

The Copper Serpent

Good morning.

**SLIDE: The Bronze Serpent in the Wilderness**

Today, we're going to look at this incident of the “serpent in the wilderness” that Moses lifted up, and discuss how it relates to crucifixion of Jesus.

- And, I must mention up front that the image has caused some **controversy** in the Christian church and has resulted in some serious false teaching. **We'll get into that today, Lord willing.**

Now – I recognize that a lot of people here have been walking with the Lord for many years, and therefore you have heard this incident discussed previously, perhaps numerous times. From personal experience, I must admit that I have a tendency to “tune-out” in such a situation, as “I've heard this before, there's nothing new here for me.”

- I suggest that you resist that temptation this morning, not so much because of what I will say but because I've found that Holy Spirit will often give us a new insight into a very familiar passage and how it applies to my life **when I least expected it.** So, stay with me, please.

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**SLIDE: "Snakes – why did it have to be snakes?"**

This is a line from several of the Indiana Jones movies, where he talks about his fear of snakes. He can tolerate giant spiders, decaying mummies, people trying to kill him and so on, but he hates snakes. I share his outlook. The event we'll discuss today in Numbers Chapter 21 involve poisonous serpents and Moses lifting a bronze serpent on a pole, and those who looked at it in faith would be healed and not die. Jesus referenced this event regarding His being lifted up on the cross so that we might have eternal life.

Christ made the statement during a conversation with Nicodemus about the necessity of being born again. Let's look at some of the conversation:

**SLIDE: *John 3:16***

John 3:16: "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life."

Jesus spoke these words to Nicodemus, who was trying to understand Jesus' mission and His teachings. Born again, you must be born again to see the kingdom of God.

Most Christians can probably quote John 3:16 without much effort, and for good reason: it is a core affirmation of the Gospel that we are called to proclaim.

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- John 3:16 has always been THE **SNAPSHOT**, the **PICTURE**, of how much God loves us. It's simple, short, and to the point: "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son that whosoever should believe in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."

A snapshot – an old-fashion term that may be new if you're under 30. John 3:16 is like a *selfie* with you and God.

Pictures mean a lot to us – I've heard the story about a soldier serving overseas during WWII who received a **Dear John letter** from his girlfriend back home. Not only was she cutting off their relationship – but adding insult to injury – she wrote, *"Will you please return my favorite photograph of myself? I need it for my engagement picture in the local newspaper."*

Well. the poor guy was devastated. But the soldiers in his unit came to his rescue. They went throughout the entire company and collected pictures of all the *other guys'* girlfriends. Then they put them all in a shoe box and sent it to the girl along with this note:

*"Please find your picture, and return the rest. "I really can't remember which one you were!!"*

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John 3:16 has always been THE snapshot of HOW MUCH God loves us.

Notice that John 3:16 doesn't tell us HOW God gave His son. That specific is introduced in a most unusual way by the previous two verses of John chapter 3: verses 14–15...

**CLICK...** "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life. "

- A Serpent – Lifted up in the wilderness. What's this all about?

The answer is in the Book of Numbers. Last time, we were in Numbers chapter 20 and read about the incident when Moses strikes the rock twice with Aaron's staff, which was contrary to God's specific instruction to merely speak to the rock for water. And, Aaron stood by in silence. God says that because they did not honor Him in front of the people, neither of them would be allowed into the Promised Land.

Let's continue in chapter 20 to see what was happening that led up to the serpent/pole incident in Chapter 21..

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**SLIDE: Numbers 20:14–end**

<sup>14</sup> Moses sent messengers from Kadesh to the king of Edom: "Thus says your brother Israel: 'You know all the hardships we have experienced, <sup>15</sup> how our ancestors went down into Egypt, and we lived in Egypt a long time, and the Egyptians treated us and our ancestors badly. <sup>16</sup> So when we cried to the LORD, he heard our voice and sent a messenger, and has brought us up out of Egypt. Now we are here in Kadesh, a town on the edge of your country.

<sup>17</sup> Please let us pass through your country. We will not pass through the fields or through the vineyards, nor will we drink water from any well. We will go by the King's Highway; we will not turn to the right or the left until we have passed through your region.'"

<sup>18</sup> But Edom said to him, "You will not pass through me, **or I will come out against you with the sword.**" <sup>19</sup> Then the Israelites said to him, "We will go along the highway, and if we or our cattle drink any of your water, we will pay for it. We will only pass through on our feet, without doing anything else."

<sup>20</sup> But he said, "You may not pass through." Then Edom came out against them with a large and powerful force. <sup>21</sup> So Edom refused to give Israel passage through his border; therefore Israel turned away from him.

**Aaron's Death**

<sup>22</sup> So the entire company of Israelites traveled from Kadesh and came to Mount Hor. <sup>23</sup> And the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron in Mount Hor, by the border of the land of Edom. He said: <sup>24</sup> "Aaron will be gathered to his ancestors, for he will not enter into the land I have given to the Israelites because both of you rebelled against my word at the waters of Meribah.

<sup>25</sup> Take Aaron and Eleazar his son, and bring them up on Mount Hor.

<sup>26</sup> Remove Aaron's priestly garments and put them on Eleazar his son, and Aaron will be gathered to his ancestors and will die there."

<sup>27</sup> So Moses did as the LORD commanded; and they went up Mount Hor in the sight of the whole community. <sup>28</sup> And Moses removed Aaron's garments and put them on his son Eleazar. So Aaron died there on the top of the mountain.

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And Moses and Eleazar came down from the mountain. <sup>29</sup> When all the community saw that Aaron was dead, the whole house of Israel mourned for Aaron thirty days.

OK...

SLIDE: Kadesh

- Here we are at Kadesh, or Kadesh Barnea, on the southern border of the land of Canaan. After almost 4-decades in the wilderness, the Israelites are back again at *the very same place* where they refused to enter the land after the report of the 12 scouts.

Normally, we would have expected the Israelites to just go north into Canaan, like they evidently had planned to do 40 years ago.

- But.. Moses and Aaron were just barred from entry into the Land because of unbelief and not honoring God in front of the people.
- So, in effect, these two leaders had to suffer the same fate as the rest of the 1st generation -- they had to die in the wilderness before the rest of the Israelites could enter the land. Do they stay there and mark time, so to speak, until they died, or do they move again?
- God informs Moses that the Israelites will enter the land from the east.

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- And, the most direct route to the place where Moses plans to cross into Canaan, the Jordan River, requires going through the territory of Edom.

**(CLICK)** Etiquette and good statesmanship requires that Moses send emissaries ahead to ask the King of Edom for permission to pass through his land... . noting that, after all, we are your brothers.

- But the answer it a NO. God does not allow Moses to *fight* his way through Edom, which would have been a relatively easy thing to do (Edom = probably less than 10,000 in Edom's militia vs. 600,000 men in Israel's army).

Moses called Edom "brother. In reality, Moses – as were all Israelites – was kin to the King of Edom.

**SLIDE: Edom my Brother...**

**CLICK: WHO WAS EDOM?**

- Back in Genesis 25, we have the story of Jacob and Esau, the twin brothers, sons of Isaac. Esau was his father's favorite and Jacob was a momma's boy. Esau was considered 1st born but he sold his 1st born rights to Jacob for a bowl of lentil soup. Later, Jacob (at his

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mother's urging) deceives his father Isaac, who is almost totally blind at that time, into thinking he is Esau and gets Esau's special blessing that his father was saving up. As the by a minute of so, Jacob was later renamed Israel by God, and so the Israelites are descendants of Jacob.

- Jacob and Esau later in life reconciled, but Esau's descendants always held a grudge about being cheated out of the best land. You can see that in what Esau said to Moses.
- So – the Israelites and the Edomites were kin.

Note that Esau threatens to use his sword against the Israelites. This reflects a prophecy made by his father Isaac over 500 years previously.

SLIDE: Isaac said of Esau:

Because you won't have my primary blessing, you will dwell in a very difficult land, ... ***"By your sword shall you live"***  
*You will serve your brother but it shall come about when you become restless, that you will break his yoke from your neck."* **(Genesis 27:40).**

Edom responds to Moses, "Don't enter my land or I will come to meet you **with the sword!**" (Numbers 20:18) – how it all fits together!



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- **P.S. TRIVIA QUESTION:** Who is the most famous Edomite in the Bible? Hint – he is in the nativity story and swords are also involved.
- **SLIDE:** **Matthew 2:** King Herod the Great who tried to kill the infant Jesus in Bethlehem (King Herod was from Idumaea – the Greek form of the name 'Edom';
  - [his father converted to Judaism, so technically he was a Jew but in name only – although it was said that he did have some scruples against killing pigs; however, he had no scruples against killing his sons if he thought they were plotting against him, and it thus was said it was safer to be one of Herod's pigs than one of his sons.) ]
- So, Isaac's prophesy about Esau and his descendants living by the sword came true – even at the birth of Christ.
  - **As Bill said – How all of scripture fits together, every smallest detail!**

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OK – *Moses will not fight people he considers close kin.*  
& the Israelites therefore will be turning to the south before they get to border of Edom and skirting the land of Edom.

SLIDE: AARON DIES

When they reach the vicinity of Mt. Hor, God instructs Aaron, Moses and Aaron's eldest son Eleazar (probably with a couple of attendants) to climb Mt. Hor. God tells Moses to remove the High priests garments and put them on Eleazar, after which Aaron will die

So, they climb the mountain and Moses removes the High Priest garments from his brother Aaron and puts them on Eleazar. Aaron then is "gathered to his kin."

How often I tend to read a passage and just keep moving on without thinking about it. This is one of those types – we just accept the fact that Aaron died on a mountain...

- **Q.:** But, Why did Aaron *have* to die up on a mountain, outside the camp? *Why not just back in his tent?*
  - Well – remember where Aaron's tent was pitched...

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**SLIDE: TABERNACLE**

**(CLICK)** It was just outside the entrance to the Tabernacle!

- According to Leviticus and Numbers, touching or even being in proximity to a dead body renders a person *unclean* and thus unable to offer sacrifice. If Aaron died in his tent (or even worse – while performing his duties inside of the Tabernacle), the whole area would be **unclean**, as well as all who were in proximity to Aaron at the time. .
- There was a 7-day purification period (ashes of the red heifer), during which the Tabernacle would essentially be closed for business, as no one would be able to enter the door of the Tabernacle.
  - And, that's why also Aaron's High Priestly garments were removed before he died – so that they would not be rendered unclean from death.
- It is not stated but I assume that Aaron was *buried* on the mountain, and of so, it is not stated who buried Aaron. This could have been done by either Moses or some unmentioned attendant with them – perhaps even an angel, as Moses was buried by an angel. I don't believe Eleazar – the new High priest – would have done it because contact with a dead body would defile him.

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- **Q.** OK – so Aaron had to die outside of the camp and his garments given to his son before he died. But why did Eleazar have to accompany Moses and Aaron up on the mountain – couldn't he just be appointed as High Priest back in the camp and given the garments there while Aaron was on his way up the mountain? **NO>**
- **The office of High priest was lifelong!** There was no such title as a *retired* High Priest, or *High Priest emeritus*. – **you died in the office!** Later on during the 2nd Temple period, the process became corrupted and the office of High Priest went to the highest bidder or to an occupying army's best collaborator.
- But, at this time, the Israelites obeyed the Scriptural requirement that the office of High Priest was lifelong, and when you died, then someone else (usually a son – or a brother, if there was no son available) would take your place. That's the principle, the type – the High Priest holds the office until he dies.
  - Today, our High Priest is Jesus, and **because He is eternal, He holds that office eternally** . **That's Paul's point in Hebrews chapter 7.** verse 23: "The *former* priests, on the one hand, existed in greater numbers because they were prevented by death from continuing, but Jesus, on the other hand, because He continues forever, holds His priesthood permanently. Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to

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God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.

- There will not be any primary runoff to see who gets the job.

OK – but why get into all this detail today; it's perhaps interesting to know, but so what?

- Well – it's knowing details like this about the OT requirements about the purity of the High Priest when performing His intercessory duties in the Tabernacle that helps us spot false teachings about Christ, such as those that have arisen surrounding the lifting up of the serpent on a pole.
- The earthly STANDARDS of the sacrificial system were MANDATED by God Himself and mirrored HEAVENLY STANDARDS. You cannot break an earthly standard and remain acceptable to the Holy God in heaven. And these standards will come into play today.

- Let's move on to chapter 21.

**READ NUMBERS CHAPTER 21:4–9**

Verses 1–4 – "When the Canaanite, the king of Arad, who lived in the Negev, heard that Israel was coming by the way of Atharim, then he fought against Israel and took some of them captive. <sup>2</sup> So Israel made a vow to the LORD and said, "If You will

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indeed deliver this people into my hand, then I will utterly destroy their cities." <sup>3</sup> The LORD heard the voice of Israel and delivered up the Canaanites; then they utterly destroyed them and their cities. Thus the name of the place was called Hormah."

(SLIDE) – DETOUR

OK – here's the situation. Instead of going directly north into Canaan (**click**), Moses wanted to go around the Dead Sea (**click**) thru the land of Edom and enter Canaan from the east. Edom says "No", and Moses will avoid Edom. Somewhere along the trek before he turns southward, the King of Arad launches a surprise attack (**click**).

As the Israelites journey toward Edom and then turn southward, the column of 2–3 million people would probably be at least 5 miles long. Remember, they marched by tribe, with Judah up front and Dan bringing up the rear. If you were in front, you could not see the end of the column, even without the mountains of dust that would be being kicked up as they journeyed. While in this vulnerable formation, an unnamed Canaanite king, the king of an area called Arad, attacks the column. He makes a preemptive strike, probably toward the rear of the column where the stragglers and weak people traveled. He undoubtedly misconstrued WHY the Israelites do not to enter his territory – Remember, 40 years ago when the Israelites tried to enter Canaan after God prohibited them from doing so, they had their butts handed to

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them by the Canaanites. The king of Arad decides to reinforce the notion of Canaanite invincibility and attacks the Israelites in the line of march while they're still most vulnerable; besides, he might gain some loot at the same time.

At first, Arad's forces gain the upper hand and take some of the Hebrew prisoners but, with God's help, the Israelites – probably led by Joshua – are victorious.

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*Let's continue... verse 4...*

<sup>4</sup> Then they set out from Mount Hor by the way of the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom; and the people became impatient because of the journey. <sup>5</sup> The people spoke against God and Moses, "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and <sup>l</sup>we loathe this miserable food."

<sup>6</sup> The LORD sent fiery serpents among the people and they bit the people, so that many people of Israel died. <sup>7</sup> So the people came to Moses and said, "We have sinned, because we have spoken against the LORD and you; intercede with the LORD, that He may remove the serpents from us." And Moses interceded for the people. <sup>8</sup> Then the LORD said to Moses, "Make a fiery *serpent*, and set it on a standard; and it shall come about, that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, he will live." <sup>9</sup> And Moses made a bronze serpent and set it on the standard; and it came about,

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that if a serpent bit any man, when he looked to the bronze serpent, he lived.

**(SLIDE) – ROUGH COUNTRY**

After defeating the king of Arad, the Israelites turn southward, towards the Gulf of Aqaba, around the land of Edom. This involved a journey of 90 miles south, then about 15 miles east, before they turned northward again.

This must have really irritated the people. The thought that their 40-year trek was almost finished, and now they were on at least a month-long, 200-mile detour around Edom. They were mostly on foot, of course, and this was very rough terrain – possibly the roughest they had ever encountered – hot, dusty, miserable. They're tired of living like nomads. After defeating the Canaanite King of Arad, they were feeling invincible, and yet Moses is avoiding a fight with Edom's small militia. They grow impatient on the journey and they begin to complain again. And, it was then that the snakes will come a-calling...



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**SLIDE: Miserable food?**

The people spoke against God and Moses, "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we **loathe this miserable food**.

The gripe is the usual argument: things were much better back in Egypt. Why would you disrupt us, bring us to this horrible place, and then just allow us to die? They claimed they had no water and no food – that was a downright lie. And then, **they contradict themselves** and say that they do have food but they loathed it, calling it miserable!

- *This reminds me of a story told by an Irish priest ..." and such small portions"* – future priest, **CATSKILL JEWISH RESORT** (his was named Cohen, people thought he was Jewish) dual complain example.
- **They then make a very foolhardy decision** – they said they had come to *detest how God has provided for them* – **they detest** the food, the manna that the Lord had graciously provided for them for the last 40 years. They said they were sick to death of the grace of God from Heaven

Notice that the Scripture says that the people complained because they were **IMPATIENT**. (many things they complained about, now it is because the journey is taking too long.)

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Lesson for us --- How often have we complained that God is talking too long to do things? we've prayed, and God's taking too long to do thus and so; and in the meantime, I don't have very much appreciation for what He is doing for me.

**SLIDE: POISONOUS Serpents**

In response to this widespread lack of gratitude and trust, the Lord sent poisonous serpents that bit them, and many died.

But, then, we begin to see that despite the rebellion, a certain maturity in understanding of the people of Israel is growing; they recognized instantly that the serpents were a divine plague upon them and that their only hope of survival was to plead with Moses, their Mediator, to intercede with Yehoveh on their behalf.

- Bible never attributes any secondary causes -> God sent the snakes. CNN News would say, "unexpectedly, the Israelites stumbled upon an unusual amount of aggressive and poisonous snakes today, which bit the people with deadly venom."
  - "The EPA subsequently announced that it will investigate whether the Israelites have violated any environmental laws by disturbing

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the breeding grounds of this precious and rare desert snake."

- Bible never attributes any secondary causes -> God sent the snakes.

**SLIDE:** The people's response

- They admit that they have sinned
- They ask the Lord to take the snakes away.

**CLICK:** Their response means that they're finally beginning to understand. They're beginning to realize that they need to **repent** and **ask for forgiveness**.

➤ **The Old Testament makes it clear that RITUAL WITHOUT REPENTANCE is USELESS.**

- Over and over, God says that it is the condition of the heart that matters.
- Over and over again, it is made clear that the various OT rituals of atonement and purification were a matter of obedience, **not** magic. The ritual – by itself – accomplishes nothing.
- Ritual by itself, without the confession of wrongdoing, without trust in the Most Holy One, and without a

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contrite spirit, is a worthless, mechanical act of self-righteousness.

Contrary to what is often implied today, there was **no** general belief among these Hebrews that *robot-like* obedience to the Law brought a proper and good relationship with Yehoveh. This **erroneous concept** of a **works-righteousness** that is invariably attributed to the Jewish people by the Church simply was not the norm in Israelite culture at this time. Even more, there was no belief (in general), that their reward for doing the Law was any more than simply pleasing God.

**CLICK: I HAVE A BETTER SOLUTION**

- The people ask Moses to pray for them that God might take away the snakes and Moses does as they ask. God's answer is that **HE HAS A BETTER IDEA**.

**SLIDE: LOOK AND LIVE**

- **God does not take away the snakes!** Instead, He provides a way for people who are bitten by the snakes to be healed. Moses is instructed to make a bronze snake (more likely, a snake made of copper (which would have had a reddish fiery color) and put it up on a pole. From then on, whoever got bitten had to look at that bronze snake & they would be healed and live. It

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may seem like an odd solution, but I think it shows a lot of God's wisdom.

- LOOK and LIVE!
- Think for a minute about the **solution proposed by the people: take away the snakes**. Chances are that – when the snakes were gone – the people would go right back to complaining. *As soon as God stopped His chastisement, it would be for them just like it had never happened* and the people would be right back to their old ways.
- So, the serpents remained and continued to bite. The serpent on the pole was a statement to the people that:
  - 1) they were in danger of dying *because of* their sins.
  - 2) if you looked that the uplifted figure with repentance & trust on God's promise, you would be healed.
- In order for someone who was bitten to live, they have to admit that they sinned and then look toward the pole. If they are willing to look at the serpent and remembered their sin and repented, they will be healed.

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- Just looking at the snake *without* repentance was useless – you had to first admit the problem and then look for help.
- God's solution was not what I would have expected, and it was not what the Israelites asked for. His solution was that the snakes stay. God didn't have Moses go around impaling every snake, like someone picking up trash in the park.
- The snakes stayed & they continued to bite people. God could have just rendered all the snakes harmless. But the snakes stayed, and they stayed poisonous, because that's how God wanted it.
  - But God's solution was to provide a way for people to survive the bite and live in the midst of the snakes.
  - That way involved repentance and looking on a figure lifted up on a pole, which carried God's promise of healing.

Again, I want that to be very clear. The people in the wilderness were not healed just by a glance at the serpent. The Hebrew word for 'looking' in Numbers 21 is a specific word for "*a very attentive, concentrated*", looking.

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The NT experience is no different. The Greek word for this kind of attentive looking is found in Hebrews 12:2. And there we read, *Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith...* It is not just a glance at Jesus. The Greek word there is about **fixing** one's full attention on Jesus. From all this, you can see that God doesn't save us by a quick glance or a superficial belief. A saving faith is a faith that requires our full attention of heart and of mind. Nothing less.

Well – what about if you were blind? If he were an Israelite back there in the desert, was he doomed to die if bitten because he had no physical way of looking on the serpent? Of course not!

- Nun – sitting down on the outside but **standing up on the inside**. GLENN IS STANDING UP ON THE INSIDE AND HE IS ALSO LOOKING ON THE INSIDE!

NICODEMUS

OK. Let's jump back to the Gospel of John: and Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus about the **necessity** of being **born again**.

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<sup>4</sup> Nicodemus \*says to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born, can he?" <sup>5</sup> Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. <sup>6</sup> That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. <sup>7</sup> Do not be amazed that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' <sup>8</sup> The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit." John 3

**SLIDE:** <sup>9</sup> Nicodemus said to Him, "How can these things be?"

<sup>10</sup> Jesus answered and said to him, "Are you the teacher of Israel and do not understand these things? <sup>11</sup> Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know and testify of what we have seen, and you do not accept our testimony. <sup>12</sup> If I told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things? <sup>13</sup> No one has ascended into heaven, but He who descended from heaven: the Son of Man.

- Notice again – "earthly things" mirror "heavenly things", earthly standards mirror heavenly standards.

Jesus was saying to Nicodemus : "Nicodemus – you're the chief teacher in Israel and you don't understand what I'm saying? You and the whole world are in the same situation spiritually as the Israelites in the desert were physically, but you can't see it (you don't understand it) – you're dying



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spiritually, you've received a fatal bite from sin, and you can't help yourselves, and your families and friends can't cure you, and all the money in the world can't cure you. Just like in the desert, God's remedy is your ONLY HOPE.

**SLIDE:** Then Jesus says: <sup>14</sup>As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; <sup>15</sup>so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life.

Jesus was answering Nicodemus' question "*How can these things be?*", by directing him back to the pages of the OT...

And, while the text doesn't say it, Nicodemus must have been totally baffled. *Lift up the Son of Man* – "what does that mean?" he no doubt wondered.

**SLIDE: LIFTED UP – EARTHLY-HEAVENLY -- PHYSICAL & SPIRITUAL HEALING**

In this discussion with Nicodemus, Jesus is merely pointing that as **the uplifting up** event in the wilderness, He also will be lifted, and in both cases healing would occur – one physically (earthly), one spiritually (heavenly).

- earthly (physical) reality, heavenly (spiritual) reality.  
Period.

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**SLIDE NEHUSHTAN** Just a footnote in history – The Israelites took the image with them, and – many years later – they had it erected in the courtyard of the temple. After the King David, the people gradually descended into pagan practices, and the image became an idol that was worshipped/had incense burned to it – along with other pagan idols. King Hezekiah, approx. 300 years after David, restored the worship of the True God and destroyed all pagan images in the land, including the serpent on the pole. He derogatorily called it [NEY-HUSH-TAN] 'JUST A THING OF BRASS'. – **no power in itself – it was only thru God's power that healing occurred.** Mt. Nebo today...

OK – when Jesus referenced the lifting up of the image in the wilderness, He was referring to the absolute necessity of Himself being lifted up for our salvation. Seems pretty straightforward... but it's been twisted by many..

**SLIDE: FALSE TEACHINGS IN THE CHURCH**

St. Paul: Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God which he obtained with the blood of his own Son. I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and **from among your own selves will arise men speaking perverse things, to draw away the**

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**disciples after them.** Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears. Ephesians

Paul warned the church about people coming into the church and also about people rising up inside the church who will speak perverse things in order to draw believers after them.

- The church has neglected this warning, as we see people – calling themselves "teachers" – twisting Jesus' lifting-up reference in a way that I would certainly label as **perverse.**

Their premise is that a serpent is always a symbol of Satan in the Bible; when Jesus links His crucifixion with the serpent being lifted up in the wilderness, Jesus, Satan and sin somehow met and joined together on the cross. Jesus became a sinner Himself on the cross. OK... Let's look at this flawed line of reasoning in a moment before seeing what the false claims are..

Let's begin by acknowledging the obvious (Captain Obvious) –

- a) **Satan is called the serpent in Scripture,** and
- b) the notion that Jesus identified His being lifted-up with the serpent lifted-up **does** make some people **feel a bit uneasy** because Satan is called the serpent

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– and because of this, it opens itself for exploitation by those looking to call attention to themselves.

- OK – what do we make of what Jesus said?
- Well – I find it odd that, while some Christians today may feel uneasy with the serpent lifting–up image that Jesus made, there is no indication that the disciples at the time had *any* problem with the point Jesus was making.
- I think this is significant, because it tells me **that they understood** that Jesus was NOT equating Himself with the serpent but was merely referencing that the "being lifted up" act would apply to Himself also -- *although they certainly were unclear about HOW He would be lifted–up.*

Now, contrast this calm reaction by the disciples to their reaction when Jesus compared Himself to the manna from heaven. In *John chapter 6*, Jesus said "I am the bread of life. <sup>49</sup> Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. <sup>50</sup> This is the bread which comes down out of heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. <sup>51</sup> **I am the living bread that came down out of heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread also which I will give for the life of the world is My flesh.**" John 6:49-51.

- And, John then states that the people who heard this said: " **This is a hard saying...** As a

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result of this many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore."

Today, WE don't find this linking of manna with His flesh as offensive *because* we know in what way Jesus was using the analogy. But, it obviously sounded strange to many people before the Resurrection. Even later, the early Christians were charged by the Romans with practicing cannibalism behind closed doors because of the reference to the Eucharist and eating His body.

The fact that Jesus linked the lifting up event with His crucifixion and it didn't raise any eyebrows with His disciples reveals that there was no Jesus-Satan linkage intended in the passage..

The practice of cults and false teachers is to zero in on one or two verses in the Bible and draw conclusions about what they mean *without the full weight of the rest of scripture.*

It's actually easy for anyone to come up with a new teaching. For example, if I asked :

- If the apostles were living today, what kind of car would they drive? **A: Honda** -> Acts 2... And when

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the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were **all** in **one accord**.

- Or, King David – David's **Triumph** was heard throughout the land.

David's loud triumph – **Could be in an advertisement for Midas Muffler**. Of course, these are just silly examples. But keep these ridiculous examples in the back of your mind as we're discussing some of the contemptible conclusions drawn by false teachers about Jesus using of the serpent-on-the-pole simile.

SLIDE: I Cor. 5:21

OK – Here's the primary text that is twisted to justify several perverse claims: :

The Apostle Paul, referring to Jesus' sacrifice on the Cross, writes that "God made the one (Jesus) who did not know sin **to be sin** for us, so that in Him we would become the righteousness of God"

Q. DID JESUS BECOME *THE LITERAL EMBODIMENT OF SIN*, OR TAKE ON A SIN – NATURE, OR BECOME A SINNER WHEN HE DIED AT CALVARY?

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The heart of the issue centers on Paul's statement: "He made Him who knew no sin **TO BE SIN** on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."

➤ *In what sense did Jesus become "sin on our behalf"?*



➤ Well – the false teachers – always ready to impress their audience by new and outrageous revelations – have come up with several outrageous claims that reveal a scholarship that is even LESS SCHOLARLY than my "The Apostles drove a Honda" analogy.

**SLIDE:** Here are some of the false teachings that have been made around Paul's statement:

- CLICK: Jesus literally became a sinner on the cross.
- CLICK – that Jesus accepted the very nature of Satan into His spirit
- CLICK – that The Father turned His back on Jesus because of He was not His Father anymore, Jesus had the nature of Satan, and that's why Jesus cried: "My God, My God, why has Thou abandoned Me?"
- CLICK – that Jesus suffered three days in hell for us
- CLICK – and that Jesus had to be born again.

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Now – I don't put the claim that the Father turned His back on Jesus in the same category as the rest of these claims, because sense of loneliness and abandonment on the cross would be a human reaction. I contend that that's not the reason why Christ used those words (which I'll explain in a minute). However, the accompanying claim of the false teachers that the Father did this because Jesus took on the nature of Satan is totally bogus.

Well, if you're seeing these statements for the first time, you're probably pretty shocked and wondering how any Church leader can teach these ideas. But, if you've been a Christian for awhile and have watched Christian TV, such as TBN, you're often heard these statements made by prominent Word-of-Faith Christian teachers/evangelists/ leaders.

- Now, I recognize that some may **be getting a bit uneasy right now** – where's this kid from Rhode Island going? That's a normal initial reaction, and it's completely understandable. Unity in the Body of Christ is a primary mandate. But we can't unify around a lie.
- Christians who hear such statements often have one of two reactions:
  - 1) they either *accept* the claims based on the status of the person teaching it, or ...
  - 2) they reject the claims but **avoid** the doctrinal battle because they don't want to upset the unity of the body;



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instead, the tendency is to say: – *I don't believe what you're saying but that's your opinion and you're entitled to it. I believe that Jesus is the Son of God Who died for my sins, and because of His shed blood, I am saved. That's all I need to know. **And you're be right – that's all you need to know to be saved.***

Ok – but there is a problem – how do you handle the **other** widely accepted teachings of these prominent men and women regarding the Christian walk? They also teach such things as:

- "throw away your medication and just have faith. If you have enough faith, God will heal you. If you keep on your medication, you have weak or little faith." or...
- "give to my ministry and God promises to return a hundredfold to you. Plant a seed. You're in bad financial straits? -- even more reason why you should do this to open the floodgates of heaven." Or how about...
- "God is giving *new* revelation to the church today through His anointed prophets, teachers and apostles; new revelations on par with the Bible are needed today because the Bible mostly contains revelations that were only needed yesterday. "

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- Similar types of statements can be heard every day on TV and in many pulpits across the country – and they're *never* challenged by the TV host. The first two are common to the Word of Faith movement, but the latter one – new revelations on par with Biblical revelations – is becoming more commonplace in wider Charismatic circles
- How are we to evaluate the truthfulness of any claims taught in the pulpit – EVEN MINE? Well, Scripture teaches that we first determine whether this advice is ACCORDANCE WITH SCRIPTURE. OTHERWISE, IT IS A FALSE TEACHING. REMEMBER: The claim that there is a new teaching or new revelation from God is an absolute essential for any heretical doctrine!

SLIDE: IGNORE FOR UNITY?

- OK – Do we handle teachings such as *"Jesus became a sinner on the cross"* – or – *"Jesus had to be-born again in hell"*?
- Do we merely say "well, that's your interpretation but I don't necessarily agree, but God bless your ministry?
- Are we to give money and take advice for our lives from someone who claims that Jesus Personally revealed to him that "He (Jesus) took on the nature of Satan on the cross"?

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- Scripture mandates that we have the courage to call what's being taught as it deserves – False Teaching.

**SLIDE: FALSE TEACHING**

The perverse statements that I cited are false teachings! In fact, I would say *"Get thee behind me Satan"* to anyone who teaches this things – no matter how important they are in the Church.

- I contend that we **MUST** categorize these teachings as St. Paul would classify them – false teaching – and here's the tough issue – we consequently have to classify those who are consistently teaching these things are "false teachers".
- Are these people Christian? – most of them undoubtedly are. But – *is a Christian immune from spewing perverse concepts?* – evidently not, else Jesus would not have said to Peter – "get thee behind me Satan".
- Now, some may say... "Judge not, judge not lest ye be judged." I agree, but put Jesus words in proper context. The kind of judging against which Christ warns is **hypocritical judging** – Judging somebody for doing something that maybe we're really doing ourselves, that is what Jesus warns against.

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➤ But, when it comes to matters of doctrine, when it comes to matters of theology, we absolutely are to judge on these things within biblical parameters. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth.

Now, some may say I'm too harsh on these people. Perhaps... I do confess that immediately after I accepted Christ, I developed a *drive* in my spirit to find out Biblical truth (JWs, Mormons, etc always at my door). When I run across false teachings, I want to do battle.

- Thankfully, the Lord has given me a **calm demeanor** when dealing with JWs and Mormons, but I'm not very subtle when it comes to Christian leaders (or supposed Christian leaders) who are promoting error and refuse to be corrected by the Scriptures.

I also recognize that many people are definitely more diplomatic than I am. For example, if Bill came across a serious error, he would gently point out the error, say that such ideas have no foundation in the Bible, that the person is definitely misguided. He might even say that perhaps they might even be closet Red Sox fans – and then he would say, but I'm not criticizing.

Well– Bill is both more handsome and a lot more charitable than I am –because in addition to saying those things, I probably would add that these ideas are perverse,

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they are from Satan, that these teachers are clouds without rain (Jude), and they are a cancer in the body of Christ.

Now, I will not judge a person's heart, but the fact that profane statements like *"Jesus took on the nature of Satan on the cross"* are accepted without challenge in many parts of the church today demonstrates that...

- 1) False teachers and false doctrines can be very popular and sell a lot of books (Don Rumble warned us of this reality on several occasions),
- 2) It also shows that there is a serious menace in the Church when we passively accept whatever a person says because they claim "The Lord told me..."
  - Unfortunately, the phrase – "God told me" – has distorted Church's IMMUNE system. and...
- 3) The widespread acceptance of these teachings also demonstrates that CHRISTIANS SOMETIMES EMPHASIZE UNITY TO THE DETRIMENT OF THE GOSPEL. **We cannot unify around a lie!**

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I know this is may be a bit heavy. Those who have listened to me in the past know that I try to intersperse humorous comments when discussing serious matters in order not get too gloomy. And, in my first version of this presentation, I did this...

SLIDE: MINION

– but I realized that this is too serious a matter, and I do not want to lessen the danger of such teachings and teachers, because they have a definite impact on the lives of thousands of Christians who trust that these claims are based on Scripture.

SLIDE: CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH

Now, I'm not talking about disagreements on minor points, such as whether you need to use grape juice or wine for communion, or should you sprinkle or immerse in baptism, or whether Jesus will return pretrib/midtrib or posttrib. I'm not talking about whether or not Jesus would wear a tie today when preaching – all these are non-essential (although I do have an opinion on the last matter). These things are **peripheral to the Gospel and Salvation.**

- But whether or not Christ became a sinner on the Cross, or whether He took on the nature of Satan and had to be reborn in hell – that's not peripheral, that's central, **BECAUSE IT ATTACKS THE NATURE OF HIS SACRIFICIAL ACT.**

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I recognize that **anyone can be wrong** about an interpretation of a Biblical passage and hold to an erroneous viewpoint *in sincerity*. I certainly do not believe that I am correct on all issues, and when shown where I'm wrong, I will change my position. Certainly, some of us here once may have accepted the overall word-of-faith message, which includes the prosperity gospel message. Name it and claim it – Blab it and grab it.

- We were Christians then when we believed it and we are Christians now when we don't.
  - But, they are teaching error.
- And, what reveals a greater danger to the Church is the fact that these leaders and major figures in the Church today, are **CLAIMING THAT THE LORD HAS REVEALED THIS INFORMATION TO THEM PERSONALLY!**
- This is serious – what voice are they listening to It is definitely **NOT** God's voice because it contradicts scripture!
- Why are they not challenged?
  - 1) Incorrect idea of what Christian unity is; a perverse doctrine often trumps Gospel truth, and...
  - 2) Because they claim "God told me..."

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PLAYING THE GOD-CARD

When people include the phrase "*God told me*", we have no choice but to listen. After all, if God is speaking through them, we'd better give heed! Who among us doesn't want to hear God's voice?

Now – here's where I'll need some additional professional help from the Holy Spirit, and perhaps **even a flak jacket**, because what I'm going to say is not easy but it needs to be said; however, it also must be said in a way that HELPS, not offends.

- It's time believers stop abusing God's Name to add weight to our plans or feelings or impressions. .

Ask yourselves: What do we *mean* when we say "*The Lord told me*"? Do we mean that we have a sense that God **MAY** be saying something to us, or are we definitely claiming – in effect – **THUS SAID THE LORD TO ME (AND PERHAPS YOU?)**.

- If it is the former, we would be more correct to say something like "*I THINK that God wants me to do thus and so*",
- if it is the latter, then technically speaking – you are claiming to speak forth God's word – that's PROPHECY. And, caution is advised, because God has not treated people kindly who claim *falsely* to be speaking what he has not told them to speak.



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One of our hardest bad habits to break in a charismatic church like ours is constantly saying, "God told me this" or "Here is what the Lord showed me." A bad habit? Wait a minute -> **am I really calling this a bad habit?** Yes. In fact, I believe it's **one of the most problematic practices in churches today.** WHY SO?

- because it is a clear violation of the **THIRD COMMANDMENT**: "You shall not take the name of the Lord your God **in vain**, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain" (Ex. 20:7).
- "In Vain" includes claiming that God definitely said something when the best we know on almost all occasions is that we **SUSPECT** He said something.

Let me make clear -- I do believe God speaks to His children. I know the value of that "still small voice" of the Spirit.. **We live and move and have our being in Christ – that's daily living** – promptings, etc

- But I also know that I was mistaken at times when I was really convinced it was the Lord talking to me. . . .
- Just because I think or feel that I have a message from the Lord doesn't automatically mean it's anything other than my own idea. Now, that idea (or thought or insight) might in itself be true and good. Or it might be a useful consideration. But that's not the same thing as "Thus saith the Lord."

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It is a **misuse** of God's name when we claim He **definitely** told us something that might be just our own idea or common sense. **How is this a misuse? Because of the reason we often do it.**

- **We often add the weight of God's Name to our words because it gives us –and what we say – authority and respectability. .**

I call this "PLAYING THE GOD CARD", which is exactly what the false teachers have done with their claims for revelation regarding the numerous passages in the Bible.

If God has really told me something, why, then, must I bring His name into it? **Wouldn't it be just as true if I left His name out?** Why not just do it or say it?

**Consider Jesus** – how often did He say that "God told Him" to say or do something? As far as I recall, just one or twice in three years of ministry. Ever word He spoke was what He heard the Father saying, and yet He didn't feel a need to bolster His own authority by constantly saying "God told Me".

- Sometimes, I think – **subconsciously** – my reason for claiming His authority is to **elevate my own authority in your eyes.**
- **Perhaps that's because I fear you would not otherwise listen to me or sanction my plans.**

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I don't offer this to stir up any controversy or to hurt anyone's feelings. We do live and move and have our being in Christ. I just think we – and I include myself here – we throw around God's name too casually these days.

- We don't constantly need the phrase "God told me". You don't have to put up a sign at the edge of the Grand Canyon that says "This is the Grand Canyon." It's pretty obvious without any help. **If the Lord really did tell me something, the rest of us can probably figure that out.**
- Operating under the gift of Prophecy is a different matter, and then we can say "The Lord said...", but that carries a lot more responsibility than I want to discuss today. I found it is wiser for me to say – as I did this week to Donna – *"I think the Lord may want this new crazy dog in my life."*

--- OK – I'll get off my soapbox ***because I think the Lord is telling me to move on..***

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Let's examine these false statements about what happened to Jesus on the cross head-on and explain why they are false.

- Right off the bat, even before looking at the NT, the bizarre leap these people make about the serpent in Numbers 21 as being representative of Satan demonstrates that they have read the passage *only superficially*. These serpents were sent by God to *chastise* the people. God sent them to perform tasks that He orders. These serpents were not Satan or from Satan, they were from God.
  - In fact, the lifting a bronze image on a pole was to be an **opportunity for people to express repentance from their sin and faith in God for healing.** **SATAN STANDS OPPOSED TO SUCH ENDEAVORS.** It is ridiculous to claim the serpent represents Satan.
- And, They obviously also forget that **snakes aren't always associated** with evil. Sometimes, God used snakes/serpents to show His power and authority. For example, recall when Moses was called by God 80 years ago to go back to Egypt:

Exodus 4:1-5 Then Moses said, "What if they will not believe me or listen to what I say? For they may say, 'The LORD has not appeared to you.'" The LORD said to him, "What is that in your hand?" And he said, "A staff." Then He said, "Throw it on the ground." So he threw it on the ground, and it became a serpent;

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and Moses fled from it. (Moses was afraid of snakes too). But the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand and grasp *it* by its tail"—so he stretched out his hand and caught it, and it became a staff in his hand— "that they may believe that the LORD, the God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has appeared to you."

- The serpent here would be a sign to believe the God sent them.

Then, when before Pharaoh:

Exodus 7: 8–12- Now **the LORD** spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying, "When Pharaoh speaks to you, saying, 'Work a miracle,' then you shall say to Aaron, 'Take your staff and throw *it* down before Pharaoh, *that* it may become a serpent.'" So Moses and Aaron came to Pharaoh, and thus they did just as the LORD had commanded; and Aaron threw his staff down before Pharaoh and his servants, and it became a serpent. Then Pharaoh also called for *the* wise men and *the* sorcerers, and they also, the <sup>l</sup>magicians of Egypt, did the same with their secret arts. For each one threw down his staff and they turned into serpents. But Aaron's staff swallowed up their staffs."

- All creation is the Lord's. The multiple serpents of the sorcerers, the counterfeit miracles, were no match for the serpent representing the authority of God. **IT IS GOD WHO HAS THE BADDEST SNAKE IN TOWN, NOT SATAN.!**

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OK – To come back to the original question: “Did Jesus become *the literal embodiment of sin*, or *take on a sin nature*, or *become a sinner* when He died at Calvary?” The Bible's answer to that question is a resounding **NO**.

- JESUS DID NOT BECOME A SINNER, OR TAKE ON THE NATURE OF SATAN.

The Scripture makes it clear that the Lord Jesus remained perfectly sinless, righteous, and obedient throughout His entire Passion; He was the pure, innocent Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world.

SLIDE: consider : [Isaiah 53:10-11](#)<sup>L</sup> – “But the Lord was pleased to crush Him, putting Him to grief; **if He would render Himself as a guilt offering**, He will see His offspring, He will prolong His days, and the good pleasure of the Lord will prosper in His hand. As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see it and be satisfied; by His knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many, as He will bear their iniquities.”

**Comment:** The Suffering Servant is called the “Righteous One” even in the context of bearing the sin of others.

- **look at what Isaiah said: "He will render Himself as a Guilt Offering!..."**

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Here's where all our training and discussions about the OT sacrificial system pays off... exciting !!!

SLIDE: LEVITICUS

The sin offering had to be perfect, without defect, or God would not accept it. Only a spotless lamb could be offered as an acceptable sacrifice.

**Leviticus 22:20** – “Whatever has a defect, you shall not offer, for it will **NOT** be accepted for you.” This requirement of being “without defect” is MANDATORY!. Jesus MUST remain spotless even in His sacrificial death.

ps: the OT EXPLAINS THE EARTHLY REQUIREMENTS OF THE MESSIAH THAT MIRROR THE HEAVENLY REQUIREMENTS!. That's why I maintain that anyone who ridicules or downplays the OT downplays Christ.

\*\*\* Like a person leaned on the innocent animal to be sacrificed for their sin – symbolically transferring the sin onto the animal – the Father laid the sin of the world on Jesus; and just like the fact that the animal did not itself become a sinner (could not have) – Jesus likewise did not become a sinner. Sin was imputed to Him.

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Anyone who teaches that Jesus became a sinner or had the nature of sin DEMONSTRATES HIS IGNORANCE of the OT sacrificial system

- the animal had to be both clean and holy – without blemish – to be an acceptable sacrifice!

So, these teachers regard their own thoughts or Satan's whispers as superior to the mandates of Scripture

SLIDE MAKE – MADE

The false teachers have overlooked a SIGNIFICANT ASPECT of the TWO SCRIPTURES OF NUMBERS 21 and 2 COR 5. Notice this word 'make in Numbers 21', God instructs Moses to 'make a serpent.' It had to be made.

CLICK: Then in *2 Corinthians 5:21*, we have the same context: *For He (God) **made** Him (Jesus) who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*

CLICK: BOTH WERE MADE BUT DID NOT CONTAIN SIN. The serpent *reminded the people of their sin* and the consequences of sin but, it itself **did not contain any venom!** It was made; by its very nature, it could not have poison in it; **IT DID NOT HAVE SIN-JUICE INSIDE.**



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- Christ likewise was MADE to be sin but had no sin in Himself!
- The Lord Jesus knew no sin. He had by nature no sin, but He was made sin for us.
- The copper serpent did not take away sin – IT PROVIDED HEALING BUT DID NOTHING FOR THE SIN. God did. Jesus, on the other hand, shed His blood which does cleanse from all sin.
  
- WHAT ABOUT THE CLAIM THAT JESUS SUFFERED 3 DAYS IN HELL FOR US?  
– Undeniably, Jesus did suffer for us, both before and while on the cross. But afterward in hell for 3 days? Well, you don't have to go any further than recalling what Jesus said to the thief on the cross – *"Truly, today, you shall be with me in Paradise!"* [Luke 23] *Today – in Paradise!*  
Remember, the Jewish day ended at sundown (approx 6pm); Jesus died at 3:00pm – "Today", for Jesus and the good thief, ended in just another 3 hours, and Jesus promises to be in Paradise then to meet him. -- I don't know, call me crazy, but that doesn't sound like Jesus was planning to be taking a side trip for 3 days of suffering.

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FINALLY

SLIDE: "My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?"

- DID THE FATHER TURNED HIS BACK ON JESUS? Even some Bible commentators and teachers outside the Word of Faith circle have promoted the teaching that because Jesus became sin for us, the Father had to BRIEFLY forsake Him because a Holy God cannot stand sin.
- I disagree about why Jesus said what He said. I think that Psalm 22 and Rabbinical practices at the time of Christ explains the event.
- Psalms 22, 23 and 24 form what has been called a "Messianic Trilogy," one that virtually every learned Israelite knew by heart. **Jesus shouted out the first line of Psalm 22 and that's probably all the strength He had at the moment.**
- But, it was like when we say the first few words of a familiar prayer or song, we remember the rest of it in our mind. "I pledge allegiance..." "My eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord", "O say can you see...", Our Father, who art in heaven..." – we hear the beginning verse and there's no need to say any more – we complete the familiar text in our heads.

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- Those around the cross how knew Psalm 22 would also see the text playing out – men gambling for his clothiers, being mocked, bones out of joint, thirsty, etc – the lines of the Psalm were playing out before their eyes, and they could see that if they looked!
- Recall the three hours of Jesus on the cross and try to fathom how the scene must have impacted people like Nicodemus who now had his eyes open...
- Here are some of the verses in Psalm 22 that the people would see playing out before their eyes:

**CLICK:** All who see me mock me; they make mouths at me; they wag their heads; (vs 7)

**CLICK:** They say “He trusts in the Lord; let him deliver him; let him rescue him, for he delights in him!” vs. 8

**CLICK:** I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax; it is melted within my breast; (vs. 14)

**CLICK:** My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to my jaws; (vs. 15) (i.e. I thirst)

**CLICK:** For dogs encompass me; a company of evildoers encircles me; they have pierced my hands and feet (vs. 16) – remember how Jesus called a non-Jew as dog? Likewise, Roman soldiers were also called dogs

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**CLICK:** they divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots. (vs 18)

**CLICK:** ... shall come and proclaim his righteousness to a people yet unborn, that He has done it – It is finished. (vs 31)

- Jesus cites the first and last line of a Messianic psalm while on the cross, and the onlookers could appreciate the unspoken verses in-between. **And NOTICE – we're in the last line of Psalm 22! "To a generation unborn" -- that's us! Jesus was speaking to us!**

I want you a good rule of thumb regarding revelations supposedly coming from the Holy Spirit, never forget: **that which does not glorify Christ is NOT of the Holy Spirit**, the Holy Spirit's primary role **IS** to glorify Christ. The Holy Spirit never says --- "come and look at Me". He says "Look at Jesus!"

Any doctrine that does not glorify Christ can automatically be categorized as either human or satanic in origin.

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Summary LOOK and Live

- Lifting the serpent on a pole happened just once – Moses didn't have to put up a new copper serpent each day .  
The healing power of the sign was for all time.
- The serpent impaled on the pole itself didn't have any venom – but it covered the effects of the venom in all serpents.
- All you had to do was look with faith – they didn't have to perform any ritual, didn't have to touch it, didn't have to fast to be worthy, you didn't even have to send in your seed offering. All you had to do was look.
- But – You had to look yourself -- someone else couldn't look for you, and you couldn't look for your children, your spouse, your best friend -- you yourself had to CHOOSE to look
- The amount of time that the poison was in you didn't matter -- Father's day regrets? Your arm could be burning from a serpent's bite five minutes ago, but the poor guy who was bitten yesterday is now writhing in pain throughout his whole body -- all the pain is removed by looking at the lifted-up one. Sinner for many years or a sinner just this morning – all are healed.
- And the cure was effective against all snakes that would come later, maybe even tomorrow, that weren't even hatched when the representative serpent was raised on

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that pole. The snakes kept coming, but their bite was not effective for those who looked.

- God provide a way for people to survive the bite and live in the midst of the snakes.

Well, you don't need to go to Harvard to learn to look. You may be a dummy like me, and yet you can look. You don't need to be a billionaire to be able to look. Anyone can look; even a child can look. And you don't have to be able to physically look – as you can stand up on the inside, you can look at the cross with spiritual eyes of faith.

**“ Look to Christ.” ‘Look unto Him.’”**