

John 3.14, 15  
**27 June 2010**

Dear friends, John chapter 3 records for us a prominent leader enquiring about the things of God. His name is Nicodemus and he is a member of the Sanhedrin. The Sanhedrin is an assembly of judges. They form the Supreme Court in Israel. And when he came to Jesus at night, Jesus taught him an important truth: what it means to be born again. In order to see the kingdom of God one must be born again.

To be born again is not a physical rebirth but a spiritual rebirth: he is born of water and of the spirit. He is one who is cleansed from all his sins as it is applied to him by the Holy Spirit.

And Jesus further instructs Nicodemus that such a blessing of being born again comes through the work of the Son of man. He is the only man that has come down from heaven and be lifted up. Why is it necessary for the Son of Man to be lifted up or die on the cross? Who is Moses? And why is the lifting up of the serpent in the wilderness has to do with the lifting of the Son of Man? What are God's promises to those who believe in Jesus? And finally how do I receive this blessing?

The theme for today's sermon is: THE LIFTING UP OF THE SON OF MAN  
Firstly, who is the Son of Man? Secondly, why the need for Him to be lifted up? And finally, what is God's promise to us?

Who is the Son of Man? This is one of the names of our Saviour. His name is a revelation of Himself, his deity, his calling. And since he is the image of God, he reveals God. Thus, in the Holy Scripture, He is called Messiah; He is also called the Lamb of God, the Word of God, the Day Spring, the Messenger, the Son of David, the Son of God. And concerning his divinity, there is one only true God, distinguished in three persons: there is God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

And when God the Son came as a man and dwell on earth, he had various names. He is Jesus which is his personal name, which means he shall save his people from their sins. He is our Saviour from our sins. He is also called Christ. That is his title, which means the anointed one. He is the legal representative to die for the sins of his people. And that is where the importance of the name of the Son of man comes in. Jesus Christ is both God and man, and so this name, Son of Man emphasizes Jesus Christ in his human nature. And according to the fulness of time, God sends forth his son. And man, he is in many ways like us but one exception, he is sinless or without sin. His sinless nature came about through his unique birth. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. And because of his sinlessness he is qualified to be our Saviour to save us from our sins. How can a sinner save another sinner from our sins?

What is the significance of the human nature of Christ? Firstly, he came in the same human nature that sinned against God. Sin came into this world through

the sin of Adam and Eve. They are the first human beings whom God has created. They were created on the sixth day of creation. When Eve was enjoying the beautiful Garden of Eden, with its beautiful trees and its fruits, a serpent appeared unto her. And the serpent began to talk to her and said to her, "Yes, has God said, you shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" The purpose of the question was to plant a doubt in her mind concerning the authority of God's Word, specifically concerning the commandment of God forbidding her to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. And Eve said unto the serpent, "we may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden: but of the fruit of the tree, God has said, you shall not eat of it, neither shall you touch it, lest you die". And the serpent now speaks and he wants to contradict the Word of God. God says, you shall die if you eat but the serpent says, "if you eat of the fruit you shall not surely die because God knows that when you eat, you shall be as god, knowing and evil". Thus, the serpent planted in the mind of Eve that God wants to hide that they could be gods, if she were to eat it. Very deceitful and cunning! And Eve took the fruit and ate it and gave it to her husband and he also ate. And thus, they disobeyed the clear command of God forbidding them to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The second significance is that through Christ's death on the cross he might destroy the devil who has the power of death (Heb. 2.14). And finally, so that Christ might be made like his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest to make reconciliation for the sins of his people and help those who are tempted.

Why is there the need for the Son to be lifted up? What does it mean for Jesus to be lifted up? This refers to the manner of the death of Christ. This is made clear to us in John 8.32, 33, when Jesus said, "and I, if I be lifted up from the earth, and will draw all men unto me. This he said, signifying what death he should die". The lifting up of Jesus Christ is his death on the cross. He was born in Bethlehem but he was raised in Nazareth, where Mary and Joseph lived. Joseph was a carpenter and his mother took care of the needs of the household. And for thirty – three years, Jesus preached concerning the kingdom of God: who are its citizens, the signs of the end of the world and the signs of his coming. And his Second Coming was according to the prophecies in the Old Testament. He also pronounced his judgement upon those who were hypocrites who misrepresented the way of the Lord and thus were leading many astray. These hypocrites were the Pharisees, the religious leaders of the day, who did not preach the way of salvation according to the Word of God.

What is the need of Jesus to die on the cross? According to this passage, when he says, "... even so must the Son of Man be lifted up", John is emphasizing the need of the Jesus to die on the cross. Notice, he says, "as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up". The necessity of the death of Christ on the cross is seen as Moses lifted up the serpent. This account is taken from Numbers 21. The children of Israel are in the wilderness or the desert after being slaves in Egypt for 430 years. And the way of the desert is indeed difficult: there was no water for them to drink and no meat to eat. And Israel journeyed from Mount Hor by the way of the Red Sea and by the land of Edom and they were very discouraged

of the way. And the people complained against God and Moses saying, “why have you brought us out of Egypt to die in the wilderness?” and they said that there is no bread or water and hated the manna. And as a result of their complaint, God sends fiery serpents and bit the people and many died. And those who were still living confessed their sins and pleaded with Moses to pray unto God to remove the serpents from them and Moses prayed for the people. And God commanded Moses to make a serpent from brass and put in on a pole and those who will see it will be healed. The lifting of the serpent is type of the death of Jesus Christ on the cross, John 3.14, 15.

What is the typical significance of the lifting up of the brazen serpent?

Firstly, the lifting of the serpent is typical of the power of sin. Healing is urgently needed because of the snakebites. These snakes are called fiery serpents, not because those snakes were red in colour, rather as a result of the bite of the serpents, poison entered into their blood stream and it has fiery or burning sensation that was felt throughout their whole bodies. And as a result of the poison, many were dying. And a solution must be found immediately, otherwise the entire nation of Israel will perish. And the cure lies in the removal of the sting of the venom that has entered the blood stream. Christ died on the cross in order to gain the victory over the power of sin. Because of the sin of Adam and Eve, man became a sinner and a slave to sin and he will continue to serve sin. And by himself he is unable to liberate himself from this bondage. But Christ came by his death and by his resurrection from the dead and his glorification, he overcame the power of sin and through the his overcoming of death, he has overcome the sting of death, that is sin.

Secondly, the lifting of the serpent is typical in the putting to death of the serpent's power. The brazen serpent had no power to kill but was symbolic of the fact that in the fiery serpents were deprived of the power to kill the people. In the lifting of the Son of Man, the fulfillment of the type, death and sin are killed and thus the serpent has lost this power and right to rule over us.

And finally, the serpent on the pole is the shining symbol of life. The brazen serpent, bright and shining in the midst of the camp becomes a symbol of life to those who look upon it. Even so, the Son of Man held before us in the preaching of the gospel, is the bright, glorious and shining source of life for his people.

What is God's promise to us? What he does not promise? God does not promise us a life without sin, or terminal disease, sorrow, or misery nor does he promise us a big fat bank account or great prosperity. Nowhere in Scripture, does God promises that we will be freed from all these sorrows of life. As long as Christ has not come for his church, we will continue to experience these sorrows. These are our portions in this life because we are live in this sin-cursed world. He promises us that we will n to perish. Those who believe in the son of man will not perish. At the Second Coming of Christ, he will gather all those who are living and those who are dead to the judgment seat. He will separate the righteous and the wicked. And those who are wicked who did not believe in Christ will be cast into the everlasting fire of hell,

where they will perish forever. But unto the righteous, those who believe in Christ, they will receive eternal life.

What is eternal life? John 17.3 says, eternal life is that they might know thee the only true God and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent. Firstly, eternal life is to have the true knowledge of God through Jesus Christ. When Jesus Christ walked on the earth, the first witnesses saw his glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth (John 1.14). As the only begotten Son he declared the invisible God whom no one has seen at any time. Thus, eternal life is the knowledge and fellowship of God through the incarnation of Christ and this fellowship is real and intimate.

Secondly, eternal life is everlasting. Once it is given this life can never go lost because this life is based on the incarnation of Jesus Christ. This beginning of eternal life will be translated into the fulness of joy at the coming of Christ at his glory and then, we will have spiritual perfection and a glorified body, like Christ. And there will be the new heaven and the new earth, where the new creation will be beautiful and glorious for all things will be united in Christ their head. The essence of that blessedness will be the perfected fellowship of friendship with the living God in Christ. And everywhere in the new world we shall see Christ, and in him we shall see the Father. We shall see him face to face and we will have the knowledge of God and that will be glorious indeed.

And this promise is accomplished through the look of faith. Those who looked with eyes of faith upon the brazen serpent will be healed. And so is Christ who is lifted up on the cross and whosoever looks upon him in faith shall be healed of the dreaded pois

on called sin. It is a look of faith that you are sorry for all your sins that you have committed against God. It is a look of faith, that all your sins have been forgiven through Christ on the cross. And it is a look of faith that Christ has died for your sins and he is ours and we are his. And finally, we are saved by grace, neither that power of healing nor the power of faith is in the natural man. The power of faith causes us to feel the burning pain of the serpent's poison, to long for deliverance, and to look at the uplifting Christ for healing. That power is the gift of grace and given to those whom God wills to give, according to the sovereign mercy and the love of God. For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believes in him shall not perish but have everlasting life. Amen.