



Sermon Series: Life Changing Lessons

Sermon Title: The Snake on the Pole

Speaker/ Date: Armin Sommer, August 22, 2021

John 3:1–17

Big Idea: Your eternity doesn't depend on your performance, but on your decision.

We understand this when we consider it from two different perspectives:

Perspective 1: An Ancient Symbol

Near the close of their conversation, in **John 3:14–15**, Jesus makes a statement where he refers to an event that took place shortly before the Israelites entered the Promised Land.

The Complaint

40 yrs earlier, they had refused, out of fear, to go into the land. Throughout the 40 yrs, God had miraculously and graciously provided for them both water and food, yet they complained about it. **Numbers 21:5**

The food was miraculous; (**Exodus 16:31**). They said it was “miserable.” God had provided for every need. He had even kept their clothes from wearing out (**Deuteronomy 8**). Yet repeatedly grumbled. When a person's heart is full of discontent, even a miraculous gift from the Lord loses its savor. **NOTHING WILL SATISFY A HEART THAT IS DETERMINED TO REBEL AGAINST THE LORD.**

The Discipline & Judgment

Numbers 21:6 (NIV84) ⁶ Then the LORD sent venomous snakes among them; they bit the people and many Israelites died.

God knows every human heart and sovereignly delivers judgment according to His divine insight into every person's heart. It was not random. The amazing fact is not that God has judged and disciplined; instead, it's that He didn't wipe out everyone and start from scratch.

God's Mercy & Grace

There was a wake-up call! **Numbers 21:7**

God tells Moses to fashion a serpent of bronze and mount it on a signal pole, which he would raise up for the people to see. All who wished to be saved from

the sting of death were simply to look upon it, and they would be spared. (**Numbers 21:8–9**) The Hebrew word (nabat) translated “look” means “to gaze upon in belief and trust.” More than the seeing with the eye; rather, embracing with the heart.

If the people would simply look on the serpent, understanding that it was their only hope, they would be saved from death. Those who perhaps glanced at it and then dismissed it as a meaningless or trivial act died there in the wilderness. Those who looked and believed/trusted were spared.

The event Numbers 21 records, and to which Jesus referred, provides a prophetic pattern that would be fulfilled in the life and ministry of Jesus.

Perspective 2: A Crucial Decision

Jesus takes hold of the imagery in Numbers 21 and unveils its deeper truth in **John 3:14-15**.

Numbers 21 was a foreshadowing (a “type”) of what Jesus would do for us on the cross. All of us have been “bitten” by a serpent called sin. Sin’s venom would claim each of us if not for the intervention Jesus provided. The cross was always God’s plan for His Son Jesus to be lifted up on the cross and to shed His blood for our salvation.

Moses raised a bronze snake on a pole. All those who looked in faith upon it were spared. God placed His Son on a cross so that all who look in faith will be saved.

The All-Important Action Point

Salvation from the serpents’ venom required only the look of faith. Nothing else would do. Likewise, no observance of rituals, rules, or religious systems can deliver us from the deadly grip of sin’s grasp. Only a simple trust in Christ’s death can deliver us from death into life. **John 3:16–17**

Your All-Important Decision

We stopped our reading at John 3:17. But that is not the conclusion of Jesus’ teaching - **John 3:18**

You have a choice: to look upon Jesus and to put your trust in Him alone for salvation and live... or not. **John 3:14–15**

Big Idea: Your eternity doesn’t depend on your performance, but on your decision.

Discussion Questions:

- What about the sermon stuck with you this week? What part challenged your thinking?
- Why do people commonly believe that their eternity is based on their performance?
- What lessons can we learn from the account given in Numbers 21:4-9?
- When a person's heart is full of discontent, even a miraculous gift from the Lord loses its savor. What guidance would you give to people who constantly complain despite their blessings?
- God made the cure for the Israelites snakebites very simple. Why would someone not believe in the cure? Is that the same reason people do not believe in the gospel? Explain