



## BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

John 3:9-15; Numbers 21:4-9

“The Serpent and the Son of Man”

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] For the Scripture reading this morning since our Lord refers to the incident in Numbers chapter 21, I'm going to read verse 4 through verse 9 of Numbers chapter 21, and then the short section in John chapter 3 for our Scripture reading. Numbers chapter 21, and verse 4,

“And they journeyed from mount Hor by the way of the Red sea, to compass the land of Edom: and the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way. And the people spoke against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth this light bread, (evidently a reference to the manna.) And the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died. (Some of you, no doubt, have seen the movie *Venom*. I have not seen it yet but there is a rather remarkable thing about the movie *Venom* and that is that the Black Mamba in it, so I'm told, is a moral Black Mamba. That is, it seems to have a desire to bite those that wear black hats. Well, we have a similar kind of thing here. The fiery serpents were those who bit the people who had sinned against the Lord. We read,) And the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people, and many people of Israel died. Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD, and against thee; pray unto the LORD, that he take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people.

And the LORD said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and 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 brass, 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 brass, he lived.”

Now let's turn over to John chapter 3, and read verse 9 through verse 15. We are in the context of our Lord's interview with Nicodemus and Nicodemus has already asked two questions. And now after he is told that again, “Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again,” in the 9th verse Nicodemus answered and said unto him,

“How can these things be? Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a teacher of Israel, and knowest not these things? (And last week, remember, commented that the indefinite article ‘a teacher’ is not true to the Greek text, it seems at this point, for there is the article in the Greek text. And we probably are to render it, ‘Art thou the teacher of Israel, and knowest not these things?’) Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness. If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things? And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven. (Now some of you are reading a modern translation, probably notice that in your version the word, ‘Who is in heaven,’ are not found. They are found in the text of the Authorized Version and in the text of some other translations as well. The reason for that is that that clause, ‘Who is in heaven,’ is in some of the ancient manuscripts and is not in some of the ancient manuscripts. Now in the critical edition which is usually the basis of one of the modern translations the majority of the editors at this point, or the majority of the committee in translation, has determined that on the basis of the external testimony that this clause is probably not genuine. Probably reflecting some later Christological development and a scribe inserted for that reason. On the other hand, there are many ancient manuscripts that do have, ‘Who

is in heaven.’ And one can see, I think, how one might want to eliminate that more likely than antic because it is a difficult thing to explain, how can the Son of man be here on earth and in heaven at the same time? So one can see how a scribe might come to this in the text before him as he’s copying it, ‘Even the Son of man who is in heaven,’ and say wait a minute, that looks like that’s an error, and drop it out. So if it was in the original text, one can see how it might be eliminated. But if it was not there it’s more difficult to perceive a scribe adding it. And so in this case I’m not at all sure that these words are not really genuine and when we get to it in the exposition I will seek to show you how the Son of man may be on earth and in heaven at the same time. But at any rate, our Lord goes on to say,” 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.”

May God bless this reading, of these comments, on the word. This morning our subject is “The Serpent and the Son of Man.” One of the common mistakes of preachers and also of others is to fail to put first things first. In spiritual life particularly is this true. Sometimes we fail to remember that the new birth must precede the new life in Christ. The tendency is for the natural man to think that it is possible for him in his own flesh, in his own power, to live a Christian life. But the thing that the Bible most carefully and most continually says that is in spiritual matters as in physical, life is first and activity follows afterwards. And one cannot have physical activity until he’s born, so in spiritual things there can be no spiritual activity until we have been born again.

One Bible teacher seeking to illustrate this imagines a man pressing toward the cemetery and stopping him, asking him what’s the reason, and hearing him say, “I’ve just obtained a large contract and I want some men to enable me to fulfill it.” But why go, of all places, to the cemetery? Only the dead are there. And the man replies, “That’s the very reason I do go sir, I need unemployed hands. Unemployed hands, I have something for them to do.” Well you would say, the preacher said, that that man is mad and he would be. But that is exactly the situation when we expect an individual who

has never been born again to do Christian life things. For Christian life can only flow out of a new Christian birth.

In this incident the Lord, for the second time, uses an Old Testament illustration. He has already spoken to Nathaniel because Nathaniel, evidently, was reading about Jacob and his vision of the ladder with the angels ascending and descending upon it. And now he turns to the incident that the children of Israel experienced in the wilderness journeys when in disobedience they complained and the Lord sent fiery serpents among them. So this is the second time he has looked into the Old Testament for events that show forth his work. In the case of Jacob’s vision as he interpreted it he said that he was the mediator between God and men, for instead of the ladder he substituted the Son of man with the angels of God ascending and descending upon him. So Jesus told us by that that he interpreted the ladder as a reference to him, a figure of connection between earth and heaven and the Son of man is the mediator, the one mediator between God and men.

Now in this incident he turns from the mediator to the method of mediation. And the method of mediation is the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ because it is by virtue of the cross that we are able to have new relationship established with the God of heaven. Now Nicodemus is asking questions. He has come as a teacher, no doubt puzzled, and no doubt also somewhat enlightened by the Holy Spirit to seek. And he came, remember, and said, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God, for no one can do these wonderful signs that you are doing if God were not with him.” I think, as we’ve been saying, that he intended to say, “How may I enter into the Kingdom of God?” Or perhaps as the lawyer, “What good thing shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?” And Jesus, in a sense, interrupts him before he finishes his whole question and says, “Nicodemus, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God.”

Now whether Nicodemus understood that word translated “again” as a second time or whether he understood it to mean from heaven which the word normally means in the Gospel of John we do not know. It may be that he was -- he had misunderstood our Lord and said simply, “How can a man be born when he’s old, can he enter the second time into his mother’s womb and

be born?” So he understood it that way. Of course, a birth from above would also be a second birth so we are left a little bit in the dark as far as Nicodemus’s question is concerned, but the sense is plain. Whether he meant a second time or above, from above, as our Lord evidently meant for in a moment he will speak about being born in the Spirit, we don’t know. It doesn’t really make any difference because the new birth is a second birth.

So the Lord answers that question and now the third question comes in the 9th verse when after he has said, “Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.” Nicodemus answers the natural question, “How can these things be?” So Jesus has shown the necessity of the new birth, he’s shown the nature of the new birth, it’s of the Spirit, and now he will expatiate on the subject of the manner of the new birth. How can I experience this new birth? All of us at one time or another have asked that question. I remember some years ago visiting a woman who was troubled, her husband was leaving her. She had become interested in spiritual things as sometimes happens under those circumstances and in talking with her I sensed that while she was under some kind of concern and anxiety and was seeking to some extent I still wasn’t sure that she was a Christian, I asked her was she a Christian, had she been born again. And she said, “Well how can I know that I have been born again?” That’s a natural question that individuals ask.

Now the Lord, after he hears Nicodemus say, “How can these things be?” is going to give some instruction to Nicodemus in how a man may be born again. But first of all he asks Nicodemus a question. He says, “Aren’t thou a teacher of Israel, and knowest not these things?” And since the teacher is definite I think it’s probably to be rendered, “Aren’t thou the teacher of Israel and knowest not these things?” Now that can mean two things. That can mean that he was the preeminent teacher of the word of God in Israel. Being a Pharisee and very skilled in the things of the Old Testament law he may have well been the leading teacher of the word of God among the Pharisees. Or whether it means simply a distinguished teacher, the teacher, “Aren’t you the teacher of Israel, and you don’t know these things?” So it’s Jesus’ turn to express a bit of astonishment.

Nicodemus hears, “Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.” “How can these things be,” the teacher of Israel asks, and Jesus said, “Are you a teacher, and you don’t know these things?” Well that’s not uncommon at all, we know today, because there are many people who stand behind the pulpit who do not know what it is to be born again. They do not know it in their own experience; they do not know how to instruct someone else and how to be born again. Now it is clear from our Lord’s statement here that he expected Nicodemus to understand it as a teacher of the Old Testament and so we would gather then that there is perfectly good reason to find the new birth in the Old Testament. As you read through the Old Testament with this in mind, probably Ezekiel chapter 36 will come most readily to mind because there references made to the Lord sprinkling clean water upon Israel and giving them a new heart and a new spirit which seems to be just another way of speaking about a new birth.

So Nicodemus, he should have known because the Old Testament taught the necessity of the new birth. That also seems to be taught, or at least strongly alluded to in Jeremiah chapter 31 and Isaiah chapter 44. One thing that we also ought to note is that at this point water baptism as a Christian ordinance had not yet been instituted by the Lord. So it’s clear that when Jesus said, “Except a man be born of water and Spirit above,” and says that this teaching is in the Old Testament and Nicodemus should have known it, that water baptism is not indicated by, “Born of water and Spirit.” For in that case, we should have found it in the Old Testament. He said, “You’re a teacher in Israel, and you don’t know these things.” That’s one of the strong reasons why we know that when we read, “Except a man be born of water and Spirit,” that cannot be a reference to water baptism as it is so often taken by individuals today when they fail to see the historical context in which that statement is written.

Now Jesus then, after having asked the question out of some astonishment on his own human nature, says, “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, we speak what we know, we testify to that which we have seen; but you do not receive our testimony.” Now he speaks about his knowledge from his inherent nature, he says in verse 11, “We speak what we know, and we testify to that which we have

seen; and you don't receive our witness.” I want you to notice in verse 11 that the first, second person pronoun is singular, “Verily, verily, I say unto thee,” that's singular, “Nicodemus, we speak what we know, and testify to that which we've seen; and ye, (plural), don't receive our testimony.” So in effect, he's saying to Nicodemus, “Nicodemus, I tell you individually, we speak what we know, we testify to what we have seen; but you and those who are represented by you, Israel, you do not receive our testimony.” What does he mean when he says, “We speak what we know,” and, “We testify to what we have seen.” Well, most likely in the light of the context he's saying, “We,” John the Baptist about who we've been reading in the 1st chapter, John the Baptist, the disciples of John the Baptist who have become his disciples and also our Lord, “We teach what we know.”

Now Nicodemus has said to him, “We know that Thou art a teacher com from God,” so here is John the Baptist and John's disciples who have now become Jesus' disciples and the Lord Jesus himself and he is saying, “We speak what we know.” Isn't that interesting? There is no doubt about it so far as the Lord is concerned and including the others with him, they also had the sense of certainty about the things that they preached. They didn't say, “Now it is the considered opinion of the great mass of evangelical scholarship that such and such is so,” or, “We reckon that it might be so.” Now I have to say that, I have to say at times as I said with reference to that textual decision, it's a very difficult decision to make and I say I go with a certain viewpoint. But our Lord and the apostles, they spoke out of a sense of certainty and I think that ideally in spiritual things we should come to a sense of certainty.

So we speak what we know, we testify to that which we have seen. How different from the rabbis. The rabbis taught the other way. They said Rabbi Hillel says so and so, Rabbi Shammai says such and such. Jesus said, “You have been taught that it has been said this and that, but I say unto you.” The characteristic thing about our Lord's teaching was that he taught with authority. That's the way they described his teaching. I remember, and I've mentioned this to some of you before, I have a habit of asking people when they hear a new preacher or a different preacher or a well-known preacher, well what was your opinion of him and I asked an individual who had heard G. Campbell

Morgan speak a number of times once, what was your -- what was the thing about Dr. Morgan's teaching that impressed you? And he said he spoke with authority. That was characteristic of our Lord's teaching. It was so different to hear an individual speak with authority.

Now people should not speak with authority when they don't have authority. At the Theological Seminary in Chicago at which I teach they have student evaluation of the professors. Some very interesting things are said. They usually said, we greatly admire Dr. Johnson's Southern accent, we're not so used to hearing good English spoken [Laughter]. One of the young men said, “We particularly appreciate him because he roots for the Dallas Cowboys [Laughter].” But then there's some other interesting things too that were said and one of the men in a recent class that I taught scored me a bit for not speaking with authority. Are you surprised? Well, he said he gave me a word of advice, he said, “Speak with authority.” Well there are times when you can speak with authority and there are times when it's the part of wisdom, it seems to me, not to speak with authority. But it was characteristic of our Lord and the apostles; they spoke with authority and in some matters such as these, in matters of the new birth and matters of the way of salvation, and matters of the person and work of Jesus Christ we can speak with authority. So the Lord said, “We tell you Nicodemus what we know, we tell you what we've seen, but you are not receiving our ministry.” And he goes on to say and no man has ascended up to heaven but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man who is in heaven.

And this rejection reflects the incapacity of Israel. After all, there is only one person who has come down from heaven and has taught with authority like our Lord. If we speak what we know, we testify to what we've seen, we tell you earthly things you don't believe, how can I believe -- how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things? The earthly things are the things of the new birth; the heavenly things are the things concerning the Kingdom of God that he's been talking about. But no man has ascended up to heaven but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man who is in heaven. This is the qualification that the Lord Jesus has. No mere man ever went up to heaven,



he said, but the Son of man has come down from heaven and he has given us an understanding of heavenly things.

He didn't have to ascend to find out, he came down from heaven. And so we can believe the things that he says. He didn't mount up to heaven as if heaven were not his home to ask about things there and come back and tell us. But he came down from heaven because that was his dwelling place. And then John, I think, adds, “Who is in heaven.” Now that was a puzzle to some of the scribes, the ancient scribes, and so some of them dropped it out at that point. How can he be in heaven and on earth at the same time?

Well let's think for just one moment about who Jesus Christ really is. Remember, he was the divine person; he existed before he took to himself a human nature. He was not born so far as his person was concerned in the manger in Bethlehem, nor conceived by the Holy Ghost in the womb of the Virgin Mary. By virtue of the divine personality he's the eternal Son, eternally generated. And so at a point in time he took to himself an additional nature by the activity of the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Virgin Mary there was a conception and a son would be born. At the end of the period of gestation he was born and now an infant in a manger and he lived as an infant, he lived as a child, he lived as a young person. He finally came to his adulthood. But during all of those infantile years of the immature and undeveloped human nature, the *logos*, the divine person, though present was in eclipse of the person of Jesus Christ. The Scriptures speak of the fact that the Lord Jesus emptied himself, took upon himself the form of a servant, came in fashion as a man, finally offered himself up on Calvary's cross. My, this is meant not that the *logos* did not possess all of his deity and all of his attributes but he made no manifestation of his power through the human nature that he had assumed because the human nature was still infantine when he was an infant.

So when the infant Jesus lay in the manger, the *logos* was present and united with the human nature as really and completely as he is at this very instant but he made no exhibition of himself. There was no more thinking going on in the infant human mind of Jesus than in the case of other infants. The babe lay in the manger inactive, thinking only as an infant human apart from sin would.

Yet the eternal *logos* was personally united with this infant. There was a God-man in the manger, just as truly as there was a God-man upon the cross. But the human nature has reached maturity in the meantime. So we can say of the Lord Jesus Christ that he is still the same omniscient and omnipotent person that he always was when he was in the manger in Bethlehem, when he was on the cross, when he was carrying out his ministry, as he is now. He never relinquished his omniscience, he never relinquished his omnipotence. His omnipresence is part of his essential attribute that belongs to him because he is the Son of God. And even though an infant, he was as the divine person in his divine nature; omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent. It's amazing, isn't it, to think about.

So the Son of man was on earth and in heaven at one and the same instant. That statement is true. Because he was localized and limited by human body on the earth it doesn't follow that he did not continue to exist and act in heaven. And because the *logos* or the divine person did not think in and by the mind of the infant Jesus, it doesn't follow that he did not think in and by his own infinite mind. The humanity of the Lord Jesus Christ then knew as much and only as much as the *logos* was pleased to reveal and manifest through the human mind. That's why we read as our Lord carries out his ministry that at certain points in time he did not know certain things. He did not know the time of the Second Advent because the divine person had not revealed that information to the human nature of our Lord.

So he must grow to maturity. As the Scriptures say, he increased in wisdom and power, both in the presence of men and of God. So when we read here, “No man hath ascended up to heaven but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man who is in heaven.” By virtue of his divine personality he is in heaven omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent at the same time that he speaks with Nicodemus as the man, Christ Jesus. Magnificent mystery of the divine personality and yet of the human nature of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Augustine puts it this way succinctly, “He was born of a mother but did not quit his Father at the same time.” Born of Mary, but still Son, eternal Son, of the Father. So this statement, I think,

may have puzzled some scribes and not having the theology that people in Believers Chapel have puzzled over it and said, “Ah, some scribe must have made a mistake,” and so he eliminated it. Most of the manuscripts that do not have this particular expression are manuscripts that have their origin in the land of Egypt. And because they do and since there were some question there about the person of Christ, it’s likely that that’s the reason they are missing in some of those oldest manuscripts in my opinion.

Now then, that brings us to verses 14 and 15. The Lord continues and says, “Nicodemus, 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.” This is the purpose of the death of our Lord and he illustrates it by a beautiful Old Testament illustration. We’ve read the account, I don’t have to tell you about it again, the children of Israel were disobedient, they were complaining, the people of God complain so much. You know, if you look at the history of Israel you can say, wait a minute, I believe I’m reading the history of Believers Chapel, is that Old Testament or is that New Testament. Or the history of some individual Christian because it’s so easy for us to complain and murmur. God’s not pleased with that, he’s not pleased at all with it. A murmuring people is a sinning people.

And so as a result, because they were murmuring, they said we don’t like this bread that we’re eating, we don’t like this food, we’d like to go back to Egypt. In Egypt we can eat at The Mansion.<sup>1</sup> But there’s no Mansion out here in the wilderness. I can see not many of you have eaten at The Mansion, but some of you have. [Laughter] Well, I want to tell you the food there is a whole lot better probably than you would have found in the wilderness, except when you ate the mana; that was divine food. They said we don’t like this light bread. So as a result of that, God sent fiery serpents in among the people and they bit the people. And you know, just like in the movie *Venom* so I’m told, I haven’t seen this movie but I read a review of it, I understand that that Black Mamba in

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<sup>1</sup>This is a reference to The Mansion Restaurant, the dining facility of Rosewood Mansion on Turtle Creek (Dallas, TX).

*Venom* has a moral nature because it seems to have a pension for biting bad guys, so I'm told in that movie which illustrates the fact that there is a moral law of God and of the serpent world.

I'm going to try to keep from saying snake because somebody says that I say sna-ake so I'm going to talk about serpent. Well these serpents, these serpents had a moral nature because they bit those people that murmured and it was a fatal bite. Now all of this is designed to be a illustrative, as you can see without much -- you don't have to have much spiritual discernment to see that the Israelites in this story represent sinners; sinners who have sinned against the Lord God. And we read in the Bible, “All have sinned and come short of the glory of God and the wages of sin is death.”

So the Israelites represent the sinners, the physical death that they suffer from the bites of the serpents represents spiritual death. The serpent, the serpent of brass, represents the Son of man. Strange, isn't it? But the reason the serpent represents the Son of man is that it represents the Son of man as the sin sacrifice. And the serpents suggest the activity of the serpent, Satan, in the Garden of Eden. In fact, the term “brass” is *nachosbeth* which is very closely related to *nachash*, the Hebrew word for serpent. The healing that they received when they looked at the serpent of brass represents the life that we receive when we look to the Son of man. And the looking upon the serpent of brass, the divine remedy, represents the act of trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ. Is this too easy? Is it too easy to receive life by simply looking? Why, this is the divine illustration of what faith is. Anything else that is less free, less easy, less immediate than simply looking at the brazen serpent is not of the Lord. There is no baptism in the illustration, it's not, “Look unto the serpent of brass and be washed and then your sins will be forgiven.” It's not, “Look and take up a collection.” It's not, “Look and put some of my special ointment on like some religion.” It's not, “Look and pray.” It's not, “Look and be sure you're a member of the congregation of Israel.” It's not, “Look and go to college.” It's not, “Look and promise to do better.” It's not, “Look and reap, and sorrow over your sin.” It's simply, “Look and to look to the divine remedy of the serpent of brass, brought healing.” Now that is the illustration our Lord has in mind when he says, “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness,

even so must the Son of man be lifted; that whosoever believeth in him believing (looking), believing in him should not perish but have eternal life.”

To Nicodemus who heard this masterful illustration from the Old Testament, the hour of the cross ultimately became the hour of his life because finally this man who came to the Lord out of concern over spiritual things so came to a trust in the Lord Jesus that at the last he was willing to stand up and be counted, came to Pilate with Joseph of Arimathea, requested the body of the Lord Jesus, and assisted in the burial of this one who had been put to death by Israel and the gentiles for apostasy. That was the response of Nicodemus. What is your response?

If you think for a moment about this remedy remember, it was a supernatural remedy. The cross is a supernatural remedy. It is something that God has done of himself. We read that God has set forth Jesus Christ to be a propitiation through faith in his blood. That he might be just and the justifier of the one who believes in the Lord Jesus Christ. Salvation is of the Lord and the Lord Jesus Christ is God’s supernatural remedy for our sin, guilt, and condemnation. It was an all-sufficient remedy because the text in Exodus said, “If any man who has any kind of wound shall look, he shall live.” It was an infallible remedy because everyone who looked did live just as Jesus will say in the 6th chapter here, “Everyone who is given to me shall come to me, and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.” So once we have come to the Lord Jesus Christ that remedy that comes of new life is an infallible remedy. It’s an enduring remedy too. And the fact that the serpent to which they looked was a serpent of brass and not a serpent of any kind of serpent’s flesh suggested the enduring character of the remedy. The Lord Jesus, of course, is that serpent. In other words, he is the remedy in his work as the redeemer who became sin for us that we might become the righteousness of God and him.

He became the sacrifice and it is upon him that our judgment was meted out and he bore it to the full. Finally saying, “It is finished.” And heaven, now because the Son of God has satisfied heaven, heaven has no further way by which it may condemn those who cling to the cross of Jesus Christ. Remember too, the Scriptures say, “Christ became a curse for us.” We are delivered from

the curse of the law because he has been made a curse for us. So he's a serpent in the sense that he's the one upon whom the judgment for sin has fallen, the judicial sacrifice, the serpent. What a beautiful picture it is to think of a serpent representing the Lord but that's what happened when Calvary's cross took place. It was a humbling remedy because an individual must acknowledge that he not only was dying but that his only way of deliverance came from a serpent. Just like that that had struck them and caused their sickness. So the idea of the Lord Jesus becoming sin for us who are sinful is carried out in this. It was the only remedy too and there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we shall be saved but the name of Jesus Christ. And may I say also, it was a personal remedy because the Scriptures say in Numbers 21:9 that the individual was expected to look upon this himself personally. And when he looks he shall live, his blood can make the foulest cling, we sing, his blood avails for me.

Can you imagine this scene in some tent in Israel? There is a young Israelite who has been bitten by one of the fiery serpents and the result has been that he has become sick, the fever has come, it's getting worse and worse and finally in his tent the flaps open and one of his neighbors rushes in and says to the young man, “There is a remedy, Moses has made a serpent and put a serpent on the pole, and if you look to the serpent on the pole you shall live. Don't delay, come now.” Can you imagine that young man saying, “I don't see any connection with a brazen serpent and what's happened to me. That's irrational. How should you expect that I should have healing from a serpent's bite, a fiery serpent's bite, if I look at a brass serpent on a pole? It just doesn't make sense to me. What possible connection is there? If there was some medicine prescribed, I'd be happy to take the medicine. If he has some medicine, bring it to me but I don't see any connection between the two.” And the other person says, “Don't be so foolish, I already know of a handful of people who've looked and they live. Come look.” And the other person says, “It's amazing how credulous people are, they'll believe anything. They'll run after this and they'll run after that, but there is no connection. It's totally irrational.” And of course he's getting weaker and weaker and finally as his life flees from him he dies without the remedy. And all that was necessary was to look.

Well, you know that is exactly what happens to many people today. They are told that Jesus Christ is the remedy, that the sacrifice has been offered, and they say, “It doesn’t make sense to me, it’s irrational. Why do I need a serpent on a pole?” They do not see that they’re sick. They do not see that they had been bitten by the serpent of sin. They do not see that they are under guilt and under condemnation. They do not recognize that they are headed for a Christ-less eternity, therefore they are not anxious to take the remedy. And everything is so clear to those who see. If there is one thing in human nature that can be proved empirically it is that we are all sinners. Is that not amazing? Can you think of anyone who is not a sinner? Don’t try to think, there isn’t anyone. There is not a single person who is not a sinner. If you’d like to stand up in this audience and tell us how you are not a sinner, we’ll give you a few moments to do that. In fact, if you’ll get two or three people together we’ll have a program and let you give testimony to your sinlessness. We’ll also invite your wives and husbands and your close friends too. [Laughter] And we’ll see what they have to say about you as well.

You’ll see by the act, the very response that you make to that, that you know that deep down within your heart we are sinners. And the remedy, God says, is the cross of Jesus Christ and he says that we should look. Well, translated into the New Testament language, “Believe, look unto the Lord and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth. As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness even so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in him.” Believeth, not join the church, not observe the ordinances, not do good works, not because you’re educated. Whosoever believeth in him, whosoever commits himself to the Lord God, Acknowledging his sin, clinging to the cross of Christ is given a new birth, given new life, and he exercises as his first act of life, faith and repentance in the Lord Jesus Christ and is received into the family of God as a child of God. What a magnificent message, a magnificent message for ancient Israelites, bitten by fiery serpents, and for modern Texans also bitten by the serpent of sin. May God help you to come. Come to Christ. Receive life. Look to him. Look to him as the one who’s offered the atoning sacrifice and live.

[Prayer] Father, we are so grateful to Thee for this wonderful remedy accomplished by the Lord Jesus Christ who was in heaven. And who so far as the divine *logos* was concerned, remain not only in heaven but also upon earth throughout his ministry, performed his ministry. And as the God-man in his human nature, glorified, and returned to heaven and awaits the second coming when he shall come to establish his kingdom. We worship Thee for a savior who has made it possible for us who have been bitten by the fatal bite of sin to be healed. If there are some here who have never believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, O Father, give them no rest nor...

**[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]**