

The Serpent in Samuel

A Messianic Motif

BRIAN A. VERRETT

foreword by Jason S. DeRouchie

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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