

A Recap of July 2014. The mystery behind the brazen serpent.

As we continue with our recap of 2014, we are now ready for the month of July. This Tree of Life will focus on July. We had the privilege of studying a few messages from Deacon Rick Bettez on Science catching up with The Bible. And then doctrine of Feasts by Rick Kabrick. My main message in July dealt with the doctrine of the Substitutionary Spiritual Death of Jesus Christ.

### **It all Began in that very important passage in Joh 3.**

**Joh 3:1-8, Now there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews; this man came to Him by night, and said to Him, “Rabbi, we know that You have come from God as a teacher; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him.” Jesus answered and said to him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” Nicodemus said 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?” 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. “That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ 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.”**

Here is our Lord dealing with religion. Religion needs a spiritual birth, it needs changes. Because you see religion is Satanic.

Religion has false doctrine, called doctrine of demons, 1Ti 4:1.

Religion has a devil’s communion table, 1 Co 10:19-20.

Religion has another gospel, [Gal 1:6](#).

Religion has another Jesus, [2Co 11:4](#).

Religion has another Spirit, [2Co 11:4](#).

Our Lord’s words in Joh, “**Do not marvel**” suggest the reaction of Nicodemus. Nicodemus was totally shocked in spite of all his human accomplishments. He was totally baffled. In verse 8, Jesus illustrates that a spiritual thing is not something that you can see. When you were born again you didn’t see it, but God the Holy Spirit entered you into union with Christ. The Holy Spirit came to indwell inside of you, you didn’t feel it or see it either.

**Joh 3:8, “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.”**

Where does the wind begin and where does it end? The wind cannot be seen, only the effects are visible. You know wind exists because it hits you in the face. However, you do not know how the wind got there or where it’s going. So, it is with the spiritual birth. It is unseen, but it is nevertheless real.

**Joh 3:9, Nicodemus answered and said to Him, “How can these things be?”**

He had not been taught this and notice our Lord uses a little sarcasm at the right time.

**Joh 3:10-13, Jesus answered and said to him, “Are you the teacher of Israel, and do not understand these things? Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak that which we know, and bear witness of that which we have seen; and you do not receive our witness. If I told you earthly things and you do not believe, how shall you believe if I tell you heavenly things? And no one has ascended into heaven, but He who descended from heaven, {even} the Son of Man.”**

The first man to enter into heaven in a resurrection body was the Lord Jesus Christ. However, in verse 13, the Lord Jesus Christ declared that He was and is in heaven as God at the very moment He was speaking to Nicodemus but as man He is not one place on earth, and that is talking to Nicodemus. He could be in heaven at the same time that He was also in His human body because He is the God-man, the unique person of the universe.

**Joh 3:14, “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up;”**

Now, you will recall that Nicodemus was familiar with Numbers 21 which gives us the story of the serpent. And so, what did our Lord mean when He said **“The son of man must be lifted up?”** He meant that true life could only come out of death. He meant that in order for a new creation to begin the old creation must be destroyed. Our Lord referred to His sacrificial death as a lifting up because the Jews were looking for a Messiah who should be lifted up. They were talking about the Messiah being elevated as King over Israel. However, our Lord talking about the Messiah being lifted from the earth hanging on the Cross.

The principle again is that the cross must come before the crown. They wanted the Messiah to be elevated to the throne of David but before this, He must be lifted up upon the cross and put to shame. To illustrate the character the meaning and the purpose of His death, the Lord refers to the well known incident in Numbers 21. In Numbers 21 Israel was murmuring against the Lord and against Moses, the man of God.

**Num 21:4-9, 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. And 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.” And the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people and they bit the people, so that many people of Israel died. 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. 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 shall live.” And Moses made a bronze serpent and set it on the standard; and it came about, that if a serpent bit any man, when he looked to the bronze serpent, he lived.**

These fiery serpents bit the people so that some of the people died and many others were wounded from the poisonous bites of the literal serpents. In verse 7, notice that they confessed they had sinned and they cried unto Moses for relief. And Moses cried unto God and the Lord told him to make a serpent out of brass and place it on a pole. The Jews who were bitten by the fiery serpents were told to look at the brazen serpent “in faith” and they should be healed. This all was a foreshadowing of our Lord. It spoke of Christ being lifted up on the Cross in order that He might save, through the look of faith, those who were dying from sin. The serpent was an appropriate figure of that deadly and destructive power, sin.

In Gen 3:15, the serpents’ seed is said to be unregenerate sinners, Joh 8:44.

**Gen 3:15, “And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel.”**

The serpent therefore represented the sinner. The poison of the fiery serpents’ bite effected the entire system of its’ victims. There was no deliverance therefore for the Jews unless God provided one. The remedy which God provided was a “public exhibition” of the destroyer, the serpent on a pole.

**Gal 3:13, Christ 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.”**

Why didn’t Moses use one of the actual serpents and spike a fiery serpent on the pole? Because it would have damaged the typology. It would have pictured God’s judgment on the sinner himself and worse still, it would have misrepresented our sinless substitute, the Lord Jesus Christ.

**Heb 7:26, For it was fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens.**

The type chosen was in the likeness of a serpent, it wasn't an actual serpent, but a piece of brass made to look like one. This correlates with Rom 8:3, **For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God {did:} sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and {as an offering} for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh.**

How could a serpent fitly symbolize the Lord Jesus Christ, the Holy One from God? A serpent is one of the last things we would ever think would represent the Lord.

However, the brazen serpent foreshadows Christ only as He was lifted up on the Cross.

The lifting up pointed to the Cross.

The serpent was a reminder and emblem of the curse.

It was through the agency of that old serpent, the devil, that our first parents were seduced and brought under the curse of a holy God, Gen 3:1-5.

And, on the cross never forget, the holy one of God was made a curse for us. GAL 3:13 Christ 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."

So, the serpent accurately prefigured the crucified Savior being made a curse for us.

But why a serpent of brass?

This brings out once more the perfect accuracy of the type or the doctrine of typology.

In the scriptures brass symbolizes divine judgment! The brazen altar illustrates this truth for on it the sacrificial animals were slain.

Upon the brazen altar descended the consuming fire from heaven.

In Revelation 1 where Christ is seen as judge inspecting the seven churches, we are told that His feet were like fine brass REV 1:15 and His feet were like burnished bronze.

So, in John 3:14, the serpent spoke of the curse which sin produced and the brass told of God's judgment falling on the one made sin for us.

But, there is another thought suggested by the brass.

Brass is harder than iron, or silver, or gold, and therefore it told of our Lord's mighty strength. He was able to endure the awful judgments which fell upon Him, a mere creature, though sinless would have been utterly consumed.

From what has been said so far, it is evident that when God told Moses to make a serpent of brass and to place it on a pole and told the Jews to look on it and they should live, that He was preaching to them the Gospel of His grace.

Let's note some things the Jews were **not** told to do.

1. They were not told to manufacture some ointment as the means of healing their wounds.

Spiritual lotions do not cure disease only the Lord Jesus Christ can cure a disease when it's miraculous.

Like the poor woman mentioned in [MAR 5:26](#), many spend all that they have on such idiotic solutions like a magic oil or ointment.

MAR 5:25 And a woman who had had a hemorrhage for twelve years,

MAR 5:26 and had endured much at the hands of many physicians, and had spent all that she had and was not helped at all, but rather had grown worse,

Notice she had even gotten worse.

There are a lot charlatans out there especially the television evangelists who manipulate those in need and are nothing more than fake healers not faith healers.

And they will answer to God for their lies.

They teach for money, accept bribes, sell whatever they can to take money from the simple-minded.

Look at what the Lord said in Micah 3.

MIC 3:9 Now hear this, heads of the house of Jacob And rulers of the house of Israel, Who abhor justice And twist everything that is straight.

MIC 3:10 Who build Zion with bloodshed And Jerusalem with violent injustice.

MIC 3:11 Her leaders pronounce judgment for a bribe, Her priests instruct for a price, And her prophets divine for money. Yet they lean on the Lord saying, "Is not the Lord in our midst? Calamity will not come upon us."

2. They were also not told to minister to others who were wounded and help each other out.

That would be the blind leading the blind.

What use would it be for a person to jump into deep water to rescue a drowning man if he could not swim himself.

3. They were also not told to fight the serpents.

What use would it be to fight the serpents for those who had already been bitten?

They could all have killed a thousand serpents each but they would still have died.

Fighting against the serpents or fighting against sin or the devil will not solve a thing.

4. They were not told to make an offering to the serpent on the pole.

God did not ask any payment from them in return for their healing.

Liars and deceivers in the Christian church telling others they have to make a faith offering or sow a seed of faith financially if they want to be healed.

Grace ceases to be grace if any price is paid for what it brings.

5. They were told not to look at Moses, the man of God.  
They had been looking to Moses but God commanded them to look at the brazen serpent.

Moses was the law giver and how many today are looking to him representing the law for salvation and spirituality.

In other words, they are depending on their own works.

6. They were not told to look at their wounds.

Some think they need to be more occupied with the work of examining their own wicked hearts.

To be occupied with self is to be occupied with that which God has condemned.

ROM 6:6 knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, that our body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin;

ROM 6:7 for he who has died is freed from sin.

ROM 6:8 Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him,

ROM 6:9 knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him.

ROM 6:10 For the death that He died, He died to sin, once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God.

ROM 6:11 Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

ROM 6:12 Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body that you should obey its lusts,

ROM 6:13 and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.

ROM 6:14 For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law, but under grace.

The devil is very pleased when he gets an individual looking at good works, feelings, baptism, self, etc. as opposed to Christ.

Let's look now at the positive side:

1. Moses was commanded by God to make a serpent of brass, it was something the Lord provided.

2. Moses was commanded to place this brazen serpent upon a pole. Therefore, the divine remedy was publicly exhibited so that all Israel might look and be healed.

3. The Lord's promise in [NUM 21:8](#) was that **“It shall come to pass that everyone that is bitten, when he looks upon it shall live.”**

The point is that man was to look away from himself to the divinely appointed object of faith.

The brazen serpent was lifted up so that those who were too weak to crawl up to the pole itself simply could look and be healed.

[NUM 21:8](#), **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 shall live.”**

No matter how many times he may have been bitten, no matter how far the poison had advanced, if they looked they could be healed, anyone could be look and anyone could be healed.

It is interesting that man became a lost sinner by a look as in [GEN 3:6](#), **When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.**

Now the sinner is saved by a look, [ISA 45:22](#) **“Turn to Me, and be saved, all the ends of the earth; For I am God, and there is no other.**

After salvation the Christian life continues by looking.

[HEB 12:2](#), **fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.**

At the end of the Christian life we are still to be looking for Christ.

[PHI 3:20](#), **For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ;**

From the beginning to the end it's a mere look.

In that great crowd of bitten Israelites there were some with young eyes, some with old eyes that looked at the serpent.

Some with clear vision and some with dim vision.

Faith is simply the eye of the soul looking toward the Lord Jesus Christ, even if it's only a little faith.

**JOH 3:14-16, “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; that whoever believes may in Him have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.”**

Since God is perfect, His plan is perfect.

Man's biggest problem which was sin was solved by a perfect God in eternity past.

Everything we will ever need in time, every sin that we would ever commit has a divine provision from a perfect God.

Every sin in the human race that would ever be committed has a divine solution “in Christ.”

God knew every failure we would ever have, every suffering and every heartache.

Therefore, He made a provision for every situation in this life.

There will never be a trial, or a testing or a suffering too great for the plan of God to handle.

Billions of years ago at a certain point of time God loved us.

Love requires thought not emotion and billions of years ago, God thought about you.

And when He thought about you, He loved you. And because He loved you, He decided to act upon that love.

**1JO 4:19, We love, because He first loved us.**

However, it says that God so loved the world. It is true that God is love but here God so loved the world.

God's love for both the believer and unbeliever is centered around the Cross.



It is true that God is love and because God is love the cross exists.

When a member of the human race by passes the cross or rejects Christ as his or her personal Savior, he then becomes the object of divine wrath.