

## Message Six

### Christ as Typified by the Bronze Serpent

Scripture Reading: Num. 21:4-9; John 3:14, 29-30; Rom. 8:3; 2 Cor. 5:21

- I. When the children of Israel sinned against God, they were bitten by serpents (Num. 21:4-9); God told Moses to lift up a bronze serpent on a pole on their behalf for God's judgment so that by looking upon that serpent all might live:**
- A. The bronze serpent typifies Christ (John 3:14), and the pole typifies the cross (1 Pet. 2:24); in typology, bronze signifies judgment; the bronze serpent had the form of a serpent but not the poisonous nature of a serpent.
  - B. In the same way, Christ was lifted up on the cross (John 8:28) in the likeness of the flesh of sin (Rom. 8:3), without participating in any way in the poisonous sin of the flesh (2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 4:15).
  - C. In Genesis 3 Satan, the serpent, injected his nature into man's flesh; as descendants of Adam, we all have been "bitten" by the old serpent, the devil; therefore, in the sight of God, the entire fallen human race consists of serpentine beings with the poison of the old serpent in their fallen nature:
    1. In John 8:44 the Lord Jesus revealed that the devil is the father of sinners; thus, in our fallen nature we are children of the old serpent, the devil—1 John 3:10.
    2. In Matthew 12:34 the Lord Jesus called the Pharisees the "offspring of vipers"; in 23:33 He called them "Serpents! Brood of vipers!"
    3. The devil is the ancient serpent (Rev. 12:9; 20:2), and sinners are serpents, the offspring of vipers; in our fallen nature we are not merely sinful—we are serpentine.
    4. Romans 7 says that Satan as personified sin is in our flesh; sin can deceive and kill people (v. 11), and it can dwell in people and cause them to do things against their will (vv. 17, 20); it is quite alive (v. 9) and exceedingly active, so it must be the evil nature of Satan, the evil one, dwelling, acting, and working in fallen mankind.
  - D. The Lord as the Son of Man was lifted up in the form of the serpent on the cross to bear the judgment for the serpent-poisoned people; He was lifted up on the cross for the casting out of the old serpent, Satan, the ruler of the world—John 12:31-34.
  - E. Hence, the Lord, as the Son of Man lifted up, can deliver the serpent-poisoned people from sin, the serpent's poison; also, by His being lifted up, He would destroy Satan and draw all men to Himself—Heb. 2:14; John 12:32-33.
  - F. Now whoever believes into Christ as the One who was lifted up to be condemned in our place has eternal life; we need a "bronze serpent" to be our Substitute to bear God's judgment for us, to redeem us, and to release His saving, divine life into our being—3:14-16; 12:24.
  - G. When we repent and admit that we are serpentine, we are qualified to experience Christ as the eternal life and enjoy Him:
    1. The Greek word for *repentance* means to have a change of mind, issuing in regret, to have a turn in purpose; also, man's repentance is his turning from all things to God Himself—Acts 26:20; 14:15b; 1 Thes. 1:9b.
    2. In our experience, this is not a once-for-all matter but a daily experience; John the Baptist preached repentance (Matt. 3:2; Mark 1:4), and in the seven epistles to the seven churches in Revelation 2 and 3, the Lord Jesus tells us again and again to repent (2:5, 16, 21-22; 3:3, 19).
  - H. It is a great blessing for us to know that, as the fulfillment of the type of the bronze serpent, Christ came in the likeness of the flesh of sin to die on the cross as our Replacement and Substitute in order for us to be regenerated and have eternal life.

## II. John 3 speaks of the serpent and the bride—vv. 14, 29-30:

- A. John 3:16 is the issue of verses 14 and 15; that is, the receiving of the divine, eternal life is the issue of the uplifting of Christ on the cross as the bronze serpent, the real sin offering:
  - 1. The Lord Jesus was lifted up as our Substitute to bear God's judgment for us so that we may look at Him (believe into Him) and have eternal life.
  - 2. Because in Adam we were bitten by the old serpent, we were dead (Eph. 2:1, 5), but now through Christ as the bronze serpent lifted up on the cross, we may receive eternal life, the life of God; this is the real manifestation of God's love to the world.
- B. For the serpent to "bite" us means that he imparts the poison of his nature into us to make us his increase; through the fall the entire human race has become the increase of Satan.
- C. John 3 reveals that regeneration is not only to bring the divine life into the believers but also to make them the corporate bride for Christ's increase; as Adam was increased in Eve, so Christ is increased in His bride—vv. 29-30; Gen. 2:21-22.
- D. By Christ being lifted up on the cross as the bronze serpent, Satan's increase has become Christ's increase, His bride; we who were once the increase of Satan have become the increase of Christ.
- E. All regenerated persons are components of the bride, who will be married to the Lord Jesus as the Bridegroom; regeneration means that our serpentine being is annulled and that we receive the divine life in order to become a new being so that we may be a part of the bride; by this we can see that regeneration is for producing the bride of Christ—John 3:29-30.
- F. The intention of John 3 is to show that the unlimited Christ must have a universal increase and that He is in the process of gaining this increase today; the immeasurable Spirit produces a universal increase for the unlimited Christ—vv. 29-36.
- G. We may say that, considered as a whole, the Bible unveils the matter of the serpent and the bride:
  - 1. God used Adam's rib to bring forth Eve, the increase of Adam, but in Genesis 3:1-6 the serpent visited the bride and succeeded in capturing her; however, God is greater, higher, and wiser than the serpent.
  - 2. In His judgment upon the serpent, God indicated that the woman would bring forth a seed (Christ) to bruise the serpent's head (v. 15); furthermore, the seed of the woman would also become righteousness to the very ones who were poisoned by the serpent (v. 21).
  - 3. Paul was concerned that the serpent who had come to bite Eve would come to bite the believers at Corinth; once again, this is the story of the serpent and the bride—2 Cor. 11:2-3; cf. Rev. 12:9; 1 Thes. 3:5; 1 Tim. 2:14; 4:1; 2 Pet. 3:17.
  - 4. The book of Revelation provides the final word on the serpent and the bride:
    - a. Chapter 19 reveals that the bride is ready for the wedding of the Lamb—v. 7.
    - b. Immediately after the wedding, this universal couple will fight against Satan and his followers, the beast and the false prophet; then Satan will be bound and cast into the abyss, where he will be imprisoned for a thousand years—vv. 11-16, 19-21; 20:1-3.
    - c. Following that, Satan will rebel once more and will ultimately be cast into the lake of fire—vv. 7-10.
    - d. Then the universe will be thoroughly cleared up, and there will be a new heaven and a new earth; for eternity there will be a universal couple: Christ as the Husband and the church as the bride—21:1-2, 9-10.

### **III. The serpentine people are becoming the universal increase of the unlimited Christ by the immeasurable Spirit with the eternal life:**

- A. In our experience we need to realize that we can be contending serpents who are apart from Christ as the life-giving Spirit; in the church life we can either be contending serpents or life-giving-Spirit drinkers—John 3:14; 7:37-39.
- B. John 3:30 refers to the increase of Christ, which is the bride of Christ in verse 29:
  - 1. According to our natural birth, all of us automatically live by our serpentine being; this is to live according to the principle of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.
  - 2. Our natural life and living are not part of the increase of Christ; only the regenerated part of our being, our regenerated spirit, is Christ's increase—v. 6.
  - 3. In a real and practical way, Christ should be our life and our person; we live Him and are one spirit with Him; we abide in Him, and He abides in us; therefore, He and we have one life and one living (Gal. 2:20; 4:19; John 15:5)—this is the serpentine people becoming the bride of Christ.
  - 4. When we have this kind of living, then in reality we are serpentine beings in the process of transformation into the bride of Christ, the increase of Christ; the ultimate consummation of this bride will be the New Jerusalem as the tabernacle of God and the wife of the Lamb—Rev. 21:3, 9-10.
  - 5. May the Lord have mercy on us that we may learn to live by our regenerated being—Rom. 8:4; Phil. 4:11-13.
- C. In John 3 we can see at least nine aspects of the unlimited Christ:
  - 1. The unlimited Christ is from above, that is, from the heavens—v. 31.
  - 2. The unlimited Christ is above all (v. 31); because Christ is all-inclusive, unlimited, and universal, while He was on earth, He was still in the heavens (v. 13).
  - 3. The unlimited Christ is loved by the Father; only in Christ can we enjoy the love of God the Father—v. 35.
  - 4. The unlimited Christ has been given all things; the Father has given all things, including us, into the Son's hand—v. 35; 1 Cor. 3:21-23.
  - 5. The unlimited Christ was sent by God—John 3:34; 6:46.
  - 6. The unlimited Christ speaks the words of God—3:34; 6:63.
  - 7. The unlimited Christ gives the Spirit not by measure—3:34.
  - 8. The unlimited Christ gives eternal life to His believers—vv. 15-16, 36; 6:63.
  - 9. The unlimited Christ has the bride as His universal increase—3:29-30.
- D. The immeasurable Spirit is the all-inclusive compound Spirit typified by the compound ointment—Exo. 30:23-25; Phil. 1:19:
  - 1. The immeasurable Spirit is the life-giving Spirit—1 Cor. 15:45b; 2 Cor. 3:6.
  - 2. The immeasurable Spirit is also the pneumatic Christ; the term *pneumatic Christ* refers to Christ as the Spirit—vv. 6, 17-18; Rom. 8:9-11.
- E. The eternal life is mentioned three times in John 3—vv. 15-16, 36:
  - 1. Eternal life is the divine life, the life of the eternal God; this life is eternal in time, space, essence, function, and power.
  - 2. Eternal life is the essence of the Triune God becoming the element of the church, the bride; and the bride is the universal increase of Christ for the corporate expression of the Triune God.