



In this study, Brian A. Verrett argues that 1–2 Samuel contains a serpent motif by practicing biblical theology and literary criticism. This motif derives from the serpent in Genesis 3, and its function within the Samuel narrative is to heighten the reader’s anticipation in the coming messiah, who is the son of David and the seed of the woman from Genesis 3:15. This messiah will defeat the serpent and inaugurate his glorious reign over a renewed world. When 1–2 Samuel is read in this way, one appreciates previously unnoticed features of the text, understands aspects of the text that were formerly confusing, and rightly sees that the whole of 1–2 Samuel is a messianic document.

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“Brian Verrett’s work on the serpent is first-class. He skillfully combines rigorous exegesis with whole-Bible biblical theology.”  
—ANDY NASELLI, Associate Professor of Systematic Theology and New Testament, Bethlehem College & Seminary, Minneapolis

“Verrett combines detailed exegesis of the relevant texts in Samuel with a wide-angle view of the entire Bible in this fascinating study of the serpent. This book shows the promise of a canonical biblical theology that can help us understand both individual books of the Bible as well as an important biblical theme. The reader of this thought-provoking book will be rewarded with new perspectives and a valuable model for a thematic biblical theological study.”  
—CHARLIE TRIMM, Associate Professor and Chair of Old Testament, Talbot School of Theology, Biola University

“Verrett has written a detailed defense of an intriguing thesis. He has provided a helpful overview of recent scholarship on the serpent motif in Scripture, both carefully critiquing and often potentially reinforcing the theory.”  
—CHARLES L. QUARLES, Research Professor in New Testament and Biblical Theology, Charles Page Chair of Biblical Theology, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary

“Brian Verrett has given his readers much to consider in this book. Regardless of full agreement with Verrett, readers can learn to appreciate his efforts to trace the trajectory of Genesis 3:15 in the biblical canon.”  
—MICHAEL B. SHEPHERD, Associate Professor of Biblical Studies, Cedarville University

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**Brian A. Verrett** is an elder at New Creation Church in Granville, New York. He is joyfully married to Angela and is the father of Lydia, Abigail, and Luke.

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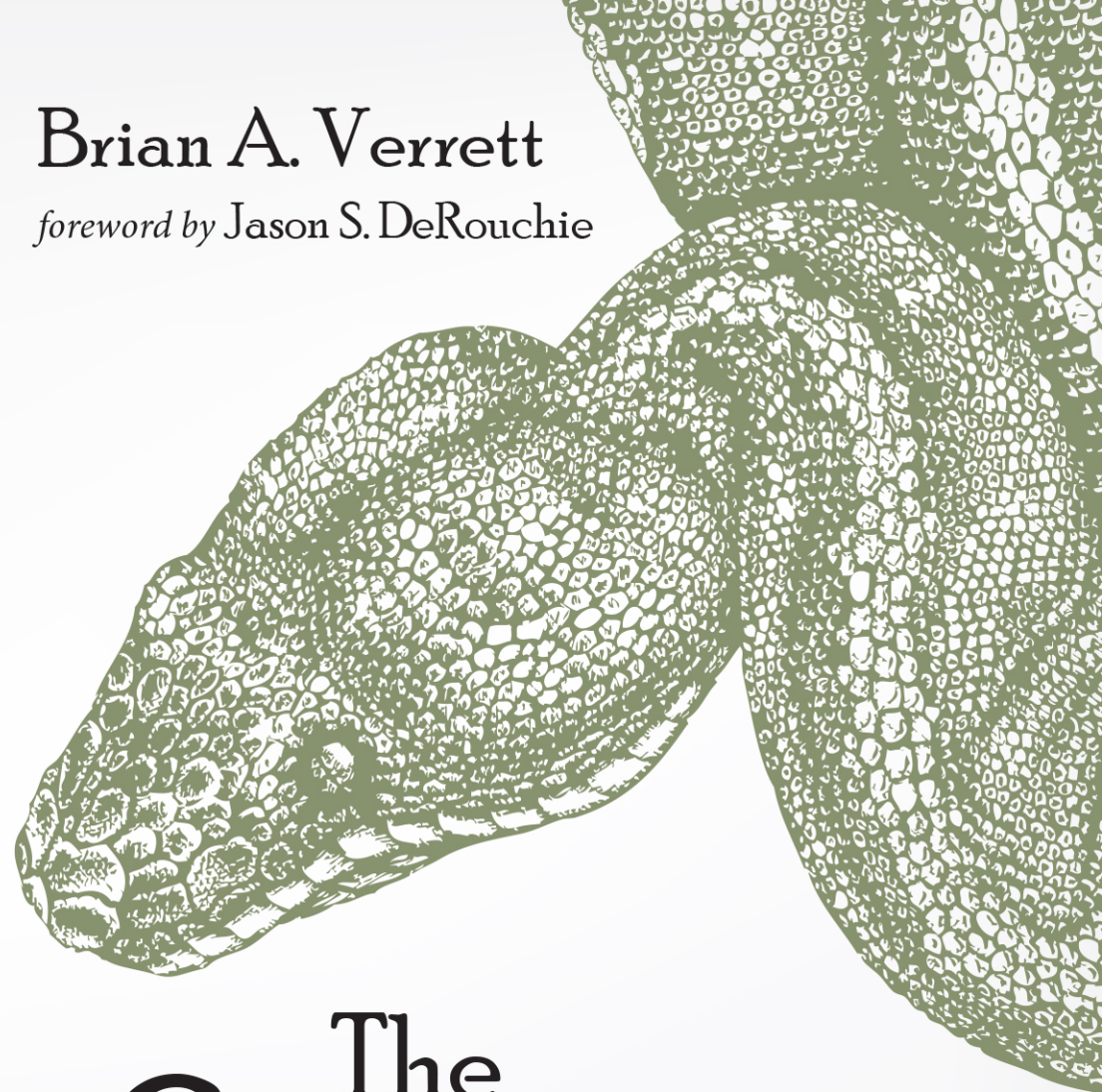
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Verrett

The Serpent in Samuel



**Brian A. Verrett**  
*foreword by Jason S. DeRouchie*

The  
**Serpent**  
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*A Messianic Motif*

BRIAN A. VERRETT

*foreword by Jason S. DeRouchie*

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A Messianic Motif

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## FOREWORD

ONE OF SCRIPTURE'S EARLIEST narratives portrays evil entering the world in the form of a serpent (Gen 3:1). Following mankind's sin in the Garden, God first cursed the serpent more than every other beast, noted that he would have offspring, and promised that a male descendant of the first woman would one day overcome the evil one through suffering (Gen 3:14–15). The story begins here. . . . The end of the story tells us that this dragon—God's greatest enemy, “that ancient serpent, who is called the devil”—would seek to destroy the promised royal, eschatological male child who was “to rule all the nations with a rod of iron” (Rev 12:3–5). Nevertheless, “the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ” would triumph through tribulation, and those associated with God and his Christ would also conquer the evil one “by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony” (12:10–11). The God of peace would indeed crush Satan under their feet (Rom 16:20). While God in Christ has bound the serpent for a time, in the end the sovereign one will fully defeat him and throw him into the lake of fire for eternal punishment (Rev 20:2, 10).

These are Scripture's bookends, and between them the Bible uses the serpent as a recurring motif. In this carefully researched study, Brian Verrett identifies how the biblical author of Samuel was one who employed serpent language, imagery, and concepts to heighten hope in the coming messianic king. Other scholars have rightly identified various characters in Samuel as “serpents,” be they Goliath, Nahash (king of the Ammonites), Hanun, Absalom, or Amasa. Nevertheless, Verrett is the first of whom I am aware who uses careful literary analysis and biblical theology to show how the author intentionally employs what can truly be called a serpent motif in order to present the offspring of David as the promised offspring of the woman



from Genesis 3:15 who will defeat the serpent and reign as king in the new creation.

Following his introductory chapter, Verrett identifies key words, images, and concepts associated with the serpent in Genesis 3 and then uses a canonical approach to biblical theology to identify how a serpent motif pervades all of Scripture (ch. 2). In this chapter, Verrett helpfully notes that Genesis 3:15 not only promises the defeat of the serpent but also foresees a restored new creation. He then takes two chapters to exegete the key texts in Samuel where others have seen the serpent, and he effectively argues for the pervasiveness of this idea in the book (chs. 3–4). Chapter 3 carefully looks at the book’s description of Goliath’s armor and death and Habakkuk 3:13–14’s interpretation of David’s victory in order to show that the narrator indeed viewed this giant warrior as a serpent. Chapter 4 then overviews those named or associated with “Nahash” (the Hebrew term for “serpent”) in Samuel and notes how the book consistently portrays them as serpentine if they stand against Israel. The final three chapters show how all the serpentine passages in Samuel are united lexically and conceptually, consistently portray the “serpent” character opposing the protagonist, and work together to communicate a unified message. Chapter 5 relates the different serpent stories together. Chapter 6 demonstrates how 2 Samuel 7:11b–17 foresaw the promised offspring of David to be the serpent slayer. And chapter 7 argues that 2 Samuel 23:1–7 explicitly links this messianic Davidic son’s reign over the new creation with his victory over the serpent.

Just weeks after Jesus Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection, Peter boldly proclaimed that, along with Moses, “all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and those who came after him, also proclaimed these days” (Acts 3:24; cf. 3:18). In this well-researched study, Verrett identifies for us how the book of Samuel utilizes the serpent motif to foretell the triumph of the Messiah over the serpent as the means for initiating the new creation. This study models careful exegetical and theological method for the glory of Christ and the good of his church, and I am thrilled that it is now published. May its message nurture living hope in the living Messiah who has triumphed through tribulation and whose new creational kingdom is inaugurated and will be consummated.

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