

**JOHN SERIES #9:
Snake Handling
Jn. 3:14-18
Grace Community Church
Kingston, Tennessee
Sunday, January 19, 2020**

1. TEXT:

- a. Jn. 3:14-18, (14) And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, (15) that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. (16) For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. (17) For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. (18) He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

2. INTRODUCTION

- a. Jn. 3:14-18 gives a beautiful allegory about salvation.
- b. Nicodemus was the “rich old ruler”
- i. By virtue of his position as a member of the Sanhedrin, he would have been wealthy
 - ii. In light of Nicodemus’ question in v. 4 (“Can a man be born when he is old?”), he was probably old
 - iii. V. 1 tells us that he was a RULER OF THE JEWS
- c. V. 7, Nicodemus was a lost man

I. THE INEFFECTUAL CURE FOR SIN

A. NICODEMUS WAS A PHARISEE

- 1.** Pharisees were sticklers about keeping the Law of Moses.
- 2.** The Pharisees were so concerned about keeping the Law of Moses that they concocted the Oral Law—a body of rules and regulations that were more specific than the Law of Moses, whereby, when they were kept, also insured that the Law of Moses was at kept at the same time.
- 3. EXP:** The Law, given by God to Moses, was a compendium of dos and don’ts comprise of 3 divisions (Civil, Moral and Ceremonial).

4. The Pharisees thought a person was saved by keeping the Law, but God gave man the Law to reveal the wickedness of their hearts, not to be a means of salvation.

a. Rm. 7:7, Paul said, “I would not have known sin except by the Law”

b. Rm. 3:20 says that by the deeds of the Law there shall no flesh be justified

5. In v. 7 Jesus told Nicodemus that his outward righteousness was insufficient to save him.

6. Mt. 23:27, “Woe unto you Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whited sepulchers, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men’s bones, and of all uncleanness.”

7. REFORMATION is not sufficient to produce salvation. There must be TRANSFORMATION.

B. NICODEMUS WAS ALSO A MEMBER OF THE SANHEDRIN

1. Nicodemus is called a RULER OF THE JEWS, in v. 1, which means he was a member of the 70-member Sanhedrin, the senate which ruled Judea.

C. INEFFECTUAL CURES FOR SIN

1. EX: If you were bitten by a poisonous snake and went to ER

D. REFORMATION

1. Nicodemus, as well as all lost people, treat the SYMPTOMS of their sin and not the ROOT of their sin.

a. Cursing is only a symptom of indwelling sin, not the cause of sin.

1) Mt. 12:34 says, “Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.”

b. Murder is only a symptom of indwelling sin, no the cause of sin.

1) Mt. 15:19, “For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies.”

2) 1 Jn. 3:15, “Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.”

c. Adultery begins as an attitude of the heart.

1) Mt. 15:19, “For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies.”

2) Mt. 5:28, “But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”

d. Stealing begins as an attitude of the heart.

1) Mt. 15:19, “For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies.”

2. Merely REFORMING outward acts does not remedy the rottenness of a person’s heart.

a. EX: An apple tree

3. There must be an inward TRANSFORMATION of that person’s heart and nature before he is saved.

E. RELIGION

1. Like Nicodemus, other people try to add religiosity to an unchanged life and think that that is salvation.

2. EX: Like mafia movies

3. RELIGIOSITY DOES NOT SAVE: Mt 7:22, Jesus said, “Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’”

4. If someone were to ask you to give a one-sentence definition of what salvation is, what would you say?

a. Jesus defined salvation for us in Jn. 17:3, “And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.”

F. To illustrate the necessity of a TRANSFORMED change, Christ related a story from the OT which was very familiar to Nicodemus.

II. THE INTERRELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CHRIST AND THE SERPENT

A. EXAMPLE OF THE SERPENT

1. John 3:14-15, “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up (15) that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.”)

2. RECOUNT STORY, Num. 21:5-9:

a. (5) And the people spoke against God and against Moses: "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and our soul loathes this worthless bread." (6) So the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and many of the people of Israel died. (7) Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, "We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD and against you; pray to the LORD that He take away the serpents from us." So Moses prayed for the people. (8) Then the LORD said to Moses, "Make a fiery serpent, and set it on a pole; and it shall be that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, shall live." (9) So Moses made a bronze serpent, and put it on a pole; and so it was, if a serpent had bitten anyone, when he looked at the bronze serpent, he lived.

3. In Jn. 3, Jesus said that the serpent on a pole in Num. 21 was an allegory of Him.

a. V. 14, “AS Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up”

4. #1 REASON CHRIST IS LIKENED TO A SERPENT: *IT WAS THROUGH THE SERPENT THAT SIN CAME INTO THE WORLD* (Gen. 3)

a. Gen. 3:13, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”

b. Rm. 5:12, “Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned....”

c. Christ became sin for us when He was on the cross, 2 Cor. 5:21, “For He made Him who knew no sin [to be] sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”

5. #2: REASON CHRIST IS LIKENED TO A SERPENT: *BECAUSE IT WAS THROUGH A SERPENT THAT OUR FIRST PARENTS WERE SEDUCED AND BROUGHT UNDER THE CURSE OF SIN*

a. Gal. 3:13, “Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, "Cursed [is] everyone who hangs on a tree')”

6. #3 REASON CHRIST IS LIKENED TO A SERPENT: *BECAUSE IT WAS THROUGH THE SERPENT THAT DEATH CAME INTO THE WORLD*

a. Rm. 5:12, “Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned”

b. Heb 2:9, “But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone.”

c. Why did God not instruct Moses to put a live snake on the pole for the Israelites to look at?

B. ELEMENT OF THE SERPENT (serpent was made of bronze)

1. BRONZE SPEAKS OF JUDGMENT

a. EXP: Brazen altar

b. Dt. 28:15, "But it shall come to pass, if you do not obey the voice of the LORD your God, to observe carefully all His commandments and His statutes which I command you today, that all these curses will come upon you and overtake you....”

2. BRONZE SPEAKS OF STRENGTH

C. ELEVATION OF THE SERPENT

1. v. 14, the serpent was LIFTED UP so all could see it.

a. Rm. 5:6, “For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.”

2. Also, by likening Himself to the OT serpent upon a pole, Christ was signifying His manner of death

a. John 3:14, “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up”

b. John 12:32, “And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all [peoples] to Myself.”

D. THE ELIXIR FOR SNAKEBITE

1. Humanly speaking, simply looking at the brazen serpent in order to be saved did not make sense.

E. THE EFFECTS OF SEEING

1. In the OT story of the deadly serpents, everyone who looked to the brazen serpent on a pole lived.
2. So too, everyone who looks to Christ and His work upon the cross will live eternally.
3. Jn. 3:15, "...that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life."

a. There are 2 Greek words that are translated into the English as LIFE

1) *bios*, which refers to existence

2) *zoa*, which refers to life at its fullest. (This is the Greek word used in Jn. 3:15)

b. SECONDLY, CHRIST STATES THE EFFECTS OF LOOKING TO HIM IN A NEGATIVE WAY: vv. 15-16 SHALL NEVER PERISH

1) PERISH is a Bible term for going to Hell.

2) Rev. 21:8, "But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

3) DEATH in Scripture does not refer to the end of anything

a) DEATH in Scripture refers to SEPARATION

b) PHYSICAL DEATH is when the soul is *separated* from the body

c) SPIRITUAL DEATH, the SECOND DEATH is when departed souls are *separated* from God in Hell.

(i) Lk. 16:19-31, the lost, rich man lived on after his physical death.

III. CONCLUSION