

Understanding Salvation

Salvation is a concept that's central to the Christian faith. But what does salvation mean? In essence, salvation refers to the healing of our souls. While physical healing restores our bodies, salvation focuses on the restoration of our spiritual health. We all need salvation because of sin, which separates us from God. There are two types of healing: physical healing for the body, and spiritual healing for the soul.

The path to physical healing and spiritual healing, however, are very different.

The Plagues and God's Intervention in Egypt

Let's take a moment to reflect on the story of the Israelites in Egypt. In the book of *Exodus*, Pharaoh rejected God's commands, leading to a series of plagues. Among these were locusts, flies, frogs, and other deadly afflictions. Every time Pharaoh cried out to Moses, asking him to pray to God and remove the plague, God heard him and took away the affliction (see *Exodus 8:8-13*).

For example, in

Exodus 8:8 (NIV), Pharaoh said to Moses,

“Pray to the Lord to take the frogs away from me and my people, and I will let your people go to offer sacrifices to the

Lord."

Moses responded, "It will be as you say, so that you may know there is no one like the Lord our God" (Exodus 8:10, NIV).

As soon as Moses prayed, God removed the frogs, showing His mercy and power.

The Snakes and the Choice Between Life and Death

However, there's a significant shift in the way God responds later on, after the Israelites had crossed the Red Sea. In the book of *Numbers*, we read that the people began to grumble and complain about their hardships in the wilderness. In their rebellion, God sent venomous snakes to bite them, and many died as a result. The people cried out to Moses, asking him to pray for God to remove the snakes. This time, however, God did not remove the snakes. Instead, He provided a remedy.

In

Numbers 21:8-9 (NIV), God told Moses:

“Make a snake and put it up on a pole; anyone who is bitten can look at it and live.”

Moses obeyed, making a bronze serpent, and when people looked at it, they were healed. God did not remove the source of death (the snakes), but instead provided a way to overcome the consequences of sin through the bronze serpent.

This is a key theological point: God did not remove the problem but gave the Israelites a way to be healed despite the ongoing problem. Similarly, God does not remove sin from the world, but He offers a way out through Jesus Christ.

Jesus: The Fulfillment of the Bronze Serpent

John 3:14-15 (NIV), Jesus Himself connects this event with His own coming:

“

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

Just as the bronze serpent was lifted up for the Israelites to look upon and be healed, Jesus was lifted up on the cross so that everyone who believes in Him might receive eternal life. This event is deeply theological because it connects the Old Testament story to the New Testament revelation of Christ's atoning work.

The snakes represented sin and the consequences of sin death. The bronze serpent is a type or symbol of Christ, who became sin for us, even though He Himself knew no sin (see *2 Corinthians 5:21*). By looking at the serpent, the Israelites acknowledged their need for healing. Similarly, by looking to Jesus on the cross, we acknowledge our need for salvation from sin and death.

The snakes were not removed, and neither is sin completely removed from our world today. In fact, the presence of sin and its consequences (death) continue in our world. But, like the Israelites in the wilderness, we have a choice: we can either accept God's remedy or reject it.

Deuteronomy 30:15 (NIV), God gives us this choice clearly:

“See, I set before you today life and prosperity, death and destruction.”

We are presented with the choice to either continue in sin, which leads to spiritual death, or to choose the way of life by trusting in Jesus Christ, who offers us eternal life through His sacrifice on the cross.

The Importance of Jesus as the Remedy

Jesus did not come to remove sin from the world completely. We still see sin and its effects, such as death and suffering. But He came to provide the *remedy* for sin. As we read in *John 1:29 (NIV)*, John the Baptist referred to Jesus as the *Lamb of God who takes*

away the sin of the world. Through Jesus' sacrifice, we are given a way to be healed spiritually, just as the Israelites were given a way to be healed from the venomous snake bites.

The Choice is Yours

The message of salvation is not forced upon anyone. It is a personal choice. God cannot force salvation into your heart; it's something you must choose.

As *Romans 6:23* (NIV) says:

“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

You can choose to remain in sin, where the wages are death, or you can choose life by looking to Jesus Christ, accepting His forgiveness, and following Him. The choice is entirely yours.

Conclusion

As we reflect on the story of the bronze serpent, we see that God

didn't remove the source of death (the snakes), but He provided a way for His people to overcome it. Similarly, He offers us the way of life in Jesus Christ, who was lifted up on the cross for our sins. Will you choose to look to Him for healing and eternal life?

May the Lord bless you as you make that choice.

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