

“THE SERPENT IN THE WILDERNESS”

INTRODUCTION

Our text for this lesson is John 3:14 (READ). Here, Jesus refers to “the serpent in the wilderness.” John 3 records one of the most interesting conversations of the New Testament. Nicodemus came to Jesus with a commendation. Cf v. 1. There are 3 divisions to the response of Jesus: (1) 1st, His statement about the new birth, v. 3. (2) 2nd, His explanation of the new birth. v. 4-8. (3) 3rd, His explanation of heavenly things, vs. 9-21.

Jesus referred to the **true** account of the poisonous serpents in the wilderness during Moses’ day. The people were tired of the WAY of God and the FOOD of God. (Exo. 16:16; Num. 11:4-9, 10-13, 14-20; cf Deut. 8:3; Num. 21:5 (Read or discuss as desired).

Those people were typical of people today, who are tired of the way of God. 2 Pet. 2:20-22. Many long for the “onions” of false teachers’ opinions. Some long for the “garlic” of another gospel. Others long for the “melons” of men. Matt. 15:9; John 12:43. Many today are enslaved to drugs, booze, the idolatry of sports, perverted sex, and have contempt for the word of God and worship to Him. Some can even converse about the details of movie stars and soap operas, but have little knowledge of Jesus and no appreciation for the bread of life. Now, Let’s look further at “The Serpent in the Wilderness” and what Jesus said that follows.

DISCUSSION

I. 1st, the FIERY SERPENTS IN THE WILDERNESS.

A. Fiery serpents had been there *all the time*, but God protected His people from them. Deut. 8:15-16

1. The people began to blame God for their problems, and tired of what HE was doing for them, and longed for what they had before, and looked upon the manna with contempt.
2. God simply withdrew His protection for Israel, and **let** the serpents take over. Num. 21:4-6

B. Isn’t America much like that TODAY?

1. It would seem that God was once blessing America when she looked to Him as the Creator, and His truth as a standard of morality.
 - a. We allowed people to pray and talk about God in schools.
 - b. We practiced religious freedom, whether we agreed or not.
2. NOW, we are killing all the babies we can through abortion, and outlawing prayer and a study of Creation and the “name” of GOD.
 - a. Could it be that God’s protecting hand is being taken from us?
 - b. Was 9/11 but the beginning of the end of a great nation? Psalms 9:17; Proverbs 14:34

II. 2nd, the BRAZEN SERPENT AND JESUS.

A. God had a CURE for their poisonous bites of the wilderness serpents.

1. The people wanted their **own** cure, through their “sinners’ prayer.” Num. 21:7
2. God rejected their prayer as a means of healing, but told Moses what to do. vs. 8-9
 - a. It is implied that they **believed** in Moses to petition God for help.
 - b. It was **also** said that they were to **look** upon the serpent to live. v. 8
 - 1) Some might have said they could live by “faith only”, just believing there was a serpent on a pole.
 - 2) Others might have said that looking would be “working”, and that they could not be cured by “human works.”
3. TRUE faith included the obedient act of LOOKING, and those that finally “looked” upon the serpent, DID LIVE.

B. God has a CURE **TODAY** for the poisonous bite of the serpent, SATAN.

1. People today want their OWN cure—through the “Sinner’s Prayer”, which says, *“Lord Jesus, I know I a sinner and cannot save myself, so come into my heart and make me your child. In Jesus’ name, Amen.”*
2. Just as God rejected Israel’s “prayer”, He rejects the “Sinners’ prayer” today, and tells **us** to look upon the One who has been “lifted up.”
 - a. We are to “believe” in Jesus. John 8:24
 - b. We are also to LOOK at Jesus for our salvation. Matt. 11:3; John 1:36; 19:37; Heb. 12:2; 5:8-9
 - 1) Some contend that salvation is by “faith only.” cf Jas. 2:24; Mark 16:16
 - 2) Others contend that being baptized is a WORK, and we *cannot* be saved that way.
 - a. We are not saved by our own meritorious works. Eph. 2:8-9
 - b. However, we **are** saved by the works of GOD—those things HE requires. John. 6:28-29; Col. 2:12; Tit. 3:5
 - 3) TRUE faith includes our obedience as we are “**in**” the Lord to be saved. John 3:15-16; Rom. 6 :3
 - a. Here is a description of those believers who are “in” Christ.
 - b. Paul then says we are baptized **into** Christ, and are at that point “in Him.”

CONCLUSION

I. Having “looked” upon Christ in obedience, we continue to look to Him.

A. We look to His “word” for guidance. Luke 6:46; John 12:48

B. We look for His “return” that will bring eternal life. Heb. 9:28

II. Are you looking to Jesus?

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