

THE BRONZE SERPENT IN THE WILDERNESS

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Nu 21:4-9 From Mount Hor they set out by the way to the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom. And the people became impatient on the way. ⁵ 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 we loathe this worthless food." ⁶ Then the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people, so that many people of Israel died. ⁷ And 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. ⁸ And the LORD said to Moses, "Make a fiery serpent and set it on a pole, and everyone who is bitten, when he sees it, shall live." ⁹ So Moses made a bronze serpent and set it on a pole. And if a serpent bit anyone, he would look at the bronze serpent and live.

Ταῦτα δὲ τύποι ἡμῶν ἐγενήθησαν, εἰς τὸ μὴ εἶναι ἡμᾶς ἐπιθυμητὰς κακῶν, καθὼς κακέينوι ἐπεθύμησαν.

1Co 10:6 Now these things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did.

Καὶ καθὼς Μωϋσῆς ὑψῶσεν τὸν ὄφιν ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ, οὕτως ὑψωθῆναι δεῖ τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, ¹⁵ ἵνα πᾶς ὁ πιστεύων ἐν αὐτῷ ἔχη ζωὴν αἰώνιον. ¹⁶ οὕτως γὰρ ἠγάπησεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν κόσμον, ὥστε τὸν υἱὸν τὸν μονογενῆ ἔδωκεν, ἵνα πᾶς ὁ πιστεύων εἰς αὐτὸν μὴ ἀπόληται ἀλλ' ἔχη ζωὴν αἰώνιον. ¹⁷ οὐ γὰρ ἀπέστειλεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν υἱὸν εἰς τὸν κόσμον ἵνα κρίνη τὸν κόσμον, ἀλλ' ἵνα σωθῆ ὁ κόσμος δι' αὐτοῦ. ¹⁸ ὁ πιστεύων εἰς αὐτὸν οὐ κρίνεται· ὁ δὲ μὴ πιστεύων ἤδη κέκριται, ὅτι μὴ πεπίστευκεν εἰς τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ μονογενοῦς υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ.

John 3:14-18 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵ that whoever believes in him may have eternal life." ¹⁶ For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. ¹⁸ Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.

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0. INTRODUCTION

0.1. THE STORY BEHIND JOHN 3:16

- Book of Numbers → after a great success: (the danger of distraction; “resting on your laurels”)
 - **Nu 21:1-4** When the Canaanite, the king of Arad, who lived in the Negeb, heard that Israel was coming by the way of Atharim, he fought against Israel, and took some of them captive. ² And Israel vowed a vow to the LORD and said, "If you will indeed give this people into my hand, then I will devote their cities to destruction." ³ And the LORD obeyed the voice of Israel (וַיִּשְׁמַע יְהוָה בְּקוֹל יִשְׂרָאֵל) and gave over the Canaanites, and they devoted them and their cities to destruction. So the name of the place was called Hormah. ⁴ From Mount Hor they set out by the way to the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom. And the people became impatient on the way.
- IMPATIENCE

0.2. WAYS OF SALVATION – UNITY AND VARIETY

- **Ex 17:11** Whenever Moses held up his hand, Israel prevailed, and whenever he lowered his hand, Amalek prevailed...
- **Ex 15:23-25** When they came to Marah, they could not drink the water of Marah because it was bitter; therefore it was named Marah. ²⁴ And the people grumbled against Moses, saying, "What shall we drink?" ²⁵ And he cried to the LORD, and the LORD showed him a log, and he threw it into the water, and the water became sweet.
- **Nu 16:46-48** And Moses said to Aaron, "Take your censer, and put fire on it from off the altar and lay incense on it and carry it quickly to the congregation and make atonement for them, for wrath has gone out from the LORD; the plague has begun." ⁴⁷ So Aaron took it as Moses said and ran into the midst of the assembly. And behold, the plague had already begun among the people. And he put on the incense and made atonement for the people. ⁴⁸ And he stood between the dead and the living, and the plague was stopped.
- One principle → faith
- Many ways → metaphors; ways of appropriation;
- culture; sinfulness; intelligence; education; type of mind; emotionality; ...
- → methods of presentation
- → ways of preaching

1. SIN

1.1. IMPATIENCE

- **Nu 21:4** (וַתִּקְצַר נַפְשֵׁי־הָעָם בַּדֶּרֶךְ)
- faith: [Thayer] πίστις, πίστεως, ἢ the Septuagint for אֱמוּנָה, several times for אֱמֶת and אֱמוּנָה;
 - conviction of the truth of anything, belief ...
 - fidelity, faithfulness, i. e. the character of one who can be relied on
- [Thayer] πιστός, πιστή, πιστόν (πείθω the Septuagint mostly for אֱמוּנָה;
 - *trusty, faithful*; of persons who show themselves faithful in the transaction of business...
 - in the N. T. one who trusts in God's promises, Gal. 3:9; is convinced that Jesus has been raised from the dead, opposed to a;pistoj, John 20:27

1.2. THE PROBLEM OF ENDURANCE

- **Mt 24:13** But the one who endures to the end (ὑπομείνας εἰς τέλος) will be saved.
- Faith & Time (Abraham → Heb 11, waiting for the future world)

2. JUDGMENT

2.1. SERPENTS

- → Eden(?) → impatience for knowledge (“emancipation”)
- **Rev 20:2** that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan...
- impatience; unbelief; → the “second soil” of the Sower Parable...
- unreliability; unfaithfulness; betrayal; broken promises; (→ divorce...)

2.2. THE PROBLEM OF SPIRITUAL EMANCIPATION

- WHAT is spiritual emancipation? → (1) knowledge; (2) being; (3) dwelling;
- HOW is it achieved? → spiritual identification with Jesus Christ
- WHEN is it attained? → after the resurrection

2.3. GOD’S WAY OF EMANCIPATION

- All knowledge in Christ! (**Col 2:2-3** that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ, ³ in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.)
- **Phil 3:20-21** But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.
- **1Jo 3:2** Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we will be like him, because we shall see him as he is.

3. SALVATION

3.1. THE JUDGEMENT ON JUDGEMENT

- the serpent “hanged” → cursed;
- → Dt & Gal → cursed (**Dt 21:23** a hanged man is cursed by God; **Gal 3:13** "Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree")
- → **Dan 6:8,12,15** ...the law of the Medes and the Persians, which cannot be revoked → Book of Esther, Purim...

3.2. A LOOK OF FAITH

- a bronze serpent: what that can be for? → “consider,” “pay attention,”
- **Acts 3:1-5** Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour. ² And a man lame from birth was being carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple that is called the Beautiful Gate to ask alms of those entering the temple. ³ Seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, he asked to receive alms. ⁴ And Peter directed his gaze at him, as did John, and said, "Look at us." ⁵ And he fixed his attention on them, expecting to receive something from them.
- **Isa 51:1-2** "Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness, you who seek the LORD: look to the rock from which you were hewn, and to the quarry from which you were dug. ² Look to Abraham your father and to Sarah who bore you; for he was but one when I called him, that I might bless him and multiply him.
- The spiritual eyes: **Gal 3:1** O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified.

3.3. FAITH & FAITH(FULNESS)

- the ACT of faith & the STATE of faith(fulness)

- Gn 15:6 → Rom 4:3
 - **Gn 15:6** And he believed (וַיִּשְׁמַע) the LORD, and he counted it to him (לִּי) as righteousness.
 - **Rom 4:3** "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness.
- Hab 2:4 → Rom 1:17
 - **Hab 2:3-4** For still the vision awaits its appointed time; it hastens to the end- it will not lie. If it seems slow, wait for it; it will surely come; it will not delay. ⁴ "Behold, his soul is puffed up; it is not upright within him, but the righteous shall live by his faith (וַיִּשְׁמַע בְּאֵמוּנָתוֹ יְהוָה).
 - **Rom 1:16-17** For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. ¹⁷ For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith."

3.4. JOHN 3:16

- An **act** of faith – or a **state** of faithfulness?
- The story in the wilderness links the sin of *impatience* with the singular **act** of faith
- The expression (ὁ πιστεύων) is a substantive verb (Slovak: „veriaci, pracujúci, vedúci...“) → a person defined by activity... → a state of being → a permanent attitude...
- **John 3:16** For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him (πᾶς ὁ πιστεύων εἰς αὐτὸν) should not perish but have eternal life (μὴ ἀπόληται ἀλλ' ἔχη ζωὴν αἰώνιον).
- Paul ↔ James
- Rom 1:17 → “from faith to faith”
- **2Cor 4:16** Though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being **renewed day by day**.
 - **Gal 2:19** I have been **crucified with Christ**.
 - **Eph 2:5-6** ...even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ- by grace you have been saved- ⁶ and raised us up with him and **seated us with him** in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus

4. TO REMEMBER

- Saving faith is BOTH an **act** of confidence AND a **state** of perseverance.
- Enduring to the end means renewing your faith and confidence in God *day by day*.
- The key and constant principle of faith is in the loving identification with Jesus on the cross and in his glory.