

A Snake, a Captain, a Blind Man, & Baptism

INTRODUCTION:

- A. **Isaiah 1:18** – “Come now, and let us reason together,” Says the LORD, “Though your sins are like scarlet, They shall be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They shall be as wool.”
- B. Our study this hour is entitled “A Snake, A Captain, A Blind Man, & Baptism.
1. It shall be our objective to reveal a Biblical truth frequently distorted by many groups in the religious world and outrightly denied by others.
 2. We shall proceed by examining each of the subject parts separately before establishing how in principle they are related.

THE SNAKE. **Numbers 21:4-9**

- A. The account of the snake is found in the Old Testament in Numbers 21:4-9. Before examining that passage, permit me to say this about the Old Testament.
1. To Christians, the Old Testament is grand for learning and admonition.
 - a. The apostle Paul wrote in **Romans 15:4** – “For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.”
 - b. We hear him again in **1 Corinthians 10:11** – “Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.”
 2. But as a law the Old Law has been fulfilled and was taken out of the way when Jesus died on the cross at Golgotha on that Friday afternoon of April 7, in 30 A.D.
 - a. **Colossians 2:14-15** – “Having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.
Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.”
 - b. The Bible says in **2 Peter 1:21** – “For prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.”
 - c. In **Hebrews 7:22** we are told – “By so much more Jesus has become a surety of a better covenant.” Better than what? Better than the Old Testament Law.

- d. Words could not be plainer than these found in **Hebrews 9:15** – “And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.”
 - e. Listen to the Bible’s pronouncement on those today who are attempting to live by the Old Testament Law during the New Testament Age. We read in **Galatians 5:4** – “You have (1) become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; (2) you have fallen from grace.”
 - f. If salvation is to be found by following the Old Testament law, then Christ died a meaningless death. Hear the apostle Paul in **Galatians 2:21** – “I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain.”
 - g. In the Old Testament, God demanded exact obedience to His every word.
 1. In it are examples of men and women who endeavored to live by the law God had given them.
 2. It is learned from the Old Testament that God blesses man only when man obeys God.
 3. One such example is that found in the record of the brass snake.
- B. With a mighty hand God led Israel out of the bondage of Egypt, and for forty years they wandered in the wilderness.
1. They often sinned.
 2. On one occasion they murmured against God because of the bread, or manna, He fed them.
 3. **Numbers 21:5-9** – “And the people 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 our soul loathes this worthless bread.”
 So the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and many of the people of Israel died.
 Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, ‘We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD and against you; pray to the LORD that He take away the serpents from us.’ So Moses prayed for the people.
 Then the LORD said to Moses, ‘Make a fiery serpent, and set it on a pole; and it shall be that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, shall live.’
 So Moses made a bronze serpent, and put it on a pole; and so it was, if a serpent had bitten anyone, when he looked at the bronze serpent, he lived.”
- a. Only those who obeyed by looking at the brass snake were healed.
 - b. Faith in God would not suffice without obedience.

- c. Israel was commanded to **OBEY** as well as **BELIEVE**.
 - d. There is not faith when one does not do the commands of God.
 - e. I summon your attention to **1 John 2:3-5** – “Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments.
 He who says, ‘I know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.
 But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him.
 By this we know that we are in Him.”
4. Friends . . . I ask you . . . **“Was this snake salvation?”**
- a. No, this was not snake salvation.
 - b. There was no power in the brass snake on the pole to heal the children of Israel.
 - 1. No sane person would dare say the brass snake healed the Israelites.
 - 2. Nor was it Moses who did the healing.
 - 3. The healing was done by God.
5. It was **OBEY** and be **HEALED**, or **DISOBEY** and **DIE**.
- a. Now notice the order of their healing:
 - 1. **Belief** That looking they would be healed.
 - 2. **Obedience** The actual looking at the brazen serpent.
 - 3. **Healing** The benefit (blessing) received upon compliance.
 - b. **BELIEF + OBEDIENCE = HEALING**.
6. Incidentally, do you whatever became of that brazen serpent?
- a. They kept it for at least 700 years.
 - 1. At age 25 in approximately 728 B.C. godly Hezekiah, son of wicked Ahaz, began his reign as the 13th king in the Southern Kingdom of Judah and king in Jerusalem during the time the Northern Kingdom of Israel was taken into Assyrian captivity by King Sennecherib in 722 B.C.
 - 2. He began to initiate some religious and spiritual reforms in Judah.
2 King 18:4 – “He removed the high places and broke the *sacred* pillars, cut down the wooden image **and broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made; for until those days the children of Israel burned incense to it, and called it Nehushtan.**”
7. **SIDENOTE:** Jesus referenced the story of the Brazen serpent in **John 3:14** – “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up” He has become the focal point for God’s power to be reached in obedience and applied by grace!

THE CAPTAIN. **2 Kings 5**

A. The record of the captain is found in 2 Kings 5.

1. His name is Naaman.
 2. He held the rank of Captain in the powerful Syrian army.
 3. The Bible describes him as having been:
 - a. Noble and mighty.
 - b. A man of valor.
 4. However, Naaman had a very serious physical problem as defined by both ancient standards and ours . . . He was a leper . . . he had leprosy.
 - a. A leper person who suffers from a slowly progressing and incurable skin disease.
 - b. Leprosy is a chronic, infectious disease characterized by sores, scabs, and white shining spots beneath the skin.
 - c. Leprosy was characterized by formation of nodules that would spread, causing loss of sensation and deformity.
 - d. The disease was loathsome . . . a seemingly incurable disease.
- B. Naaman found a ray of hope.
1. Naaman had captured a little Jewish maiden who told him of a great prophet in her homeland of Israel who could heal him of his dreaded disease.
 2. With great hope and high expectations, Naaman, with his King’s blessings, hurried to the prophet whom we know to be Elisha.
 3. Upon his arrival, Elisha sent a servant out to Naaman and told him to go dip seven times in the Jordan River and he would be healed.
 4. Naaman turned away in a rage and prepared to return to Syria.
 5. He was greatly disappointed because he **thought**, mind you, **thought** the prophet would come out to him and tell do or tell him to do some great thing.
 - a. Man has long overlooked the simplicity of the ways in which God works.
 - b. Remember that God does not always work as man has preconceived that He will.
 - c. Listen to and cherish a great passage of Scripture as recorded in **Isaiah 55:6-9** – “Seek the LORD while He may be found, Call upon Him while He is near.
 Let the wicked forsake his way, And the unrighteous man his thoughts; Let him return to the LORD, And He will have mercy on him; And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon.
 For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways, says the LORD.
 For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts.”
 - d. With Naaman’s belligerent attitude, it could be said that he had a problem of attitude as well as a disease of the body.

1. Unfortunately, Naaman is not the last one to trust in his own thoughts rather than the thoughts of God.
2. The conscience of man has often led him to oppose the will of God.
3. Certainly the apostle Paul would serve as a New Testament example of such while utterly opposing and persecuting the church of Christ.
6. Do you like happy endings. Most people do, and Naaman’s story has a happy ending for him.
 - a. In time Naaman overcame his prejudice and stubborn will and went to the Jordan River.
 - b. He dipped one time . . . a second time . . . a third time . . . a fourth time . . . a fifth time . . . a sixth time . . . and then a seventh time after which his flesh became whole and the leprosy was completely gone . . . totally eradicated from his body.
 - c. Although the healing came during the completion of the seventh dip
 1. The **first** dip was a step of obedience . . .
 2. The **second** dip was another step of obedience . . .
 3. The **third** dip was another step of obedience . . .
 4. The **fourth** dip was another step of obedience . . .
 5. The **fifth** dip was another step of obedience . . .
 6. The **sixth** dip was another step of obedience . . .
 7. And the **seventh dip** was the completion of his obedience that brought about his cleansing. Not one dip could be left out and the blessing be received.
 - d. It took all the steps in order to reach the final step and the promised cleansing. The promised cleansing did not come until all the steps (in this case dips) had been completed.

C. Friends, I ask you . . . **“Was this water salvation?”**

1. No! This was not water salvation.
2. None but the vain would say that there was power or magic in the water to cleanse Naaman.
3. The power of God healed Naaman . . . but when? . . . at what point?
 - a. The water was only an instrument God used to test the faith of Naaman.
 - b. God appointed a time and a place where He would meet Naaman with salvation from his disease of leprosy.
 - c. Until Naaman came to the **PLACE (THE JORDAN RIVER)**, and to the **TIME (THE SEVENTH DIP)**, he was not cleansed.
 1. Sounds a lot like the principle of God’s plan for man’s salvation in man’s obeying the Gospel.
 2. It was **OBEY** and be **HEALED**, or **DISOBEY** and **REMAIN AS A LEPER**.
 3. Now notice the order of Naaman’s healing:

- a. Now notice the order of his healing:
 1. **Belief** “If I dip 7 times in Jordan, I will be healed.”
 2. **Obedience** Seven dips in the Jordan River
 3. **Cleansing** The benefit (blessing) received upon compliance.

B. BELIEF + OBEDIENCE = CLEANSING

D. **SIDENOTE:** Jesus referenced the story of the Naaman in **Luke 2:27** – “And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian.”

THE BLIND MAN. John 9

- A. The account of the blind man is found in John 9.
 1. Not only was he blind, but he had been since his birth.
 - a. He had never had physical vision.
 - b. He had never seen a sunrise . . . or a sunset.
 - c. He had never seen the beautiful stars in the night sky,
 - d. Even though he lived in Jerusalem, he had never see the beauties of the Jewish temple.
 - e. He had never seen the faces of his parents or any of his brothers or sisters, if any.
 - f. He had never seen a scroll on which was written God’s precious Word.
 2. As Jesus was passing by he observed the sightless condition of this man and stopped to do something about it.
 - a. In so doing he declared Himself to be the “light of the world” (**John 9:5**).
 - b. We take up our reading at **verse 6** and continue through **verse 7** – “When He had said these things, He spat on the ground and made clay with the saliva; and He anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay. And He said to him, ‘Go, wash in the pool of Siloam’ (which is translated, Sent). So he went and washed, and came back seeing.”
 - c. The blind man had great faith **to do exactly** as Jesus had said.
 1. His physical blindness had not resulted in spiritual blindness.
 2. In the great sermon on the mount, Jesus said – “Not everyone who says to Me, “Lord, Lord,” shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven” (**Matthew 7:21**).
 3. Decades later James would write in **James 2:24** – “You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only.”
 - d. Faith in God never calls a command of Jesus nonessential or unnecessary.
 - e. Until the blind man **did** what Jesus told him to do, he remained without his sight and the healing that would come with obedience.
 3. Please observe:

- a. Jesus told him **WHEN** he would be healed.
- b. Jesus appointed a **PLACE** where he would be healed.
- c. When the blind man came to that **TIME (WHEN HE WASHED THE CLAY FROM HIS EYES)** and the **PLACE** (Pool of Siloam, he was **HEALED**.

B. My friends, I ask you, “**Was this clay or water salvation?**”

1. No! This was not water or clay salvation.
2. Washing in the Pool of Siloam did not explain **HOW** the blind man received his sight but **WHEN**.
3. Jesus used the clay and the water as instruments in testing the man’s faith.
 - a. Notice the order of his healing:
 1. **Belief** “If I wash the clay from my eyes in the pool of Siloam, I will be able to see.”
 2. **Obedience** . . . The actual washing off of the clay at Siloam.
 3. **Healing** Receiving his sight . . . Benefit (blessing) upon compliance)
 - b. **BELIEF + OBEDIENCE = HEALING.**

BAPTISM. Mark 16:16

- A. The records of the brass snake, captain, and the blind man all illustrate a principle found in the Gospel record of the Lord Jesus Christ.
 1. The people in these records were required to obey before they were blessed.
 2. The Gospel of Christ must be obeyed as well as believed before pardon is granted.
 3. Jesus said in **Mark 16:16** – “He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.”
 4. When one **BELIEVES** the facts and **OBEYS** the commands of the gospel, then he is blessed with salvation . . . but not until then.
- B. The Israelites were commanded to look up at the brass snake . . . Naaman was commanded to did seven times in the Jordan River . . . the blind man was commanded to wash the clay from his eyes in the Pool of Siloam. These things were commanded them, but now what does Christ command of us today?
 1. Believe in Him. **John 8:24** - “Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins.”
 2. Repent of sins. **Luke 13:3** – “I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish.”
 3. Confess Christ before others.
 - a. **Matthew 10:32-33** – “Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven.

But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven.”

b. **Romans 10:10** – “For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”

4. Be baptized (immersed in water) for the remission of sins.

a. **Acts 2:38** - “. . . Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins . . .”

b. **Acts 22:16** – “And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.”

C. Listening friends:

1. The Savior is **NOT FAITH** . . .

2. The Savior is **NOT REPENTANCE** . . .

3. The Savior is **NOT CONFESSION** . . .

4. The Savior is **NOT BAPTISM** . . .

5. The Savior is the Lord Jesus Christ, the only Begotten Son of God. But the steps of faith . . . repentance . . . and baptism . . . are steps all men must take in order to return to God.

D. Baptism (immersion in water for the remission of sins) is:

1. The last step or act of obedience before salvation is granted.

2. It is the borderline to the kingdom of God.

3. It is the last step before entrance into Christ.

E. **Galatians 3:27** – “For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.”

1. Before one is baptized, he is **OUT** of Christ . . . after one is baptized, he is **IN** Christ.

2. Faith in God moves one to be baptized . . .

a. As it moved Israel to look upon the brass snake and live.

b. As it moved Naaman to dip seven times in the Jordan River to be cleansed of his leprosy.

c. As it moved the blind man to go wash in the Pool of Siloam there in Jerusalem.

F. Friends, I ask you, “Is this water salvation?”

1. No! This is not water salvation.

a. The water in baptism has no more power in and of itself to cleanse from sin than:

1. The brass snake did in healing Israel of snake bites.

2. The water did in healing Naaman of the loathsome disease of leprosy.

3. The clay and the water in the Pool of Siloam to cure the blind man.

b. The blood of Jesus Christ is the only power to remove sin.

1. **Revelation 1:5** - “. . . To Him (Christ) who loved us and washed us from our sins in **His own blood.**”
2. Baptism is the time that the blood of Jesus washes away the sins of man.
3. The water is the place where the promise of God and the obedience of man meet for it to happen.
4. **Romans 6:3-5** – “Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?

Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection.”

c. Listen carefully . . .

1. Baptism is the **POINT** at which a person is cleansed of his sin.
2. This is **WHEN** faith saves.
3. There is no inherent good or evil in the water of baptism.
4. God uses water baptism to test the faith of the individual.
5. **It is merely an instrument and not a power in and of itself.**

G. Now notice the order of his healing:

- 1 **Belief** “If I am baptized into Christ I will be cleansed of all of my sins.”
- 2 **Obedience** Baptized (Immersed in water) for the remission of One’s sins.
- 3 **Cleansing** Cleansed (forgiven) of all of past sins one has committed.

H. God declares to man that his faith will save him when it moves him to repent of his sins . . . confess Jesus as the Son of God . . . and be baptized for the remission of his sins.

1. God could have given us a brass snake on a pole to look upon in order to be healed of our sins today . . . but He didn’t.
2. God has told man that water baptism is the **TIME** of salvation and not the **POWER** of it.
3. Listen carefully:
 - a. Baptism is the **TIME** one enters Christ. Galatians 3;27; Romans 6:3
 - b. Baptism is the **TIME** one’s sins are washed away. Acts 22:16
 - c. Baptism is the **TIME** one is born again. John 3:3-5
 - d. Baptism is the **TIME** one is raised to the new life. Romans 6:4
 - e. Baptism is the **TIME** one is added to the kingdom of God—the church. Acts 2:42, 47

6. Baptism is the **TIME** one is saved. Mark 16:16; 1 Peter 3:21
4. Unfortunately:
1. Many like the Israelites refuse to look in the right direction.
 2. Many like Naaman refuse to go to the right source of water.
 3. Many like the blind man refuse to wash in the assigned water.
 4. Listening friend . . . don't be like these.
 - a. To be immersed in an actual pool of blood would be undesirable by people . . . and God knew that.
 - b. One the other hand, we cannot be cleansed without coming in contact with the blood of Christ.
 - c. God knew that water would not be undesirable in that we enter it daily to cleanse our bodies . . . so why should one refuse to enter it once to cleanse one's soul for all eternity.
 1. In the act of so being immersed, God applies cleansing blood of Christ to our souls.
 2. In the process, our bodies get wet . . . but our souls become cleansed of all of our sins.

CONCLUSION:

- A. The only thing left for you to do is simply what the Bible says.
1. **1 Peter 3:21** – “There is also an antitype which now saves us -- baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”
 - a. A **TYPE** is a historical fact in the Bible that illustrates a spiritual truth . . . In this case the Great Flood during the time of Noah & the saving of the eight inside the ark.
 - b. The **ANTITYPE** is the spiritual truth itself . . . In this case baptism.
 2. The time is provided now to encourage you to exercise your faith in obedience to the Gospel of Christ and become a Christian.
- B. **God's Plan for Man's Salvation.** Will you come to Jesus now?