

26-0920a Transcript

26-0920a - *Moses' Bronze Serpent*, Scott Reynolds

Bible Readers: John Kessler and Roger Raines

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Moses' Bronze Serpent

Scripture Readings

1st Reading (0:04 - 0:42): John Kessler

Genesis 3:14-15 - (0:04) Good morning. The first scripture we're reading today is from the book of Genesis, chapter 3, verses 14 and 15, Genesis 3, 14 and 15. (0:17) So the Lord God said to the serpent, serpent, because you have done this, (0:22) cursed are you above all livestock and all wild animals. (0:26) You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life. (0:30) And I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your offspring and hers. (0:37) You will crush your head and you will strike his heel. (0:41) This is the word of the Lord. (0:42)

2nd Reading (0:47 - 2:09): Roger Raines

John 3:3-5,13-15 (ESV): (0:47) Good morning. I'll be reading from the book of John, the gospel of John, chapter 3, verses 5

continued

through 7 and then verse 13 through 15. (1:00) I'm going to go to verse 4 for context purposes. (1:05) Nicodemus said to him, how can a man be born when he is old? (1:09) He cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born, can he? (1:15) Jesus answered, truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and in spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. (1:25) That which is born of the flesh is flesh and that which is born of the spirit is spirit. (1:34) Do not be amazed that I said to you, you must be born again. (1:40) Now, verse 13. (1:43) No one has ascended into heaven, but he who descended from heaven is the son of man. (1:51) As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the son of man be lifted up so that whoever believes in him shall have eternal life. (2:07) This concludes this reading. (2:09)

Transcript (0:04 - 29:55), Preacher: Scott Reynolds

(2:14) Good morning. It's good to see everybody. (2:17) As Moses lifted up the serpent, so must the son of man be lifted up. (2:25) Jim mentioned in one of his sermons a while back that there was a connection between the bronze serpent that God in the Old Testament told Moses to make and hang on a tree and Jesus on the cross in the New Testament.

(2:43) Jim identified it as a type, anti-type, and those are biblical terms. (2:48) Type is used in Romans chapter 5, talking about Adam being a type of Christ. (2:55) That's the English rendition of the actual Greek word for type.

(3:02) In 1 Peter 3, Peter uses the word anti-type when he's talking about baptism being an anti-type of the flood. (3:15) He makes those comparisons. (3:17) Or as Paul likes to say, shadow and substance.

(3:23) Using Paul's words from Colossians chapter 2, verse 17, where Paul's talking about things from the Old Testament, he says, (3:33) These are a shadow of the things that come, but the substance belongs to Christ. (3:40) So you might be surprised to learn that that wasn't our idea or Paul's, for that matter. (3:45) The person in the Bible who makes the connection between the bronze serpent and the Son of Man is none other than Jesus himself.

(3:57) Let's begin by looking at the historical background of the fiery serpent. (4:05) In the last year of Israel's 40 years of wilderness wanderings, Miriam, Moses' sister, and then Aaron, Moses' brother, will die in the last year of their wanderings. (4:22) After a month of mourning for Aaron, the Israelites set out on a series of military victories that will bring them out of the wilderness and into the territory of Moab.

(4:36) It won't be long before they begin to prepare for the conquest of the promised land. (4:43) It is during these military victories in the wilderness as they're coming out, and before the conquest begins, that the account of the bronze serpent occurs. (4:56) The account picks up just after the Israelites have defeated the king of Arad, Canaanite, from the account in Numbers chapter 21, verses 4-6.

(5:13) 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. (5:24) And the people spoke against God and against Moses. (5:28) Why have you brought us out of Egypt to die in this wilderness? (5:33) For there's no food and no water, and we loathe this worthless food.

(5:40) You may remember that worthless food was the manna and quail that God was giving them. (5:49) Then the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people so that many people of Israel died. (5:58) Why were these people being bitten by the serpents? (6:02) Was it their impatience? Perhaps their impatience set them up to sin? (6:08) Was it because they spoke against God and Moses? (6:12) Perhaps God doesn't like murmuring.

(6:16) God sent fiery serpents, that is poisonous serpents, to kill those who sinned, and many people of Israel died. (6:27) And continuing in Numbers chapter 21, verses 7-9, (6:32) And the people came to Moses and said, (6:35) We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord and against you. (6:41) Pray to the Lord that he take away the serpents from us.

(6:45) So at least the people recognized they sinned. (6:50) And what is their solution to their sin? Ask Moses to intercede. (6:55) So Moses prayed for the people.

(6:59) And what's God's solution? We continue in verse 8. (7:05) And the Lord said to Moses, (7:07) Make a fiery serpent and set it on a pole. (7:12) Everyone who is bitten, when he sees it, shall live. (7:17) So Moses made a bronze serpent and set it on a pole.

(7:21) And if a serpent bit anyone, he would look at the bronze serpent and live. (7:28) God's solution? A fiery serpent. (7:34) That is one fiery serpent on a pole.

(7:39) One pole. (7:42) Is that what you expected? A fiery serpent on a pole to look at? (7:46) Wouldn't one of the sacrifices of the Law of Moses be sufficient for the forgiveness of sins? (7:52) They confessed their sin to Moses and God, (7:56) and certainly they showed that they're willing to repent of their sin. (8:01) And notice God doesn't use the Law of Moses to save them.

(8:07) Why? (8:08) Why does God implement something outside the Law of Moses? (8:15) The Law which he gave them to deal with their sins. (8:21) Why does he implement something else to save them? (8:28) Before we look more into this, I'd like to ask the question, (8:33) So what? (8:35) Why is this story in the Bible? (8:38) Why is it even significant? (8:41) Well, it must be. It must be significant.

(8:46) Because Jesus himself makes the connection. (8:51) He says, in the reading that we had in

John 3, verses 13 through 15, (8:58) in a conversation with Nicodemus, (9:01) No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. (9:08) And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, (9:12) so must the Son of Man be lifted up, (9:19) that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

(9:23) There are so many lessons here. (9:27) Jesus says, he, the Son of Man, being lifted up on the cross, (9:32) is like Moses lifting up the serpent in the wilderness. (9:36) We could look at that comparison.

(9:39) There is a comparison to make. (9:41) Jesus said so. (9:42) And in a roundabout way, we're going to look at that.

(9:46) We could look at the statement, (9:48) whoever believes in him may have eternal life. (9:52) If we were a denomination, (9:54) we might make the argument and conclude, incorrectly, (9:59) believing only or believing alone is all that is needed to be saved. (10:04) Nowhere in the Bible does it ever say faith only.

(10:11) Nowhere. (10:12) Except in the Bible commentary supplements. (10:15) And commentary is not the Bible.

(10:19) There is only one place in the Bible where the words faith and alone occur together. (10:27) And that is in the book of James. (10:30) It's the only place.

(10:32) And it reads in James 2, verse 24, (10:38) you see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone. (10:48) The only place in the Bible that talks about faith alone says, (10:55) we are not justified by faith alone. (11:01) But also the word may back here in John 3, 15, (11:06) where it says whoever believes may have eternal life.

(11:11) The word may is defined as expressing a possibility. (11:17) That is not a certainty or expressing permission that you may have permission to enter. (11:26) It's not entering.

(11:27) It's an allowance to enter. (11:31) Or the word may can also mean expressing a wish or a hope. (11:38) And these terms have less probability than expressing a possibility.

(11:44) In other words, whoever believes possibly has permission to maybe enter the kingdom. (11:54) But believing isn't entering the kingdom. (12:00) It is necessary to be permitted to enter the kingdom.

(12:05) You must be born into the kingdom. (12:09) Under Moses, they had to look upon the serpent. (12:12) And what if they couldn't see it? (12:15) Moses made one serpent.

(12:18) And by the way, there were over a million Israelites at the time. (12:22) Do you think it may have been difficult, not impossible, but difficult, (12:27) to have the opportunity and the crowd of over a million frantic people (12:32) worried about being saved to look upon that one serpent? (12:38) The Israelites asked Moses to pray for them, which he did. (12:43) But the answer from God wasn't pray the serpent into your heart.

(12:48) It was Numbers chapter 21, verses 8 and 9. (12:54) And the Lord said to Moses, make a fiery serpent and set it on a pole. (12:59) And everyone who is bitten, when he sees it, shall live. (13:04) So Moses made a bronze serpent and set it on a pole.

(13:08) And if a serpent bit anyone, he would look at the bronze serpent and live. (13:12) But it required faith to do the action of the command, (13:20) look at the bronze serpent and live. (13:24) We could look at the context of Jesus' statement (13:28) and see that just before the statement in John 3, which we also read in the reading, (13:35) where he said in verse 3, (13:38) Unless one is born, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

(13:42) We could look at what it means to be born again. (13:46) Isn't it interesting that to become an Israelite, (13:50) you had to be born into the world by Israelite parents. (13:56) And Jesus says that to enter his kingdom, (14:00) you have to be born again into his kingdom.

(14:06) Interesting. (14:07) We could look at the association of those who were saved from their sins (14:12) by looking on the serpent and those saved from their sins who believes in him. (14:19) In fact, if we were doing a typical Church of Christ sermon, (14:23) we would make the case for baptism here because it's definitely there.

(14:30) But we're not going to do that today. (14:32)

(14:33) My question is, (14:36) why did God use a serpent hung on a tree to represent Christ on the cross? (14:46) Why a serpent? (14:50) Learning from Jesus that there is a correlation between the serpent on the pole (14:55) and Christ on the cross, we have to ask, why a serpent? (15:02) We can understand the Lamb, Jesus, the Lamb of God, who takes away sin. (15:07) It's in the law.

It's a sacrifice. (15:10) But what about a serpent? (15:11) It isn't in the law to offer a serpent. (15:15) Serpent.

(15:17) Yes, the comparison made between Moses' bronze serpent and Christ is a pole and a cross. (15:26) That is, the killing of the serpent hung on a pole and Jesus put the death on a cross. (15:35) As a side note, just speculation here.

(15:40) When God told Moses to make a serpent, he didn't say, make a bronze serpent. (15:48) He said, make a fiery serpent. (15:53) And Moses made a bronze serpent.

(15:57) Let me suggest something here. (16:00) This is the speculation. (16:04) If you're around my age, you may remember from your childhood (16:08) that people used to take their children's baby shoes and have them bronzed.

(16:14) They didn't cast shoes out of bronze. (16:17) They took already existing baby shoes and dipped them in bronze to preserve them. (16:23) What if, when Moses was told to make a fiery serpent, (16:29) he took an actual fiery serpent, killed it, and then bronzed it? (16:37) He hung that bronze serpent on a pole.

(16:40) So possibly you have this actual bronze serpent hung on a pole. (16:49) Just a thought. (16:51) So the question again, why a serpent? (16:55) And what is the significance about the serpent and what does it represent? (17:00) If you looked this topic up on the Internet, which I did, (17:06) you would find that other people also wondered why God would have Moses (17:11) make a serpent and hang it on a pole.

(17:14) One person suggested that the serpent wasn't in any way associated with the serpent in the garden (17:21) that tempted Eve, but that the serpent was a direct representation of their sin. (17:27) It somewhat works in the comparison of the serpent on the pole and Jesus on the cross.

(17:35) With Jesus' crucifixion, our sin is nailed to the cross, which we sung about.

(17:42) Paul says in Colossians 2, verses 11-15, (17:47) In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without ends, (17:53) by putting off the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ, (17:58) having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith, (18:06) in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead. (18:11) And you, who were dead in your trespasses, and the uncircumcision of your flesh, (18:17) God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all of our trespasses. (18:23) And by the way, this is an aside, this is a description right here of being born again, (18:32) being raised with him in baptism through faith, and that's the faith that saves.

(18:37) That when we die with him in baptism, we believe we will be raised with him in the resurrection of Jesus. (18:46) God made you alive together with Jesus, having forgiven us all our sins. (18:53) When? Verse 12, having been buried with him in baptism, forgiving us our sins.

(18:59) Verse 14, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands, that's the law. (19:11) This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. (19:15) He disarmed the rulers and the authorities and put them to shame, open shame, by triumphing over them in him.

(19:23) So when Jesus is crucified, God nailed the law to the cross. (19:30) He killed the law. (19:33) That's what that means, when you nail something to a cross, it dies.

(19:39) Which means the law is dead, it no longer exists. (19:43) And as Paul tells us in Romans 4.15 and 5.13, where there is no law, there is no transgression. (19:52) There is no sin.

(19:56) With no law, sin is dead. (19:59) In other words, if you kill the law by nailing it to the cross, you have also killed sin. (20:05) And this makes sense of these passages in Galatians 3.13 and 14.

(20:11) Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us. (20:15) For it is written, cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree. (20:20) So that in Christ Jesus, the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, (20:25) so that we might receive the promised spirit through faith.

(20:30) In Romans 8.1-4. (20:32) There is, therefore, now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. (20:38) For the law of the spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. (20:45) For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do, (20:51) by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh.

(20:56) And for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, (21:01) in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, (21:07) who walk not according to the flesh, but according to the spirit. (21:11) He condemned sin. (21:15) The definition of condemn is to punish, usually by death.

(21:22) To condemn sin is to kill sin. (21:26) It's dead. (21:28) So the serpent on the pole and Christ on the cross show the condemnation of sin.

(21:35) That is how sin is killed, or put to death. (21:40) That's one idea, and I like it. (21:42) But there's also another interesting idea here, (21:47) that we'll look at and then we'll close the lesson.

(21:52) What else can the serpent represent? (21:56) We should not dismiss the correlation of the serpent to Satan. (22:00) Moses' serpent, obviously, wasn't the serpent from the garden. (22:06) But

the serpent in the garden wasn't just the serpent.

(22:11) But Satan, speaking through the serpent, (22:15) that Satan is referred to as not just a serpent, but that serpent, (22:23) is seen in Revelation 12, verses 7 through 9. (22:28) Then war broke out in heaven. (22:31) Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, (22:34) and the dragon and his angels fought back. (22:37) But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven.

(22:42) The great dragon was hurled down. (22:45) That ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, (22:51) who leads the whole world astray. (22:55) He was hurled to the earth and his angels with him.

(23:00) In Revelation 20, verses 1 through 3, (23:04) And I saw an angel coming out of heaven, having the key to the abyss, (23:09) and holding in his hand a great chain. (23:12) He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, (23:19) and bound him for a thousand years. (23:22) If the serpent on the pole is also a representation of Satan, (23:28) then we are getting a foreshadowing of the destruction or the vanquishing of Satan.

(23:40) In Genesis, we are told, our other reading that we had, (23:44) So the Lord said to the serpent, or God said to the serpent, (23:50) Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all wild animals. (23:56) You will crawl on your belly, and you will eat dust all the days of your life. (24:01) And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers.

(24:08) He will crush your head, and you will strike his heel. (24:14) God prophesied right here in Genesis 3, in the very beginning, (24:20) that in the battle between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman, (24:24) the seed of the woman will be injured, but the seed of the serpent will receive a fatal wound. (24:34) That Satan studies the scripture to see how this might occur, (24:38) is seen when he tempts Jesus in the wilderness.

(24:45) And the first time I saw this, my jaw dropped. (24:51) In Matthew, chapter 4, verses 5-7, (24:56) Then the devil took him to the holy city, him being Jesus. (25:00) The devil took Jesus to the holy city, and had him stand on the highest point of the temple.

(25:07) If you are the son of God, he said, throw yourself down, for it is written, (25:13) he will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, (25:19) so that you will not strike your foot against the stone. (25:23) Jesus answered him, it is also written, do not put the Lord God to the test. (25:31) Satan quotes scripture from Psalm 91, and sometimes when you see scripture quoted in the New Testament, (25:40) you ought to go back to the Old Testament and read the quote in context.

(25:47) So Satan quotes scripture from Psalm 91 to Jesus, and keep in mind, (25:53) that Satan is a complex being, one metaphor is not enough to describe him. (25:58) So Peter tells us in 1 Peter 5, verse 8, (26:02) Be alert, and of sober mind, your enemy, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, (26:09) looking for someone to devour. (26:11) So Satan is seen as a serpent and a lion.

(26:17) Now let's look at the passage Satan used to tempt Jesus, and see what he left out. (26:25) What's missing? (26:30) Psalm 91, verses 11 and 12. (26:34) For he will command his angels concerning you, to guard you in all your ways.

(26:39) They will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against the stone.

(26:44) That's what he quoted Jesus, and stopped. (26:48) But look at the very next verse.

(26:52) Psalm 91, verse 13. (26:57) You, again being Jesus, you will tread on the lion and the cobra.

(27:03) You will trample the great lion and the serpent.

(27:08) This verse is a prophecy of how Satan will be vanquished. (27:15) So how will Satan be

vanquished? (27:19) If we combine 91, verse 13 of Psalm, (27:23) You will trample the great lion and

the serpent. (27:26) With Genesis 3, verse 15, (27:29) He shall crush your head, and you will bruise

his heel.

(27:34) The seed bruises his heel, stomping on and crushing the head of the serpent. (27:43) When

does that occur? (27:46) On the cross. (27:48) Jesus is bruised, but rises from the dead.

(27:53) It's not fatal. (27:56) And destroy Satan, as the Hebrew writer says, (28:01) In Hebrews 2, 14

and 15, (28:30) On the pole, foreshadows the law nailed to the cross, (28:38) Our sins nailed to the

cross, (28:41) And Satan destroyed, nailed to the cross, (28:49) That serpent on a pole. (28:55) Jesus'

death on the cross achieves all this.

(29:00) And isn't that amazing? (29:01) Our God is awesome. (29:07) At this action, Christ's death on

the cross shows us how we are born into the kingdom. (29:14) By obeying the tight doctrine

presented in Romans 6, (29:18) Being baptized unto Jesus' death, we are crucified with him.

(29:22) Anyone who has died is freed from sin, and that sin is nailed on the cross. (29:28) And

believing that through baptism we participate in his resurrection, (29:34) And that's the faith that

saves us, being born into his kingdom, (29:39) Being born again of water and spirit, that we may

receive eternal life. (29:46) And that's a blessing.

(29:48) We're extending the invitation now to anyone who's subject to it. (29:52) So come now, as

together we stand and sing. (29:55)