

“Lifted Up”

GOSPEL OF JOHN SUMMER SERIES

Numbers 21:4-9 Hebrews 11:1-6 John 3:1-16

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<-- **This is the Rod of Asclepius.** It is a snake wrapped around on a pole. In Greek mythology, Asclepius was the god of health and medicine. It is said to be the basis of the modern day medical symbol called the **caduceus**. -->



However, this symbol actually comes from the Bible. A 1,000 years before Asclepius and Greek mythology, God told Moses to make a bronze snake and put it on a pole to save the people from poisonous snake bites. We heard the story today in our Old Testament scripture reading.

The Israelites constantly complained against God and His servant Moses in the Wilderness after the Exodus, and finally the Lord had had enough! The consequence of their sin and rebellion was poisonous snakes. That day, the Lord judged the peoples' sins by sending snakes into their camp. The day of grace was over for many people that day. But the faithful repented, they confessed their sins, and called out to God for help. God, in His grace, heard their prayer and He provided a way for them to live. For those who looked at the bronze snake, and believed God's promise that they would live, the poisonous snake bites were harmless. God provided a way of salvation for His People. **By believing God's promise of life in the snake on the pole, the people lived.**

That bronze snake on a pole was a type of Christ: it foreshadowed what Jesus would do for us¹!

Jesus is the way of salvation that God has provided for us! We don't look to a bronze snake lifted up on a pole, but rather we look to the Son of God lifted up on the cross. That's where our salvation is found!

Jesus uses the story of the bronze snake in the Old Testament to teach us about Himself and His work of salvation for us.

[Jesus said,] Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in Him may have eternal life. For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. John 3:14-16

The reality is that everyone of us has been *snake bitten*; not by a poisonous snake, but by sin. **The same snake that was in the Garden of Eden is also in our lives**; Satan leads us into temptation, sin, guilt and shame. Like the people in the Old Testament story, we **complain** against God; we are **unhappy, discontent, unsatisfied**; we **slander** and **gossip**; we **criticize** and **grumble** about other people; **rebellion** is seen in our lives. We deserve to have poisonous snakes biting each of us. We all have been *bitten* by sin; and we will all die unless God provides a way for us to live.

And God does provide a way to live! *Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, so that everyone who believes in Him may have eternal life.*

God provided a way of salvation for you in His Son Jesus Christ. God Himself rescues you from the poison of sin. Jesus was lifted up on a cross

¹ Ironically, this is the only place in Scripture where Jesus is compared to a snake! Usually, Satan is associated with a snake (Gen 3, Rev 12), but here it is a visual image of Jesus, who like that snake on a pole, was lifted up on a cross for all people to be healed from sin! This use of an Old Testament story is called a "type" that points to Jesus --> Jesus replaces the OT "type" and is greater than the "type", since He is God and His work has eternal significance.

so that your sins would be forgiven, and that you would be spared death because of your sins. Because Jesus was “lifted up” on a cross, God promises to forgive you, heal you, and give you eternal life! You will not die in your sins! You have life in Christ!

Jesus returns to this Old Testament image of “lifting up” later in John:

When I am lifted up from the earth, [Jesus said,] will draw all men to myself." John 12:32

So Jesus said, "When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am [the one I claim to be] John 8:28

Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in Him may have eternal life.

God provided a rescue from sin for you: **today believe it!** In the Old Testament story, everyone could see the snake on the pole, but only those who **believed** what God said about it were healed and lived².

It's the same today with the cross. Everyone can see the cross, in fact, there are crosses everywhere --> from jewelry to tattoos! Crosses are everywhere! But not everyone **believes** what God says about the cross. By faith, we trust God's promise that Jesus is the One God sent to rescue you from sin; that Jesus was “lifted up” on a cross for you so that you would live forever!

The reason that the Gospel of John was written was so that you would **believe** that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by **believing** you

² UNFORTUNATELY, this bronze snake on a pole turns up again in the Old Testament... this time as an idol! It seems that some of the Israelites kept this bronze snake on a pole as a relic, and worshipped it. Read the story in 2 Kings 18:1-4.

would have life in His Name. **Faith** is **trust** in Jesus' Word, it is **confidence** in God's Promises.

Believe that you have life because the only begotten Son of God was **lifted up**! Here are some promises that you can trust:

[Jesus said] "I tell you the truth, whoever hears My Word and **believes** Him who sent Me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life. John 5:24

Jesus said to her, "I am the Resurrection and the Life. He who **believes** in Me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and **believes** in Me will never die. John 11:25-26

But these are written that you may **believe** that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by **believing** you may have life in His Name. John 20:31

God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him. Whoever **believes** in Him is not condemned, John 3:14-18

Today believe that Jesus is the One that God sent to rescue you from sin and death! God has saved you from the poison of death by lifting up His Son Jesus Christ on a cross!

There's an interesting reversal with this **lifted up** idea.

Jesus was **lifted up in death** on a cross for us; and by faith in Him, you will be **lifted up in life** on the Last Day. Your body will be lifted up out of the grave and you will live forever in the Kingdom of Heaven in a resurrected and glorified body. This is what we mean when we confess that we believe in the **Resurrection of the dead** and the life everlasting! *Jesus dies so that you can live forever!* As Jesus was **lifted up in death**, you will be **lifted up in life** on the Last Day.

Today, may you always look to the Lord Jesus, the Only One who was lifted up on a cross for you. **In Him, you have life!**

AMEN!