

*Morning Sermon March 27, 2016*  
*“Reaching Down and Lifted Up, to Raise Us Up”*  
*John 3:14-17*

*The more I preach on this day the more I am impressed with the great gulf of a distance between the idea of Easter and scriptural truth about the death and resurrection of Christ.*

*For instance, the animals, all around in the stores you will see bunnies and chicks, even chocolate bunnies and chicks. Today, I will speak to you about fiery serpents!*

*Why about serpents?*

*I. Jesus mentioned Moses lifting up the serpent in the wilderness –*

**"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, (John 3:14 NKJ)**

*Why did Jesus bring up this event?*

*1. He was talking to Nicodemus –*

**There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews.<sup>2</sup> This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him." (John 3:1-2 NKJ)**

*A. Nicodemus was a Pharisee.*

*B. Nicodemus was a ruler of the Jews (meaning he was a member of the Sanhedrin, seventy men who ruled Israel.*

*C. He came to Jesus at night, probably because most of his fellow Pharisees were against Jesus!*

*2. Jesus got immediately to the point with Nicodemus –*

**Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."<sup>4</sup> Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?"<sup>5</sup> Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter 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 marvel that I said to you, `You must be born again.' (John 3:3-7 NKJ)**

*II. Certain things are “musts” not only for Nicodemus but for everyone –*

**<sup>7</sup> "Do not marvel that I said to you, `You must be born again.' (John 3:3-7 NKJ)**

*This is not a sermon about the New Birth, so I will keep this shorter than I probably should –*

- 1. The new birth is a dramatic change, it is a starting again from scratch, implying your first birth and first life, just doesn't cut it!*
- 2. The new birth is a divine change, it is something God does, we cannot make it happen ourselves it is the work of God's Spirit*
- 3. It is absolutely necessary, even for a religious leader like Nicodemus, “I said to you, You must be born again!” John 3:7*

*Nicodemus, may have thought coming to Jesus that he was well on his way to Heaven? Maybe he thought he would need to make a little change here or there?*

*III. Jumping forward in John 3 to the serpent reference, Jesus saves us from perishing –*

**"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, (John 3:14 NKJ)**

*If you want to understand this verse in the must be born again context, imagine Nicodemus asking, “HOW DESPARATE IS MY CASE JESUS?”*

- 1. Jesus is basically saying, compare things to Numbers 21:5-9 -*

**<sup>5</sup> And the people spoke against God and against Moses: "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For *there is no food and no water, and our soul loathes this worthless bread.*"<sup>6</sup> So the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and many of the people of Israel died.<sup>7</sup> Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, "We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD and against you; pray to the LORD that He take away the serpents from us." So Moses prayed for the people.<sup>8</sup> Then the LORD said to Moses, "Make a fiery *serpent*, and set it on a pole; and it shall be that everyone who is**

bitten, when he looks at it, shall live."<sup>9</sup> So Moses made a bronze serpent, and put it on a pole; and so it was, if a serpent had bitten anyone, when he looked at the bronze serpent, he lived. (Numbers 21:1-9 NKJ)

*The punishment was fitting the crime, note they wanted to go back to Egypt, the land ruled by Pharaoh, who wore a cobra, fiery serpent crown on his head -*

“Scholars believe the serpents that are designated here as “fiery serpents” (*King James Version*) were so-called because their bite inflicted a burning fever that, if not checked, brought death.”

R. Kent Hughes

*It was a circumstance that started confession of sin and PRAYER!  
It was a life and death circumstance, which required a bronze serpent on a pole!*

*Just as Moses circumstance required confession, prayer and a serpent on a pole ours as sinners requires Jesus Christ's death!*

2. *The serpent was symbolic of SIN and Jesus would become sin for us –*

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

3. *Our case is so desperate, Jesus' death was a MUST –*

A. *It is a must in the sense that nothing less than the Son of God's / Son of Man's death would remedy our sins –*

*What can wash away my sin, nothing but the blood of Jesus*

–

**"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, (John 3:14 NKJ)**

<sup>39</sup> **He went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, "O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will." (Matthew 26:39 NKJ)**

<sup>42</sup> **Again, a second time, He went away and prayed, saying, "O My Father, if this cup cannot pass away from Me unless I drink it, Your will be done." (Matthew 26:42 NKJ)**

B. *Jesus' death is a "must" because He and all of Scripture prophesied it -*

**Must** (δεῖ). *Must* signifies the eternal necessity in the divine counsels. M.R. Vincent

**"Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?" (Luke 24:26 NKJ)**

**Then He said to them, "Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, (Luke 24:46 NKJ)**

**And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. (Mark 8:31 NKJ)**

IV. *Jesus not only saves us from perishing, He saves us to eternal life –*

**"that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life."<sup>16</sup>  
"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."<sup>17</sup>  
"For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. (John 3:15-17 NKJ)**

**God, the greatest lover – 1 John 4:8 so loved – He loved us most – John 15:13**

**the world – every tribe, tongue, people and nation – Revelation 5:9 that he gave His one and only Son – the greatest gift - 2 Corinthians 9:15**

**that whoever** The greatest opportunity – **John 6:37 believes – Isaiah 45:22; Proverbs 3:5-6; Isaiah 26:3-4 in Him** The greatest attraction – **Song of Solomon 2:1-3 shall not perish** The greatest promise

**but** The greatest difference **have** The greatest certainty **eternal life** The greatest possession – **Revelation 21:1-5**

<sup>53</sup> **For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. <sup>54</sup> So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory." (1Corinthians 15:53-54 NKJ)**

*Arnold Brevick*