶל-הָאִשָּׁה אָמַר הָרְבָה אַרְבָּה עֲצָבוֹתָי וְהָרְבָה

Genesis 3:16b: בְּעֲצָב תֵּלְדִי בָנִים

¹⁶ Tremper Longman III, *Genesis, The Story of God Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2016), 66.

¹⁷ John H. Sailhamer, “Genesis,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Genesis–Leviticus (Revised Edition)*, eds. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 89.

¹⁸ K. A. Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, vol. 1A, NAC (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996), 242.

¹⁹ Derek Kidner, *Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 1, TOTC (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1967), 75.

²⁰ Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis, Interpretation, a Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1982), 45.

²¹ As representative examples of this view, see Kidner, *Genesis*, TOTC 1:76; Sailhamer, “Genesis,” *EBC*, 1:91–92; and Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, vol. 1, WBC (Dallas: Word, Inc., 1987), 90.

Proposed translation: “To the woman he said, “I will surely multiply your sorrow²² and your conception;²³ with sorrow you will bring forth sons.²⁴””

The verse thus refers not to physical pain, but to emotional sorrow; to conception, not birth; and to the sorrowful bringing forth of sons specifically, not children in general. This understanding is validated by the narrative flow of Genesis. If the verse truly referred to physical pain in childbirth, why do the first two births (Gen 4:1-2) not mention anything about this pain? Indeed, as the biblical story progresses, pain in childbirth is rarely mentioned. One must advance in the narrative as far as Rachel giving birth to Benjamin before such an idea surfaces.²⁵

Instead, as Genesis 4 reveals, the woman’s multiplied conception produced two sons who multiplied her sorrow because the elder—whom she hoped would be the promised seed—joined the serpent (Gen 4:7) and then killed the younger (Gen 4:8). Her sorrow thus multiplied because she recognized she would not only become the mother of those who shared her desire for the promised seed, but also the mother of those who would join the serpent in his opposing desire.

²² The word **כַּצְרָה** is usually translated as “pain” in Genesis 3:16 (so NASB, ESV, NIV). The NKJV correctly renders 3:16a, “I will greatly multiply your *sorrow* and your conception” (emphasis added), but then inconsistently translates **כַּצְרָה** in 3:16b, “In *pain* you shall bring forth children” (emphasis added). Of the 34 OT uses of the root **כַּצְרָה**, only Ecclesiastes 10:9 necessitates physical pain. For the remaining 33 uses, “sorrow” as a reference to emotional turmoil and grief is acceptable. Validation of **כַּצְרָה** referring to emotional sorrow is found as the story progresses: in Genesis 4, the woman’s multiplied conception produced two sons who multiplied her sorrow because the elder—whom she hoped would be the promised seed—joined the serpent (Gen 4:7) and killed the younger (Gen 4:8). Her sorrow thus multiplied because she would become the mother of those who shared her desire for the promised seed, but also the mother of those who would join the serpent in his desire.

²³ While **הָרָה** is frequently understood / rendered as “childbirth,” the word **הָרָה** means “pregnancy” and comes from the root **הרה**, “to conceive.” “Conception” is probably the best rendering here. In any case, conception refers to the beginning of the process, and not to birth, the conclusion of that process. While obviously related, conception and birth are not the same thing. Furthermore, conception is not painful, further validating the idea that **כַּצְרָה** is emotional turmoil and not physical pain. Many have proposed that **הָרָה וְהָרָה** form a hendiadys, but this assertion is without warrant, first, because there exists no clear grammatical indication for a hendiadys, and second, because narrative flow itself validates the alternative explanation / translation proposed in this paper.

²⁴ Of some 40 English Bible translations, all but one (Catholic Public Domain Version) translate **בָּנִים** as “children.” But in Genesis 5–11 alone, the phrase **וַיֹּלְדֵם בָּנִים וּבָנוֹת**, “And he fathered sons and daughters” appears 17 times (Gen 5:4, 7, 10, 13, 16, 19, 22, 26, 30; 11:11, 13, 15, 17, 19, 21, 23, 25). The author of Genesis was very specific in identifying and differentiating male children and female children. In Genesis 3:16b, the sorrow refers to the bringing forth of “sons” and not “children” in general.

²⁵ Rather, labor pains are typically used as a figure of speech, and more likely reflect that common human experience as opposed to an allusion to Genesis 3:16.

Misinterpretations of Genesis 3:16c and 3:16d

In Genesis 3:16c, the three interpretive issues to be addressed are (1) the identity of the אָדָם , the “man,” (2) the nature and object of the woman’s desire, תְּשׁוּקַתָּהּ ,²⁶ and (3) the meaning of the preposition עִמְּךָ in the final clause.

Genesis 3:16c: $\text{וְאָל־אִישׁוֹ תְּשׁוּקַתָּהּ}$

Genesis 3:16d: $\text{וְהָיָא יִמְשָׁל־בְּךָ}$

Proposed translation: “And your desire will be for your man,²⁷ because²⁸ he will rule with²⁹ you.”

Sidebar: the meaning of the preposition עִמְּךָ

The preposition עִמְּךָ most commonly means “in,” “with,” “by,” or “among.”

However, virtually all English translations render עִמְּךָ in Genesis 3:16 as “over.”

HALOT identifies 24 major categories, plus sub-categories, of usage for the preposition עִמְּךָ . *BDB* identifies 22 major categories plus sub-categories. None of categories or sub-categories from these two lexicons include the English word “over;” either conceptually, spatially, or lexically. Cline’s *Dictionary of Classical Hebrew* proposes 18 categories of use, the fourteenth of which is, “over.”

However, the example given for that usage is quite weak: $\text{אֵין מֶלֶךְ בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל}$, “There was no king over Israel” (Judg 18:1), which could just as well—or even better—be translated, “There was no king *in* Israel” (emphasis added). In *HALOT*, the entry for מָשַׁל suggests that מָשַׁל + עִמְּךָ means to “rule over.” But even here, the proposed examples do not bear this out. Celestial bodies may rule “in” the day and “in” the night (Gen 1:18). Joseph ruled “in” Egypt (Gen 45:8, 26). Women ruled “among” the people (Isa 3:12). A servant ruled “among” everything that belonged to Abraham (Gen 24:2). The other two examples (ostensibly) of “rule over” are Genesis 3:16 and 4:7, but this demonstrates how circular the reasoning is: since the lexicographer interprets Genesis 3:16 as the husband ruling over the wife, he lists it in the lexical entry as “rule over.” Then the translator finds the lexical entry and translates it as per the “expert” opinion. This paper demonstrates how “with” in 3:16 and 4:7 is a superior option. Furthermore, the present author performed a morphological search for מָשַׁל + עִמְּךָ using Bible software and found 51 relevant examples in 40 verses. In most cases, “rule in” or “rule among” provides an acceptable translation. Only in a few select cases does “rule over” seem more

²⁶ The nature of her desire is also related to the *object* of her desire, which depends on the identity of the אָדָם .

²⁷ This paper is proposing that the identity of the אָדָם is actually the promised seed, and not the husband.

²⁸ Understood as a causal disjunctive clause, “because” is the best rendering. Even if the ו is taken normally as, “and,” it does not affect the meaning. “Because” just seems more suitable because it explains why the woman’s desire is for the promised seed.

²⁹ See sidebar on the meaning of the preposition עִמְּךָ .

warranted. Yet these are the exception and not the rule. Interestingly, none of these were listed as examples in *HALOT* of מִשַׁל + אֲ. If a rendering of “rule in / with / by / among” is sufficient in translation, that should be preferred as the natural meaning instead of the more forced—and certainly less common—“rule over.”

These points are highlighted to show that while the preposition אֲ is indeed quite flexible, it requires special pleading to insist upon its meaning as, “over” in Genesis 3:16 and 4:7. Yet all English Bible versions render אֲ in Genesis 3:16c as, “over.” The same mistake is made in Genesis 4:7, which will be discussed below.

Most commonly, Genesis 3:16c-d is understood in one of two ways. First, that the woman would desire to rule over her husband, therefore the husband must wrestle back control and dominate the wife. If this were the case, one would expect examples of wives usurping the authority of their husbands throughout the biblical story. While marital conflict indeed appears in Genesis, no examples can be found which reach the level of a wife actually usurping her husband’s rule. Additionally—and a point which renders the whole argument moot—understanding the final clause as the man ruling *over* the wife does not accurately reflect the meaning of the preposition אֲ (see sidebar on the meaning of אֲ).

The second common interpretation is that the woman would have sexual desire for her husband. This view is perhaps more in line with the promise of Genesis 3:15 since the promised seed would only come about through physical intimacy with her husband. However, this interpretation of Genesis 3:16c does not logically connect with Genesis 3:16d, “And / because he will rule with you” (or even incorrectly, “And he will rule over you”). Furthermore, forcing תְּשׁוּקָה, “desire” to mean “sexual desire” based on its use in Song of Solomon is fallacious. The word תְּשׁוּקָה only appears three times in the OT: Genesis 3:16, Genesis 4:7, and Song of Solomon 7:11. Note that two of the three uses in the whole Bible are in our two verses of interest. The word simply means, “desire,” and the nature of that desire is determined by its context. Thus, its use in the Song is rightfully understood as sexual desire. But to attach a sexual nuance to תְּשׁוּקָה in Genesis because of its use in the Song defies logic.

Identity of the “man” in Genesis 3:16

Both of the above popular (mis)interpretations flow from the nearly universal acceptance that the אִישׁ of Genesis 3:16c refers to the woman’s husband. English Bible translations likewise render אִישׁ as, “husband.” However, this paper proposes that the אִישׁ actually refers to the promised seed who was just announced in the previous verse. Several factors favor this idea.

First, the woman’s “desire” must be understood in light of the story. The incredible hope offered in Genesis 3:15 juxtaposes the monumental loss of humanity’s rule of the earth. When the promised seed strikes the serpent, he will tear away the rule of the earth from the serpent and restore it to God’s image bearers, who will rule with the promised seed (Gen 3:16d). This rule implicitly includes the hope of resurrection, since God had promised the man and woman death for disobedience (Gen 2:17; reaffirmed in 3:19). Thus, only through resurrection could the man and woman rule with the promised seed. In view of the immensity of the promise in Genesis 3:15, why would the woman’s desire be for the man who had just failed her? Instead,

her hope now turned to the man who would come forth from her. Indeed, the entire biblical story is hoping not in the first Adam, but the last.

Second, the word $\psi\text{א}$ is used of the male child born in Genesis 4:1, Cain. In the woman's own words, "I have acquired a man," קָנִיתִי אִישׁ . Her desire (Gen 3:16) was that this male child would be the promised seed (Gen 3:15).³⁰ Except for one's presuppositions, nothing in the text precludes the $\psi\text{א}$ of Genesis 3:16 from referring to the woman's offspring.

Third, the misuse / mistranslation of the preposition אִתְּךָ in Genesis 3:16d has multiplied the misunderstandings of this verse. As discussed above, אִתְּךָ does not mean "over."³¹ Its most common meanings are "in," "with," "by," or "among." In this case, "with" is eminently suitable: "he [the $\psi\text{א}$ who is the promised seed] will rule *with* you" (emphasis added). That is to say, the promised seed will strike the serpent, thus ending the serpent's rule of the earth. In place of the serpent, the promised seed will rule the earth and grant the woman (along with those who share her desire) the right to rule *with him* as imager bearers of God.

Fourth, in the flow of the narrative, the Genesis 3:15 pronouncement of the promised seed is absolutely foundational to the plot. In light of its colossal importance, which is more likely to occur in Genesis 3:16—a description of marital conflict ("and he [the husband] will rule over you"? Or the hope of the promised seed ("because he [the promised seed] will rule with you")?

For these reasons, the proposed translation for Genesis 3:16 is the following: "To the woman he said, "I will surely multiply your sorrow and your conception; with sorrow you will bring forth sons, and your desire will be for your man [the promised seed], because he will rule with you." Such a translation maintains strong fidelity to the Hebrew original. Furthermore, it eliminates the need for debate over the nature of the woman's desire, since the object of her desire is the promised seed and not the husband—the desire then becomes obvious. Lastly, this translation makes sense of the developing plot. It explains the multiplication of sorrow and conception (Genesis 4). It explains how "rule of the earth" is central to the biblical metanarrative, and how the hope for the promised seed implies a restoration of the rule of the earth back to God's image bearers, thus fulfilling the desire of the story's hero (God).

The biblical metanarrative thus demands a resolution where the promised seed has struck the serpent, so ending the serpent's rule. In place of the serpent, the promised seed would then rule the earth.³² To all those who share the woman's hope, the promised seed would further grant the right to rule with him. Such rule, then, is the fulfillment of the hero's [God's] original desire that his image bearers rule the world on his behalf (Gen 1:26-28). Since ruling with the promised seed is a promise to those condemned to death, it also implies resurrection for those who share the woman's desire.

³⁰ Note that Adam and Eve had no idea it would many generations and thousands of years for the promised seed to be born. For all they knew, the first male child would be the promised seed. Indeed, every successive generation of those who shared the woman's desire continually hoped that the next male child would be the promised seed. The book of Genesis traces the line of promise and its major concern for each generation is which son will carry the promise.

³¹ The preposition עָלֶיךָ is much more suitable for the English word "over."

³² That is, the earth created in Genesis 1–2.

Premillennialism in Genesis 3:16

Does the biblical metanarrative include a point of resolution where all these things occur? Indeed it does: Revelation 20 foretells a thousand year kingdom where those who have hoped in the promised seed (i.e., they shared the woman’s desire) are resurrected and rule with the promised seed—identified through the course of the biblical metanarrative as Jesus of Nazareth. In this millennial rule, Christ fulfills the promise of Genesis 3:15. His striking of the serpent ends the serpent’s rule of the earth (Rev 20:2-3), to be replaced by Christ’s eternal kingdom. The curse on the earth (Gen 3:17) subsides as Christ subjects all creation to his rule. As God’s perfect image bearer (Col 1:15), Jesus Christ will rule the earth with those who have hoped in him³³ (Rev 20:4, 6) and are conformed to his image (Rom 8:29; 1 Jn 3:2), thus fulfilling God’s original purpose in creation (Gen 1:26-28). Harmonious relationships will exist between mankind and creation, representing a return to the edenic conditions of Genesis 1–2.³⁴ Humanity is thus restored to the garden, and God’s image bearers once again rule the earth on God’s behalf.

Any eschatological view—and any understanding of the “kingdom of God”—which fails to incorporate God’s image bearers ruling the world (the one created in Genesis 1–2) has entirely missed the problem and resolution of the Bible’s metanarrative.

Thus, a correct translation of Genesis 3:16 and a correct identification of the *ישׂא* as the promised seed support dispensational, premillennial interpretations of eschatology. Far from producing a disunified view of the metanarrative, the premillennial conclusions derived from Genesis 3:16 actually provide a narrative unity in problem and resolution of the biblical plot conflict.

Cain’s Choice in Genesis 4:7

While Genesis 4:7 certainly presents difficulties of translation, the author used similar lexical and grammatical choices to those in Genesis 3:16. Such similarities are by the author’s design, and as will be demonstrated, they serve to illustrate the two competing desires of the woman and the serpent for the same object, the *ישׂא* who had come forth from her.

Genesis 3:16 אֶל־הָאִשָּׁה אָמַר הַרְבֵּה אֲרַבְּהָ עֲצָבוֹנָהּ וְהָרְגָה בְּעֶצֶב תֵּלְדֵי כְּגִים וְאֶל־אִישָׁהּ תִּשְׁוֹקֶתָהּ וְהָיָה וּמִשָּׁל־בָּהּ
 Genesis 4:7 הֲלוֹא אִם־תֵּיטִיב שְׂאֵת נְאֻם לֹא תֵיטִיב לְפָתַח הַטָּאֵת רֹבֵץ וְאֵלֶיךָ תִּשְׁוֹקֶתָהּ וְאַתָּה תִּמְשַׁל־בּוֹ

Genesis 3:16 expressed the woman’s desire for an *ישׂא*, a “man,” the promised seed who would come forth from her. In Genesis 4:1, she declared, *קָנִיתִי אִישׁ*, “I have acquired a man.” She thus hoped that this *ישׂא*, Cain, would be the promised seed. Upon growing up, Yahweh approached Cain and told him, *הֲלוֹא אִם־תֵּיטִיב שְׂאֵת*, “If you do good, [then] rank / preeminence.” As firstborn, the promise would naturally go to him first, but it was conditional. The “doing of

³³ That is, those who share the woman’s desire by hoping in the promised seed.

³⁴ The prophets (major and minor) have much to say about the physical renewal experienced in this kingdom age. Isaiah notes how infants and children will play by cobras and vipers without fear of harm (Isa 11:8). This prophecy demonstrates that in the kingdom age, the serpent of Genesis 3 is no longer ruling the world. Rather, the image bearers of God have rightly taken back their dominion to rule among all the animals of the earth.

good” meant agreeing with God about what is right.³⁵ Thus, if Cain agreed with Yahweh (protasis), then אָשָׁף (apodosis). The word אָשָׁף is used in Genesis 49:3 of Reuben as excelling in “rank” or “preeminence” in reference to carrying the line of promise.³⁶ Should Cain “do good” and agree with God, he would become the carrier of the promise.

Yet Genesis 4:7 also describes the alternative should Cain chose to not “do good.” Like Genesis 3:16, this verse suffers from unfortunate mistranslation. Virtually every modern English version renders “sin,” חַטָּאת, as the subject of תִּשְׁקָה, “desire.” Thus, the verse is commonly understood and translated as if “sin” desired Cain. Hebrew grammar, however, forbids this possibility: “sin,” חַטָּאת, is a *feminine* noun. Yet a third person, *masculine*, singular pronoun is attached to תִּשְׁקָה. Because of the disagreement in gender, the identity of the masculine pronoun (the subject of “desire”) thus cannot be “sin.” Instead of, “It [sin] desires to have you” (so NIV), the proposed translation is, “And for you is his desire.”

The Mistaken Identity of Genesis 4:7

A clue to the correct identity of the masculine pronoun exists in the final clause of the verse: וְאַתָּה תִּמְשָׁל בּוֹ, “Because³⁷ you will rule with him.”³⁸ Up to this point in the narrative, the only masculine characters are God, the man, and the serpent. The pronoun can’t refer to the man because he lost his place of rule to the serpent. Neither can the pronoun refer to God, because that would defy the logic of, “But if you do not do good [in God’s eyes]...”—why would a failure to do the right thing in God’s eyes result in his ruling with God? Besides, God had already created the earth for the purpose of mediatorial rule. The only remaining option, then, is the serpent. Indeed, God’s image bearers had just given over their rule of the earth to the serpent when they submitted to him. Thus, the masculine subject of “desire” in Genesis 4:7 must be the serpent.

³⁵ The denominative verb טָבַע, “to do good,” hails back to the noun טוֹב, which has already appeared multiple times in Genesis. The collocation of the verb רָאָה, “to see,” and the noun טוֹב are important, because they regularly appear together with significance. Upon God creating the heaven and earth over six days, “God saw that it was good” וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹהִים כִּי טוֹב (Gen 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25). Such statements imply that God, as creator, gets to decide what is good and right in his sight. But in Genesis 3:6, “The woman saw (רָאָה) that the [forbidden] tree was good (טוֹב) for food.” Instead of trusting what God had said was good (or not) in his sight, she determined to decide for herself what was good. The verb רָאָה and the noun טוֹב appear regularly in important places, like with the sons of God seeing the daughters of men in Genesis 6, and with David seeing Bathsheba in 2 Samuel 11. In such cases, the “seers” decide for themselves what is right in their own eyes.

³⁶ Indeed, one of the primary concerns of the author of Genesis is to trace the line of promise through each successive generation. As the firstborn son of Jacob, the line of promise *would have* gone through him, but because of defiling his father’s bed, “You [Reuben] shall not have preeminence” (Gen 49:4, NASB). Levi and Simeon, second and third in line for the promise, were likewise disqualified from carrying the line of promise due to their actions at Shechem (Gen 49:5-7). Jacob then identified Judah, his fourth son, as the carrier of the promise (Gen 49:8-12).

³⁷ As with the final clause in Genesis 3:16, a causal disjunctive clause seems most appropriate.

³⁸ Just as in Genesis 3:16, the preposition עַל is almost always mistranslated as, “over.” “With” is most suitable here, for the same reasons given above in Genesis 3:16.

The reason the serpent desires Cain is explained in the final clause of Genesis 4:7, “Because you [Cain] will rule with him [the serpent].” In other words, Cain would rule the earth with the serpent. Thus, there existed two competing desires for Cain based on the two “teams” delineated in Genesis 3:15. On the one hand, the woman hoped Cain would be the promised seed who would strike the serpent and restore rule of the earth to God’s image bearers. On the other, the serpent hoped Cain would join him in ruling the earth in opposition to God and to the seed of the woman. Genesis 3:15 had promised a struggle between the two “teams” in the story, each with a desire antagonistic to the other. These two competing desires came to bear on the life of Cain.

The proposed complete translation of Genesis 4:7, then, is: “Is it not that if you do good, then rank / preeminence? But if you do not do good, sin is a crouching one at the door; and for you [Cain] is his [the serpent’s] desire, because you [Cain] will rule with him [the serpent].” The continuing narrative validates this interpretation and translation of the verse. As Cain refused to make the right choice, the promise passed from him to his brother, Abel.³⁹ Cain’s murder of Abel (Gen 4:8) serves as an outworking of the promised enmity between the two teams (Gen 3:15) and the multiplied sorrow of the woman (Gen 3:16).

The Pattern of Ruling with the Serpent

That initial act of enmity (Cain murdering Abel) also serves as the pattern for the ongoing conflict between the two teams in the story. Those who share the woman’s hope for the promised seed are “seed of the woman.” Those who share the serpent’s desire are “seed of the serpent.” Throughout the biblical metanarrative, the serpent seed will continually attempt to destroy the line of promise in order to prevent the coming of the promised seed. Examples include Pharaoh, Athaliah, Haman, and King Herod. These examples share the common denominator of being rulers—that is, they were “ruling with the serpent” and thus sought to destroy the line of promise. David and his descendants in the line of promise likewise faced the enmity of many surrounding rulers / nations. John the Baptist identified the Pharisees as, literally, “offspring of serpents” (Matt 3:7). The reader who has followed the metanarrative thus knows the Pharisees are on the team of the serpent, and can expect them to oppose the promised seed. Since Jesus *is* that promised seed, the reader can expect them to kill Jesus, the precise act they perpetrated.

The type of rule perpetrated by the serpent and his seed is one of domination, oppression, and murder—they rule by force. By contrast, the rule of God’s image bearers brings blessing, provision and care. This shepherd-like care is what God originally intended for his creation under the rule of his image bearers (Gen 1:26-28). The image bearers rule the way shepherds lovingly care for their sheep.

Premillennialism in Genesis 4:7

The presence of serpent-style rule (i.e., tyranny and oppression) throughout biblical and world history provides ample evidence of the serpent ruling the world through those who

³⁹ This is validated by what Eve said after Seth was born: “God has appointed to me another seed (זרע) in the place of Abel” (Gen 4:25, author’s translation). The reference to “seed” goes back to the promised seed of Genesis 3:15. Seth, then, would carry the promise.

have joined him. The temptation of Jesus (Matt 4; Mark 1; Luke 4) likewise validates the serpent's rulership of the kingdoms of the earth, for otherwise he could not validly offer them to Christ. The suggestion by Covenantal / amillennial theologians that the cross of Christ bound Satan, thus ending his rule of the earth, does not bear out biblically or historically. After the cross, Satan tempts (Acts 5:3, 1 Cor 7:5), has power (Acts 26:18), destroys human flesh (1 Cor 5:5), deceives (2 Cor 2:11, 11:14), hinders (1 Thess 2:18), harasses (2 Cor 12:7), slanders (1 Tim 5:14), captures (2 Tim 2:26), prowls around seeking to devour (1 Pet 5:8), and is "now at work" (Eph 2:2) with many schemes (Eph 6:11). Christians are commanded to stand against the devil (Eph 6:11), resist him (James 4:7, 1 Pet 5:9), and overcome him (1 John 2:13).

Furthermore, world history in the Christian era demonstrates bears out the tyranny of world leaders. Various Ceasars and European rulers have typified serpent-style rule in their harassment of Christians and Jews. More broadly, exceptions to tyrannical rule are rare on the world stage. Even today in the twenty-first century, world leaders wax more and more despotic. The epitome of this rule will occur in the Great Tribulation when the serpent's image bearer, commonly called the "Antichrist," rules the world.

Genesis 4:7 thus identifies the reason why so many wicked men have ruled even to this day: they rule with the serpent, and they enact the serpent's manner of oppressive rule. This includes not only political leaders, but also wealthy globalists and secret societies scheming to oppress the nations. This serpent-style rule will only cease once the promised seed strikes the serpent, thus eradicating his rule from the earth. Only at that time will rule of the earth be restored to God's image bearers (Rev 20). Genesis 4:7, then, points to premillennialism because the earth has yet to be restored to the rule of God's image bearers. If it had, then the style of rule would be one of blessing and care. Any fair and reasonable accounting of history (past and present) recognizes the manner of the serpent's rule has remained consistent throughout recorded history.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper has highlighted how mistaken identities and mistranslations of Genesis 3:16 and Genesis 4:7 have obscured the dispensational premillennial conclusions inherent to the Bible's metanarrative. The אָדָם, "man," of Genesis 3:16 refers to the promised seed of the woman, not her husband. The one desiring Cain in Genesis 4:7 is the serpent, not "sin." Rightly understood, these verses present two opposite teams—both of whom desire to rule the earth, but with two opposing styles of rule. Such understanding of the identities in these verses finds validation in the flow of the biblical metanarrative and in broader world history such that dispensational premillennialism alone accurately represents the problem and resolution of the biblical story. A faithful understanding of the Hebrew text and correct identification of the characters in Gen 3–4, then, show how dispensationalism doesn't at all destroy the unity of the Bible. Rather, dispensational premillennialism is the only interpretive grid that actually resolves the Bible's narrative arc in a unified fashion. The problem introduced in Genesis 3 is a serpent ruling the earth in place of God's image bearers. The serpent entices humanity to rule the earth with him (Gen 4:7). The resolution, anticipated in Genesis 3:15-16 with the rule of the promised seed and resurrection of those who hope in him, only occurs in Revelation 20.

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