

# John

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Preacher: Sayers, Ron (1929-2001)

- [ 0 : 00 ] As the Lord may help this afternoon, I direct your thoughts to the portion we read, the Gospel according to John, chapter 3, reading verses 14 and 15.
- And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.
- The Gospel according to John, chapter 3, verses 14 and 15. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.
- These words, as we read through the portion together, are the words of the Lord himself.
- He had been speaking to one who had a name amongst men. He was a ruler of the Jews, Nicodemus.
- [ 1 : 36 ] But whilst there were those things that he ruled in, and whilst there were those things that he had some head knowledge of, there were things which he did not know in his heart.
- Things which he did not understand. Now, friends, how much there is that we can neither know nor understand until these deep and precious truths are revealed unto us by the Spirit of God.
- What answer would you give this afternoon, if it were said to you, like one said even to the eunuch, understandest thou what thou readest?
- It was a very solemn and searching word that the Lord spake to him who came to him by night.
- There were those things which he would own. That this man, this real man, this glorious man, was a teacher from God.
- [ 2 : 54 ] He said, no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him. But he who knows the hearts of all men, he answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.
- Except. Except. Ah, where we have this word.
- We do have it time and time again in the scripture of truth, but my friend, where God has said except. Oh, what need. That we should prayerfully read it and attend unto it.
- It's God's exception, not man's. He said except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.
- Not he may not. He says he cannot. Oh, my friend, what a truth is set before us here.
- [ 4 : 15 ] Understandest thou the word? Is it an exercise in your soul? As to whether you know the new birth?
- Am I quickened by his spirit? Ah, there may be much that we may lay profession to, lay claim to.
- But my friend of all, unless we know this solemn, blessed truth, what will it avail in that day when we appear before the judge of the whole earth?
- If we know not this truth, if we have no evidence of being born again.

Now here was a truth that at the outset Nicodemus did not understand. No more than we. No more than we.

[ 5 : 18 ] Friends, if we know anything of this glorious truth, if we bear any evidence of it, it is not the work of any man.

It is not the work of our own nature. It's what the Lord has shown us. What the Lord has done for us. And so he goes on, even to expound this truth.

Mark this in Nicodemus. His desire and his attention to hear what God would speak.

How can these things be, he said? There was a desire to know, a desire to learn. This is not found in all men. It was not found in all that came to the Lord Jesus when here upon earth.

Some turned back and walked no more with him. We read of another who turned away, went away sorrowful. My friend, it didn't have this effect with Nicodemus.

[ 6 : 29 ] We read of him again, twice more, in this Gospel of John. And we have this mark of Nicodemus, that he was a disciple of Jesus, a follower.

To come, as the Lord may help, to the words of our text. As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up.

But whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. We find oft times in the teaching of the Lord Jesus, of how he referred to the Lord, to those things that had taken place in days past.

And remember his own word, he didn't come to destroy the Lord. He came to fulfill it.

Now here, does he say, as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, I'm sure that Nicodemus is a ruler of the Jews.

[ 7 : 53 ] No mean place. That the recorded knowledge of this circumstance would have been well known to him.

And as we may now, as the Lord help, make some reference to it, we shall praise there as some type, some agreement in that lifting up of the serpent in the wilderness.

And do we desire to see a precious Christ exalted? For him hath God exalted. You well know the circumstance there of how that the Israelites in their journeys were left even to a state and condition of memory.

Can you cast a stone at them, friends? You who have a hope in the mercy of God, have you not known what it's been to murmur in the path and to complain?

You look what the Lord had done for them. The wonderful way in which he brought them out. His supply of their needs. And yet they knew what it was to murmur and complain.

[ 9 : 09 ] It would appear from that which we read in another portion of the word of God that through that wilderness they were oft times beset with these serpents, these fiery serpents.

But hell, that they were preserved from being bitten by them. They come even to this place where they would compass the land of Edom and because of the things that were in the path and that discouraged them how they murmured and complained.

They complained to Moses. But my friend, you may trace this as there are other records in the world of where they complained and murmured.

Their complaints were against God, not against Moses. Ponder this in your own path, hearer.

When you know a murmuring, complaining spirit, perhaps sometimes because of the way, or it may even be a complaining against a fellow traveler in the road.

[ 10 : 27 ] Is your murmuring against that one? Is it against the path? My friend, it's against God. Moses solemnly had to remind them of this.

That time when the manna was about to be given them. He says, your murmurings are not against me, they're against the Lord. Oh, what mercy surrounded God's ancient people.

My friend, can you cast a stone at them? You would say, well, if I saw my need so supplied as they did with the manna, if I could see the water following me as they did, and mark that the clothes do not wear out, the shoes do not wear out.

And my friend, remember in all this, there was the pillar of the cloud going before them. There was the witness, the evidence. Yet they complained. And I would say, with such evidences, I couldn't complain.

I say, friend, he that is without sin among you, let him cast the first stone. How they murmured. How they complained.

[ 11 : 42 ] For they complained against the Lord. Because of their complaining. Because of their sin. Did God send these fiery serpents among the people that they bit the people.

And much of the people died. Oh, friend, sin. That hideous monster sin.

See it in the bitings, in the venom, of these fiery serpents that were among the people. And sin, my friend, how it brings forth death.

Much of the people died. Now these who were conscious of being bitten, how they cried. They said, we have sinned.

They came to Moses, but they said, we have sinned. We have spoken against the Lord and against thee. The truth is coming home. And how they desired of Moses that he would pray unto the Lord that he might take away the serpents from their midst.

[ 13 : 14 ] And Moses prayed for the people. He took their case, their petition, their desire, even to the Lord. But here we may trace, as perhaps we may trace it in our own past, there are those things which we ask for, and that the Lord does not grant them, does not give answers to those petitions in the way which we would desire.

This was not the Lord's will. This was not the Lord's purpose to take away the serpents from amongst them. But he had some other purpose.

He would use some other means and take unto Moses and said unto him, Make thee a fiery serpent, set it upon a pole.

And it shall come to pass that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live. And Moses made a serpent of grass and put it upon a pole.

And it came to pass that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of grass, he lived. Now our Lord here, in referring to this matter, this incident, he says, Now as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so, must the Son of Man be lifted up.

[ 14 : 50 ] The serpent was made of grass.

Now mark this, friends. There was only one serpent that Moses was commanded to make and to lift up upon the pole. They were bitten by many. But there was only one serpent to be raised up, to be reared up.

And that serpent was to be made of brass. Viewed, judged by the knowledge of man, this was not the chief or the best of metals.

It was a mina metal. The serpent was not to be made of gold.

The serpent was not to be made of silver. It was to be made of some mina metal. It was to be made of brass. My friend, what can you trace in this?

[ 16 : 09 ] As we may look at that mina metal which Moses was commanded to make the serpent, my friend, can you see the humanity of Jesus Christ?

He took upon himself human flesh, sin-accepted, human flesh. that serpent was made of brass.

And whilst it was to be made in the appearance like unto the fiery serpents that had bitten the people, yet, my friends, that serpent being made of brass, it knew it knew no venom, no poison.

Do you trace this here in the Lord Jesus Christ? That though he knew what it was to take upon himself human flesh, though he came into this world, yet he was without sin.

Without sin. it was this poison in the serpents that as they bit the children of Israel, so they died.

[ 17 : 45 ] But there was no sin, there was no poison in the brazen serpent that Moses raised and reared up. Now, my friend, there is no sin, no sin, as we would look at the human nature of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Oh, what teaching there is here. I do feel, friends, if only we could and would look more closely into details of those things that are set before us in God's own word, what teaching we should know.

Our proneness to look over, detail, to turn aside, perhaps even from a little word. It was a brazen serpent.

Of all other material that Moses might have used. No, this was the one that God commanded. Remember that there are characters of brass.

I'm told that there is a strength in brass, there is not in gold. Well, be that as it may, my friends, as we may look at it here in the type, as we would see the strength that he is mighty to save.

[ 19 : 31 ] Here is strength. what teaching there is in there. And again, as we would look at that metal brass, how durable it is.

Can I use the expression, friends? The durability in him, that he is the same yesterday, and today, and forever.

now this is hey. He says, now then, as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up.

There was a brightness with the brass. I don't know, friends, but I wouldn't be left to fanciful thought or imagination, but one would feel that in that wilderness where those Israelites were, what a shining there must have been upon that serpent of brass.

hell that it might attract the eyes of those who had known the bitings of the fiery serpents.

[ 21 : 02 ] And my friend, remember this, that this was the command, this was the ordinance, they were to look to that serpent, and as many as looked, lived.

They weren't commanded to draw near to it and to touch it. They weren't commanded to come to it and to call upon it.

But the command was that they were to look upon it, and as many as looked, lived. What a sweet, yet blessed simplicity there is in the commands of God.

One had to be reminded of this, even by his fellow travellers. I think of that leper of old.

Why they said to him, if the prophet had commanded thee some great thing, would they not have done it? But my friend, the simplicity of it, to go into Jordan and to wash.

[ 22 : 17 ] Wash and be clean. Now the simplicity here of those who knew the biting of the serpent, death stamped upon them, that if they would but look, they should live.

There might not this brazen serpent, in the shining of the sun, they speak of brightness. They might in some special way be attracted to it.

My friend, what a brightness there is. What a glorious attraction there is in Christ. What says the apostle in his epistle, even to the church at Colossae, he says, therefore, in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.

This is in Christ, friends, in Christ, the fullness of the Godhead.

Oh, what a deep thrill. What there is here to ponder over. I feel there is a difference in this word to that which he writes in the previous chapter when he says, therefore, it pleased the father that in him should all fullness dwell.

[ 24 : 01 ] In that word, it pleased the father that in him should all fullness dwell. The fullness that dwelt in him was according to the divine pleasure of his father, a fullness of grace, a fullness of mercy.

It pleased the father that it should dwell in him. And my friend, he is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Or that we might know what it is to draw from that fullness which dwells in him.

That he may give grace, for grace. But here we have the word. For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the God of the Godhead, bodily.

In his divine nature, yet he was God. For my friends, where can we begin to speak of the fullness of the Godhead?

His omnipresence, is omniscient. This is the fullness of the Godhead. And it dwelt in him bodily.

[ 25 : 23 ] O friend, to faith. What a glorious attraction is Christ.

There's a brightness there. Doesn't Paul tell us again he was the brightness of his Father's glory? The brightness of him. Oh, to behold him with real joy, with sacred joy.

I say then what sweet agreement there is here between that serpent that Moses made and between the Son of Man, yet the Son of God.

Now in this brazen serpent was the means that the Lord would appoint, did appoint, that they might be saved. We know that his power is such that whatever he has purposed he can and will perform.

He could have removed those fiery serpents from them. He could have used any means that he pleased to deliver them from their state and condition. But this was the appointed way, that the serpent should be raised and looked upon.

[ 27 : 00 ] I know the types will come short, all types do. Now that in after days that brazen serpent became an idol to them. I say friends, there's a shortcoming here of the time.

serpent, for that serpent became an idol and it became a center of their worship. And how the Lord raised up one to destroy it, to break it down.

For no flesh or glory in his presence. He has said again, from all your idols will I cleanse you. my friends, walk in obedience to God's revealed way, to his command, to his ordinances.

But I say make not an idol of the means. Don't despise the means. But make not an idol of the means. They who made an idol of that serpent, they knew what it was to be destroyed.

Now as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up. He must be set forth, that sin bitten, dying sinners, may look unto him.

[ 28 : 34 ] And as many as look live, what was his own word again? Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth.

Now hearer, do you know what it is to come? And to look, even upon Christ. God, God, God, God, our time this afternoon is almost gone.

The Lord may help this evening, we'll look at one or two of those places where sinners are brought, and where they may look upon a precious Christ. But my friends, he must be lifted up.

He must be lifted up. Moses was instrumental in raising up the brazen serpent. And there are those whom the Lord has called in some special way to this work today, to lift up a precious Christ before the people, to point to him, not to themselves.

I believe this is the desire of your dear pastor here, to set forth a precious Christ. I do desire that there may be love in your heart toward him, but my friend, remember that what he is, he is by the grace of God.

[ 30 : 07 ] Indeed, there may be times and more times, and you may even realize, when there is a spirit of prayer in his heart for you, but I tell you, friend, he has no power of his own to save a soul.

But is it not his desire to point to a precious Christ, to lift him up, to set him before you? And friend, may you know what it is to look above and beyond the means, above the instrument, and to look to Christ.

Moses raised the serpent, they were to look on the serpent, not on Moses, not on Moses. they came to Moses. I know we have that type there of how Moses took their case time and time again before the Lord, how he pleaded on their behalf.

But my friend, the time came when it is recorded that Moses is dead. Oh, there's a deep truth there that we might enter into that, the Lord Moses is dead.

But the people weren't left. Joshua was raised up. Moses brought them to the border of the land. He didn't take them in. I don't find it recorded anywhere, but it was told that Moses would bring them into the land of promise.

[ 31 : 38 ] He brought them unto it. And that work accomplished, the Lord took him up into Mount Pisgah and showed him the land and took him to himself.

We must leave these few broken thoughts here for this afternoon. Friends, may it be our desire to lift up Christ. May it be our desire to look unto him that we might be saved.

Amen. Amen.