

Jesus and the Serpent

There was bedlam in the camp of Israel. Food and water were scarce, and the desert heat was unforgiving. But the Hebrew who had already experience the power miraculous hand of God did not turn to him with their request for help. On the contrary they complained. spoke against God and against Moses: *"Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no bread, there is no water, and our soul loathes this disgusting food!"*

Tempted by Satan to doubt God in the desert they sinned and wished God had left them alone in Egypt! Satan that old Serpent began snakes- The Tempter gave birth figuratively to sins. The people sinned with their attitudes of doubt and words of rebellion. As a result God sent venomous snakes among them. The vipers invaded the camp and began to strike the people with their poisonous bite. Soon people began falling on the ground and writing in agony as the poison killed them. Hundreds and thousands died. They knew this was a punishment from the hand of God. Now they come to Moses with urgency-, "We sinned when we spoke against Yahweh and against you. Pray that Yahweh will take the snakes away from us."

So Moses prayed! Then God gave him this remedy: , ***"Make a venomous snake, and set it on a pole. It shall happen that everyone who is bitten, when he sees it, shall live.***

The people had to look at the symbol of their sin and its consequence of death. If when they were bitten, they fixed their eyes upon the bronze serpent they live!

When Nicodemus came to Jesus one night in Jerusalem Jesus pointed to this incident in history of Israel as a foreshadowing picture of his future action on behalf of sinners. Jesus had startled Nicodemus by telling him that he had to be born again from above.

In answer to Nicodemus exclaiming -how can this be? Jesus referred to this historical judgment on the sinful Hebrews. ¹³*No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven —the Son of Man.*

¹⁴ "Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, ¹⁵ so that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.

Jesus is teaching that this actual event that happened when Israel was enroute to Canaan was a type or foreshadowing of his death as a remedy for mankind in sin, in spiritual death with hell as their final destiny. By use of this imagery, he is predicting his crucifixion on behalf of sinners. Since he goes on assert God's gracious love for sinners he gives the basis for God's gracious love in his incarnation and death on their behalf.

This is the context for John 3:16. **¹⁶ For God loved the world in this way: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.** ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. ¹⁸ Anyone who believes in him is not condemned, but anyone who does not believe is already condemned, because he has not believed in the name of the one and only Son of God.

Consider with me the Biblical connections that explains how this event is a prophetic picture of the Messiah Jesus work of redemption.

The Instruction

⁸ The LORD said to Moses, "Make a snake and put it up on a pole; anyone who is bitten can look at it and live." ⁹ So Moses made a bronze snake and put it up on a pole. Then when anyone was bitten by a snake and looked at the bronze snake, they lived.

The Meaning

Deut 21: ²² If a man has committed a sin worthy of death, and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, ²³ his body shall not remain all night on the tree, but you shall surely bury him the same day; for he who is hanged is accursed of God. Don't defile your land which Yahweh your God gives you for an inheritance.

Isaiah 53

Surely he has borne our sickness
and carried our suffering;
yet we considered him plagued,
struck by God, and afflicted.

⁵ But he was pierced for our transgressions.
He was crushed for our iniquities.

The punishment that brought our peace was on him;
and by his wounds we are healed.

⁶ All we like sheep have gone astray.
Everyone has turned to his own way;
and Yahweh has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

John 12

²⁷ "Now my soul is troubled. What should I say—Father, save me from this hour? But that is why I came to this hour. ²⁸ Father, glorify your name."

Then a voice came from heaven: "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again."

²⁹ The crowd standing there heard it and said it was thunder. Others said, "An angel has spoken to him."

³⁰ **Jesus responded, "This voice came, not for me, but for you. ³¹ Now is the judgment of this world. Now the ruler of this world will be cast out. ³² As for me, if I am lifted up from the earth I will draw all people to myself." ³³ He said this to indicate what kind of death he was about to die.**

³⁴ Then the crowd replied to him, "We have heard from the law that the Messiah will remain forever. So how can you say, '*The Son of Man must be lifted up*'? *Who is this Son of Man?*"

According to Jesus the Serpent in the wilderness represented the penalty for the sins of the people they were justly experiencing. It points to his death on the cross under the curse that we have upon us where he makes the great exchange- our sins and their punishment imputed and borne by him and his righteousness as the holy, perfect Son imputed to us so God can justly forgive us and grant us the gift of salvation in and through Jesus!

The divine remedy for our rebellion and our transgressions and sin is that the Word, the Son became man that he might live a sinless life and then as the chosen Sin Bearer take to himself our sins. He fulfills the type of the Snake on the Pole. To look upon Christ as your sin bearer you must realize your sinfulness and sin acknowledge it and turn from it to gaze upon Christ Jesus on the cross.

Paul explains this in 2 Corinthians 5:21 ²¹ *For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

NLT reads: ²¹ For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ.

Here the words of the prophet: **Isaiah 45:22**

***"Look to Me, and be saved,
All you ends of the earth!
For I am God, and there is no other.***

This has been Wayne Conrad with Bible Insights.

