

The Brazen Serpent

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Preacher: Donald J. Macaulay

[0 : 00] Let's turn now to the New Testament, to the Gospel of John and chapter 3 and read some verses here. The Gospel of John and chapter 3 and we'll be flipping back from this passage backwards and forwards to the passage in numbers particularly so if you keep both marks it would be helpful.

In the Bible known passage, now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus a ruler of the Jews. 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.

Jesus answered him truly truly I say to you unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus said to him how can a man be born when he is old?

When he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born. Jesus answered truly truly I say to you unless one is born of water and the spirit he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

That which is born of the flesh is flesh and that which is born of the spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you you must be born again. The wind blows where it wishes and you hear its sound but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes.

[1 : 21] So it is with everyone who is born of the spirit. Nicodemus said to him how can these things be? Jesus answered him are you the teacher or our teacher depending on the translation of Israel and yet you do not understand these things?

Truly truly I say to you we speak of what we know and bear witness to what we have seen but you do not receive our testimony. If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things?

No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven the Son of Man. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness so must the Son of Man be lifted up that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

For God so loved the world that he gave us only Son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life and so on.

I am sure you have already noticed the connection between the three passages that we have read. What is commonly referred to as Nehusdan or the Brazen serpent.

[2 : 41] Nehusdan simply means the Brazen serpent it means exactly the same thing in Hebrew. And it is quite fascinating that the three mentions that take place here are exactly at periods of 700 years.

It is 700 years after the incident with Moses in the wilderness that Hezekiah destroys Nehusdan and it is approximately 700 years later that it appears again in this conversation between our Lord and Nicodemus.

Why does Jesus bring it up in the conversation with Nicodemus? If we were to look at the whole conversation with Nicodemus and I am sure it is one that you have heard many, many sermons on as he opens up to him the fact that one has to be born again and that that birth is of the Holy Spirit, Nicodemus of course fails to understand what he is talking about.

And so our Lord brings up another image to him. In verse 14, as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. Now Nicodemus would have been very familiar with that particular statement. He would have understood immediately what it was referring to as a teacher of Israel that is a rabbi, one of the members of the Sanhedrin as we see him later on.

[4 : 23] He would be very, very familiar with the books of the law and the prophets. And he would have understood the reference. But whether he understood what Jesus actually said to him about the Son of man being lifted up that's another question altogether.

We don't hear much more about Nicodemus. We only see him again once in the Sanhedrin that Jesus is when they are discussing what to do with Jesus and again of course at the tomb along with Joseph of Armaea.

But there are many who think that as a secret believer that he was one of the 70 that Jesus sent out. I'm not quite sure about that but some commentators think he was, some think he wasn't. Others think that he didn't actually come to faith until after the resurrection. And perhaps some even suggest that not even until Pentecost until the day of Pentecost.

But that would be entering into speculation. But the one clear thing we can say about Nicodemus is that he did come to faith.

[5 : 35] Whether he understood what Jesus is saying to him here that's another question altogether. He would have understood the reference and for you and I to understand what Jesus is speaking about here we need to understand the reference as well as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness.

And in order to understand it we need to go back to this passage in numbers and have a look at it in much more detail.

There we go. And so we see particularly from verse 4 from Mount Horde they set out by the way to the Red Sea to go round the land of Eden.

Now in order to understand the situation here we have to remember certain things. 39 and a bit years have passed since they left Egypt.

How many are actually alive who came out of Egypt in the original exodus? We don't know for sure. We only know that Moses, Joshua and Caleb are certainly among those who are still alive.

[6 : 53] But it would seem very likely that here very many if not all of the generation that left Egypt have perished by the way.

But have died as God said that they would because they failed to believe the report of the spies. Again I'm abbreviating things here. I'm not going into the report of the spies and why they didn't believe it and so on.

If you're not familiar with that then you can have a look at it yourself when you go home. But as a consequence of that you remember that God had told them that they would wander through the wilderness for a period of time until that generation that had not believed his word and the report of the good spies had perished.

And so what we're dealing with now is a people who were not the original rubble that came out of Egypt if I can put it that way.

We have to remember that about a million or so people who came out of Egypt not all were of the children of Israel. They were intermarriage and half-breeds if I can use that term respectfully among them as well.

[8 : 06] Because we read at one point for example of the man whose father was an Egyptian and whose mother was an Israelite being punished later on for blaspheming.

We read that story in numbers just earlier on in the book of Numbers as well. We'll come back to one or two of these incidents later on.

But here they are in the wilderness of Peron at this point and they are about to enter the promised land. Now things have happened in the previous chapter that have changed the situation for them quite a bit.

If you look back at chapter 20, we don't have this on the screen, it doesn't matter anyway, you'll see at verse 18 in chapter 20 that Edom has refused to allow the children of Israel to pass through by the king's highway.

The children of Edom were the descendants of Esau and technically therefore related to the children of Israel of course. But they refused them safe passage through their land.

[9 : 18] And you see that in verse 20, but he said you shall not pass through even though they offered to pay etc and so on, Edom came out against them with a large army and with a strong force.

Therefore Edom refused to give Israel passage through his territory so Israel turned away from them. And immediately after that there is the death of Aaron at Mount Horror on the border of the land of Edom.

Now that would have been quite a shock of course to the people of Israel to have lost their high priest, the first high priest. But you remember of course that God had promised for the succession

of the priesthood.

And you see at the end of chapter 20 how Aaron is taken up to the top of the mountain where he dies and Eliezer succeeds him in the priesthood.

And then we have this little passage of the Canaanite king of Arad fighting against Israel and taking some of them captive. And we see that God listens to rather than obeys the voice of Israel and Israel defeat them.

[10 : 30] Whether they actually managed to rescue the captives is not stated. We assume that they did. You see in the first verse he fought against Israel and took some of them captive.

There is no further mention of them but it is very likely that those captives, they were not killed by the look of it, they were taken as hostages that they were released.

And so we come then from Mount Horror to set out by the way of the Red Sea to go round the land of Edom. Now you have to put yourself in the picture here and this is where a map helps us enormously.

There we go. Now it is very useful to be able to visualize where exactly they are at this time.

They are round about here. Mount Horror is round about here. And the simple way, they have been wandering around this wilderness for the last 40 or years or so, 39 and a bit years.

[11 : 30] The simplest way would have been to go straight through Edom and up into what was the Promised Land. But because of Edom refusing them passage, they are forced to turn back and are forced to come down here to the top of the Red Sea, to the valley of Araba here.

And it is here that the incident with the Brazen serpent, but with the fiery serpents takes place. And from then on they are forced to go all the way round Edom, round across and it is through Moab that they eventually come into the Promised Land later on.

The red lines on the map are the main highways. Now I don't think of course of highways of roads with double lanes and marking on them but simply the tracks that were taken by the caravans that sold merchandise from one place to the other.

And their hope had been probably to be able to follow one of these main routes up or maybe even up the Araba valley towards the Dead Sea and then into what would become the Promised Land. But do you remember of course that at all times they had been subject to the pillar of fire by day and the pillar of fire by night and the pillar of cloud by day to God leading them.

[13 : 01] But they get awfully disappointed and awfully discouraged and it is little wonder that after 39 years of wondering about the desert etc suddenly to be told that they have got to undertake another long way round and a perilous journey at that would have made the people not only disappointed but rather upset.

And one of the reasons for that was that they had to cross this particular valley. And it's almost certain that the place they crossed the valley would have been somewhere down here, somewhere down near the Red Sea.

That's what the text tells us. They set out by the way of the Red Sea to go round the land of Eden. And the people became impatient on the way and they 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 love this worthless food?

Now the worthless food they're referring to is of course the manna that had been provided by the Lord for them every single day except on the Sabbath with a double portion on the day before the Sabbath and that therefore they had not lacked.

[14 : 21] In the course of the 40 years or so that they are in the wilderness they had never lacked food or water. God had provided it for them in most miraculous ways.

And not only provided food and water for them but also for their animals. We tend to forget this. But when they are coming out of Egypt and now at the entrance to the Promised Land 40 years later not only have they multiplied enormously, it's reckoned that there are several million of them at this time including women and children.

Although we have the men numbered later on the book of Numbers really its title in Hebrew actually means in the wilderness although we refer to it as number.

But we have a number of the fighting men given to us in the book of Numbers and again if you want to have a look at that you can see in total up yourself.

But remember you need to add women and children to that so you're doubling up at least the figure maybe maybe trebling it some people think.

[15 : 26] And they have an enormous amount of animals with them. We tend to forget that. Because one of the things that happens later on when they come into the Promised Land and they cross a bit further up and they come into the land of Gilead you remember that Ruben and Gad in the half tribe of Manasseh ask to be allowed to stay there because there's good pasture and one of the reasons they say it is because the scripture says they had much cattle.

And that of course makes perfect sense to us because if you think of all the sacrificial system that had been in place the number of animals that were sacrificed every single day then God has provided for them during all this time not only a sustenance for them but also for their animals. And there would be no doubt at points that many of these animals as sheep and the goats not only providing of course clothing for them but also have provided milk and meat and various other things as well.

So although we tend to think very often that their sustenance was nothing other than manna that was probably not the case. They probably did have a very down.

But they still complained. You remember them complaining before and the Lord sent quails to them in number 11 when they complained they had no meat to eat.

[16 : 56] How often did they complain? The generation before had complained about being brought out of Egypt and wanting to go back to the cucumbers and the melons and the various other things.

And this next generation once again does exactly the same thing. They failed to see the number of blessings that they had been given.

They had been given the law. They had been given a covenant with God in Mount Sinai. They had become the Lord's special people. The Lord had delivered them from Egypt.

He had provided for them again and again. And even in that provision you remember of course that both Moses and Aaron had been forbidden to enter the Promised Land because of their sin at the waters of Meribah.

When Moses instead of speaking through the rock had actually struck the rock and he dies later on on the top of Mount Pisgah in Moab looking into and able to see the Promised Land.

[18 : 02] So here they are. Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? How often do you and I complain about God's providence?

Here we are. As I look at you this evening I don't see anyone who doesn't look reasonably well fed. I won't say anything more than that. You're not suffering from a lack of anything.

You may be in financial difficulty but by the standards of many other people in the world you are rich. You are very well off.

We complain so much about the weather but how many people in so many other countries would be so happy to see even a fraction of the rain that we have had in the last month.

And yet it is in human nature is it not to complain all the time. And when things don't seem to be going well with us very often when we can't blame anyone else for it who do we blame?

[19 : 05] We blame God. God's providence. He's not answering our prayer. He's not providing for us in the way that we want them to do.

And of course again you have to think well why should he? Why should he provide for you in the way that you want?

Because scripture tells us so often that he does all things well. But he provides for you and will continue to provide for you in the same way as he is providing for the children of Israel.

You see the journey through the wilderness and the entrance to the promised land is of course a metaphor for the Christians walk through this life.

You and I are journey through the wilderness and as we journey through the wilderness we will come against great difficulties. Some of them will be of our own making as it is with the people here.

[20 : 09] Some will be of our own making but others will be God's providence and sometimes you and I will have no answer and fail to understand God's providence.

If we could understand everything in God's providence we would be working it out by logic and there would be no need for faith. I'm sure many of you not so very long ago would have heard of course of the sudden death of Ivor Martin's son-in-law.

On holiday from Peru here young man 45 years old married to Mary Catherine, two young children and dropped dead of a heart attack in Scotland.

How do you explain God's providence and God's working there? It requires great faith to be able to deal with and to overcome a situation like that and it is of course not easy and there may be things in your life and my life where we cannot understand at times God's providence but this is where faith comes in.

But you see the Australians complaint here leads them to something else. The Lord sent fiery serpents among the people and they bit the people so that many died.

[21 : 32] Now the valley of Araba here is still famous for these particular serpents. Shall we have a look at it?

We notice of course that it is so well covered, the lights were out, it's so difficult to see against the stony background, it was a stony desert.

This is what's known as a carpet viper or a sea saw viper. Its bite is inevitably fatal and there is still no antidote to its poison and they are extremely numerous in that particular area even up until this day and very well camouflaged.

Very hard to actually see them. When you see the image it clarifies or it should clarify for you a couple of things.

You can see of course that the colour is virtually the same colour as the brazen serpents. Very probably it wasn't actually made of brass according to our historians they tell us that brass hadn't really been discovered by this time.

[22 : 49] It was probably made of copper and so you can see again that the copper colour of course blends in perfectly with that. But here are the fiery serpents.

Now here's a curiosity. It wasn't that they weren't there before. They had been here for quite a while but no serpents had bitten the people.

But at the point of complaint, God's restraining grace is removed. And when God's restraining grace is removed things happen in our world that sometimes we fail to understand.

I was reading an article not so long ago that suggested that God's restraining grace being removed is what is causing coronavirus at the moment.

And it's curious isn't it? The writer suggested that the two countries that were most affected at the time China and Iran when he was writing were both major enemies of the word of God.

[24 : 00] Now whether that is the case or not that's debatable you and I could argue about that and maybe afterwards in fellowship with our coffee afterwards maybe we can argue that point.

But what matters here is that the serpents were there before. But now as God's restraint has taken away they bit the people so that many people of Israel died.

Now it doesn't say how many but it was enough for the people to do something and you notice what they do. The people came to Moses and said we have sinned.

And there is the first step that Nicodemus and you and I have to take when we come to look at the Lord raised upon the cross.

We have to recognize that we have sinned. We have to recognize that we are sinners. Many times people will say well you know sinning is just another synonym for being human because all humans are sinners.

[25 : 08] There is a sense in which that is true. But not all humans realize that they are sinners and it is only when you realize that you are a sinner that you realize that there is a need for something.

The people came to Moses who did they come to? They didn't go directly to God. They went to Anathrisesar. They went to a mediator.

And we have seen time and time again through the wilderness that the people will pray. You see that at Mount Sinai. They ask Moses to speak for them to intercede for them because they are afraid of God.

And here they come again when they ask Moses pray to the Lord that he take away the serpents from us.

This is exactly what Nicodemus has to learn that for his sin to be taken away an intercessor, a mediator is necessary.

[26 : 13] But he still has to see the process of mediation. And what happens then? So Moses prayed for the people.

Isn't that what your intercessor the Lord Jesus Christ does for you on the right hand of the Father that he is praying constantly for you? Has it ever occurred to you that you have two members of the Trinity praying for you?

One the Holy Spirit here on earth which is helping you. Romans 8 tells us that it's helping you in your prayers. But we know not what to pray at times or how to pray. And the Spirit itself make an intercession for us. One here on earth but another on heaven on the right hand of the Father who is interceding for his people all the time. Isn't that a comforting thought? That whatever situation you are in you have two members of the Trinity who are interceding for you at all times.

[27 : 19] Moses prayed for the people and the Lord said to Moses make a fiery serpent and set it on a pole and everyone who has bitten when he sees it shall live.

That's a very curious thing as well. God is telling Moses in effect to make an image. The very thing that he himself had forbidden in the second commandment. Now shall it make no graven image. But there's a difference because that forbidding was to bow down and to worship it. They are not to worship this fiery serpent but everyone who has bitten when he sees it shall live. So Moses made a bronze serpent and set it on a pole and then we have a very famous painting by a guy called James Tissot.

[28 : 20] You may prefer the Rubens painting. There are various other paintings of this. This is a very famous scene that has been painted many, many times. And there is the scene supposedly of Moses with the serpent on a pole.

Now it's very unlikely that it was actually like that but it could have been. Because if you consider the size of the camp, let's just say for the sake of argument, two million people in a camp. You've seen images of the refugee camps in Syria and so on where there are up to a couple of million people and you see the size of them. They're spread out over several square kilometers. How on earth could anyone see the serpent from there at that kind of distance? Now it suggests in the painting of course the idea is that the people actually who were bitten crawled to where the pole was and then had a look at it.

But that's not what scripture says. What scripture says, everyone who is bitten when he sees it. And some commentators think that the Levites, perhaps the high priest some suggest, actually walked around the camp holding up the serpent so that people could see it.

[29 : 37] Scripture doesn't tell us how it was done but that is the way that relief was given. And the image I suppose is fairly clear and that it shows us exactly that being carried out.

Whether that is a good picture of Moses or not, I have no idea. I've never met him so I can't really tell you there. But that's the typical Old Testament representation of the leading figures at the time. And that then if a serpent bit anyone he would look at the bronze serpent and live. Put yourself in that situation if you'd been bitten by one of these serpents.

And the reason that they were called fiery serpents wasn't because of their colour or anything else. It was because of the effect of the poison. As the poison spread from the bite through your bloodstream it was as if your body was on fire.

Extremely painful. And that is still the case nowadays. And so what you see then is that the serpents, here's a curiosity, the serpents are not taken away.

[30 : 54] God does not remove the serpents. But what does he do? He provides a remedy so that anyone who looked at the bronze serpent would live.

It required an enormous amount of faith, did it not, to look at that serpent and believe that it could heal you. To believe that a lump of copper or metal or whatever it was stuck on the top of a pole could actually heal you.

But if you consider something else, the poison still remained in the bloodstream of the people, those who were bitten.

And exactly the same way, your sin remains in your bloodstream from the moment you are born until the moment that you die.

That's why we're told that the wages of sin is death. And there would of course come a time in these people's history when they would eventually die.

[32 : 07] But in the same way as a remedy is given, not the serpent taken away, not the poison taken away, there is a similar remedy given for the sin that exists in you and I from the moment of our birth until the moment of our death.

And what is that remedy? The remedy is exactly what Jesus says to Nicodemus. As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

Our Lord would be lifted up on a cross in the same way as the serpent is lifted up in the pole. And the cross itself and the pole and the serpent have no merit in them themselves.

There is nothing in the serpent or the pole and there is nothing in the cross that can heal anyone. It is what takes place between the person who is looking in faith at the pole and the serpent and at the cross and the person who is on the cross.

That is where the effect comes from and where faith leads you. You see the cure is given by whom?

[33 : 45] It is given by God. It is God who gives the cure for the serpents. It's divinely ordained.

There is an efficacy in the brazen serpent in exactly in the same way that there is an efficacy in the cross.

Not because of the cross of itself but because of what takes place on the cross. And here we see from the Old Testament to the New a parable, a foretype of what happens as Jesus is explaining to Nicodemus.

Now it is very unlikely that Nicodemus understood this until the crucifixion. Even if he understood it then, you remember the two on the road to Emmaus?

They didn't understand the cross at all. You remember even the disciples, although they had been told again and again by our Lord that he must be crucified and that he would rise the third day.

They didn't believe it. In fact they had forgotten all about it. It is curious isn't it that the Romans and the Jews, his enemies, and put a seal on the tomb but the disciples, his followers, probably Nicodemus among them, didn't actually believe until it happened.

[35 : 13] I wonder how many of the Israelites failed to look in faith at the brazen serpent. And yet there are so many today aren't there? None of us here, I hope, I believe, who would look at the cross and not see anything in it but there are so many other people as we come up to Easter not so far away who will look at the cross and the activities taking round about Easter and they'll see nothing in it.

Why not? Because of course they lack the faith and the necessity to come to realise their need of what took place on the cross.

You see the Old Testament dovetails into the new for us again and again and again and without the old we cannot understand the new and without the new we cannot fully understand the old.

The two things are one complete thing. It's amazing as I said that we're dealing with a period of 1400 years from the brazen serpent to Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus and yet he brings up the same image.

And no one can understand the lifting up of the Son of Man unless he also understands the brazen serpent.

[36 : 39] Both are divinely instituted. Both are instituted. Both are given in order to heal.

One heals the bite of the serpent but it doesn't take away the poison. The other one heals the effect of sin but it doesn't take sin away.

You and I will continue to sin in thought word and deed until the day that we die. And for some that's a terrible thought but yet you have to think of it in another way.

You have to remember that we are sinners in the process. We are saints in the process of sanctification. And that sanctification will go on until the moment that we enter the promised land.

And you see how we mix over the Old Testament metaphors with the new. We often talk about death as crossing over Jordan, entering the promised land, going to our eternal home.

[37 : 46] And all these images can fit together for us. Wasn't this what Isaiah said? Isaiah 45 when God said to him, look unto me, all ye ends of the earth.

For I am God and there is none else. And the Hebrew word that's used for look there literally means to have to turn round and look.

That's probably what many of the Israelites had to do in order to look at the brazen serpent from where they were lying in agony. That they might actually have to turn round and look. Especially if it was in a fixed hill perhaps on one side of the camp.

There are some commentators think that the serpents were only attacking on one side of the camp. And therefore the pole was simply put up on that side of the camp.

But there's nothing in scripture that says that. But it's possible. But when we come to the cross, you and I have to turn and look and to see what is taking place on the cross.

[38 : 54] And we have to see why it is taking place on the cross. What do we see? We see Jesus made in the likeness of sinful flesh as Paul puts it in Romans 8.

And we see that that likeness of ourselves in sinful flesh is a plan that was instituted before the foundation of the world.

And so many people say, especially if we come up to Easter, they say, was there no other way?

Was there no other way for the Israelites to be cured of the bite?

Yes, of course there was. God could have miraculously cured all of them just like that. Or he could have eliminated the serpents just like that, but he didn't.

Why not? He cost it four shadows, the cross for us. Why was there no other way except the cross?

[39 : 54] Because no one else could pay the price of God's justice. So often in the Old Testament, and we see it through the wilderness again and again and again, God's justice comes into action to show Israel that his commandments must be obeyed.

I've already made reference to the man in Numbers 11 where he cursed the name of God. And you remember that he was taken out in stone.

And a little bit further on in Numbers 15, there's a man gathering sticks for a fire on the Sabbath.

Imagine such a trivial thing compared to what we do nowadays on the Sabbath.

Imagine if God dealt with us now in his justice fully as every sin deserves, that the full wrath of God would be poured out upon us in the way that it was many times in the wilderness.

On the children of Israel. Imagine how many of us would be left standing at the end of the day.

None. Absolutely none.

[41 : 06] But aren't you thankful that there was one who was placed on the cross, one who in perfect obedience and in perfect holiness was able to pay the price of God's perfect justice.

And when he does that, the blood of the atonement cleanses from all sin. How does Paul put it? He says, therefore there is now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.

And that is your lot this evening, if you have looked at the cross and come faith to see what is being done there.

Who could look at the presence of the cross? Anyone. Anyone who was bitten. There was no restriction. Who can look at the cross?

Anyone. Anyone who is tainted with sin. Anyone can come to the cross. But unless you come in faith to believe that you will be healed off your sin, then the cross will have no effect upon you.

[42 : 27] Now that is a message of course that you've heard many times and a message that I know that you all have taken to heart and that you all believe. But it's quite fascinating isn't it, to see the parallels that exist between the brazen serpent and the cross of Calvary.

You see the image of death becomes an image of life. And it is temporal in one sense, but then it becomes eternal.

And as we see Moses' role as the mediator and intercessor, we see a greater role for our Lord Jesus Christ, not only as mediator and intercessor, but as high priest as well.

Priest, prophet and king, the officers of the Lord Jesus Christ, all come into play in this situation. So time has passed, so I'll just finish with this.

No one has ascended to heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. And as Moses lifted up the serpent and the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up that whoever believes in him, and you notice there's the faith, believe.

[43 : 41] You have to believe in him. May have eternal life. Why? And the verse that we all know when everybody or most people have heard of, although few understand it, for God so loved the world that he gave us only Son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

But God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

And world there is not a universal savior. It is a savior meaning that from all parts of the world, all races, all tongues, all tribes, that's what we see in the book of Revelation.

And remember, of course, that the book of Revelation shows us another image of the serpent, that old serpent, the devil.

That's how he's referred to in the book of Revelation. And that is probably one of the reasons why it was an image of a serpent. It may well have been to remind them of the fall.

[44 : 50] Remember it was a serpent that deceived Eve. And then, of course, Adam falls as well. May have been to remind them of serpent worship in Egypt, where it was quite common and used again as a cult of healing to worship the snakes.

But the real reason was to foreshadow the cross, to show us and point us to what was to take place so that Nicodemus and so many others, and you and I and so many others, would understand the purpose of the cross.

And that we would be able to come in faith to look at the one who is there and who died for us and who made atonement with his own blood.

Let us pray. Our Father in Heaven, we give you thanks this evening that we are able to meditate on these things. We give you thanks how the Old Testament teaches us to look at the new.

To come in faith to see the Son of God lifted up. And lifted up has punishment for our sin, that he takes a vicarious role in the expiation of our sins.

[46 : 04] We thank you that he has paid the price for us. And we ask that you would help us to remember that day by day as we go on through this wilderness, suffering from the effects of everything around the boat, help us to trust implicitly in the finished work of Canterbury.

Be with us now as we conclude our worship and pardons and through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.