

# The Baby and the Serpent

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] we're going to turn this evening to john's gospel chapter 3 i want us to look together at verse 17 john's gospel chapter 3 and verse 17 where we read the following it's on page 1071 john 3 verse 17 for god did not send his son into the world to condemn the world but in order that the world might be saved through him i've often said and i truly believe this with all my heart that the best way to really become acquainted with the teachings of the bible is to start with the gospels and to follow the life of jesus that's the first thing i would ever recommend a person who hadn't done who hadn't read the bible before you start at the gospels and you follow through because that's what the people there did as they came to know jesus for the first time and as they discovered more and more and more about what this man was able to do they discovered that this was someone who was completely unique and that was what was in the mind of nicodemus here's a man who's been watching jesus you couldn't but ask the question if you saw jesus you witnessed the kind of things he was able to do you couldn't but ask the question who is this man even the disciples who had been with him for years they still were brought to the point where they often ask who is this man and that's that's the starting point because if jesus is not the son of god then there's no point in going any further but that's the kind of question that nicodemus is asking uh he's a real uh a ruler it says that he's a ruler of the jews an educated man he's thought the thing through this is a person who's acquainted with the old testament and he's watching this man jesus trying to fit in with what kind of person this man jesus might be and so he came to him and presumably he was afraid that other people might see him talking would be guilt by association he didn't want to lose his reputation amongst his peers so he came to jesus at night and with this question rabbi we know that you are a come from god for no one can do these signs that you do unless god is with them and so begins probably the most famous chapter in the bible we all know john 3 16 for god so loved the world that he gave his only son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life but if you read the chapter carefully you can't help noticing that there are questions that naturally rise from the chapter and there are apparent apparent contradictions that are found in this chapter now i say apparent contradictions not because i believe that there are contradictions in the bible but there are certain teachings which do seem to contradict one another deliberately so i believe in order for us to be brought to the point where we say i simply do not understand this and this is one of them probably the most well known of all there's a contradiction between what jesus says here in verse 3 where he says unless a man or unless someone is born again he cannot see the kingdom of god that's the first thing i'd like us to look at this evening the statement with which jesus answered nicodemus truly i say to you unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of god but then he moves on into verse 16 or rather in verse 14

where he says this as moises lifted up the serpent in the wilderness so must the son of man be lifted up that whoever believes in him may have eternal life then you have john 3 16 and then you have verse 17 for god did not send his son into the world to condemn the world but in order that the world might be saved through him so if i was going to give a title to the sermon this evening it would be this the baby and the serpent the baby and the serpent of course by the baby i'm really really looking at what jesus is talking about in verse 3 where he says unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of god that's the first statement that jesus makes and i want us to just open it out a little bit and try and discern what it means in order for us to see how it challenges the statement that jesus makes later on so that whoever believes in him may have eternal life and of course by saying that he's talking about the serpent in the wilderness so there's the baby first the birth and then the salvation by looking at the serpent how does how do these things contradict one another well if you look at this what jesus is saying is that every person who is brought to know jesus christ every person who is brought into the kingdom of god is brought by god's grace and there's a sense in

which he does absolutely nothing to bring himself into that place and it's like a bit what jesus uses to illustrate this is the birth of a baby a person is brought to faith in jesus like a baby is born into this world first of all in that that person is utterly absolutely passive in what takes place i've seen six births live births in this world and the one thing that is absolutely that is it's in common with all of them is this that they did nothing to bring themselves into this this war we have many choices in this life but being born was never one of them when you think about it nobody asked you before you were conceived would you like to be conceived you never signed in the dotted line you never had the choice of whether to be born and whether not to be born and irrespective of all those who attended you think of all those who attend a birth there's the nurses and the orderlies and the midwife and there's the the the obstetrician if something goes wrong and all of the people who are providing and who are maintaining the equipment that's that's in a hospital and all focused on the birth of one person into the world and everyone's doing their duty and doing their bit and the one except the one person who does absolutely nothing and that is the baby jesus says it's the same when a person is brought to faith in jesus it is like a baby being born that person is born of god that's what he says born of god and that means tonight that i can stand here and say to you that i am not a christian because god found in me something that deserved to be in his kingdom i'm not a christian because i earned the right to be in his kingdom i'm not christian because i did anything for god i am a christian tonight 100 percent because of what he did for me from start to finish before the foundation of the world

ephesians chapter 1 tells us that before the foundation of the world god determined that i would be one of his people and so would you if you're a believer tonight and all through the history of the of of the world and from the from the moment we were born and as we listened to the gospel whenever that was it might have been recently or it might have been a long time ago god has worked from one stage to another to make sure that you were brought into the kingdom as a baby is born into the world so that's the first thing that this teaching tells me this great statement no one is is no one is unless you are born again you cannot see the kingdom of god the second thing this statement tells me is that when a person is born again that everything like a baby everything becomes new when you think about it for a baby every the whole world is new the sights the sounds the experiences everything that has to be learned and later on the speech and the eating and the the education and everything learning to walk and all of these things they're all brand new it's the same when a person comes to christ that's why paul said if anyone is in christ he is a new creation the old has gone and the new has come behold he said all things are become new but the third thing that this statement tells me is that when a baby is born automatically that baby is born into a family and into a country he automatically he or she automatically has citizenship and rights for protection in that country he or she has legal rights in that country and it's the same when a person is brought to faith in jesus christ god gives you right confers upon you a right to be in his family and a right to the privileges and all the great things that belong to the people of god so there's these three things that come to my mind when i think about this statement unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of god now here's where the challenge lies someone may be here tonight you listen to everything i've said you've said all right okay i know what you're saying that when a person becomes a christian it is nothing to do with him but it is everything to do with god and it's not what he's done for god it's what god has done for him from start to finish i can understand that in that case i don't need to do anything i don't need to listen to this because all i need to do is go home and spend the rest of my life business as usual and if god means me to be born again then like a baby i'll be born again after all you've just been saying you've just been telling us that i'll be the one person that is inactive in a birth is the baby so i'm going to be inactive i'm not going to do a thing i'm just going to wait until god works in my life and if he works he works if he doesn't he doesn't and here's where the challenge lies in the very next breath after making clear that a person who comes to jesus comes to jesus through no power of their own he tells us this very simply this that god at the same time gives an open willing invitation to the world to come to him and that invitation is given in many many not just here but in many many places of the bible let's just look at verse 16 for god so loved the world that he gave his only son that whosoever believes whosoever believes in him shall not perish but have everlasting life and then in john chapter 6 he says virtually the same thing he says i am the bread of life all that the father gives me will come to me and whoever listen to this whoever comes to me i will never cast out that word whoever means if you listen to the gospel if you hear the voice of god in the gospel then you are to come to him you are to accept the open invitation the willing sincere invitation that god it doesn't depend on what life you've

had in the past how well you've lived your life or how poorly you've lived your life every every single person is bankrupt before god tonight god gives you an invitation to come to him and to come to faith in the lord jesus christ it's what we call in the theological world god's sovereignty we talked about that this morning god's sovereignty and our responsibility and we are to believe the two things together we're not to set one against the other we're not to try and make out that one denies the other or contradicts the other the two things are in place in order for us to listen to the gospel and believe in jesus that's why we're here tonight if it wasn't for the fact that i believe in the preaching of the gospel it'd be a waste of time tonight it's through the preaching of the gospel that you hear god's word speaking to you and that you respond and you come and do as he says and come to believe in jesus and yet at the same time it's not your work and that to me is a fantastic piece of news because you know what it means it means that it doesn't depend on my skill as a preacher it doesn't depend on how slick i am at presenting the gospel whether or not you become a christian tonight is due to the power of god and his power alone and yet at the same time it is down to you to listen to the gospel and to respond and to hear god's word speaking to you and revealing jesus christ and that he is the only way that i am the way and the truth and the life now when i want us to look at verse 17 then this evening and just in order for us to open this second aspect a little bit more for god did not send his son into the world to condemn the world but in order that the world might be saved through him there are many many questions that you could ask with this verse the first question might be this does this mean that jesus has no right to condemn us that's what he says for god did not send his son into the world to condemn the world but in order that the world might be saved through him it does not mean that jesus has no right to condemn the world does it mean secondly that jesus will not condemn the world no it doesn't because the bible goes on to tell us that about a day when jesus will come again and this time to judge the world and condemn those who have failed to believe in him the third thing the third question i ask is what does the world mean does this mean jesus said for god did not send his son into the world to condemn the world but in order the world might be saved through does that mean that every single person who's ever lived in the world past present and future will eventually come into heaven no it doesn't no it doesn't because in the very next verse in verse 18 he tells us this whoever believes in him is not condemned but whoever does not believe is condemned already because he has not believed in the name of the only son of god so right away jesus qualifies what he tells us and he says that there are some in the world who will believe these are the ones who will be saved but there are others who won't believe and these are the ones who will be condemned that's what he tells us so in that case what does he mean by the world well what he means is simply this that the world in its entirety is in need of being saved every single person soon as they're born they're born in sin the greatest need that you and i have tonight is to be forgiven from all our sin and god's plan is not just for storn away or for glasgow or for jerusalem god's plan is that the gospel goes everywhere it's universal it's to go into all the world and we are our task tonight is to bring the gospel to every nation and tribe and language have you ever wondered why there's so much effort that goes into translating the bible do you know how many hundreds of years that christians have been translating the bible do you know how many hours have been spent translating the bible do you know how many years adoniram judson spent in burma translating the bible into burmese he spent years and years and years under the most excruciating circumstances in prison during the day he was tortured by the burmese at night time when they stopped torturing him then he would switch the light on and start translating the bible isn't that why did he do that why did he spend so much hours and effort and you would think that he would be wanting a rest after all those hours of torture it's incredible why was that because he believed in this gospel and he believed that if he translated the bible into burmese then the more he translated the more chance it would have to reach into the villages and the jungle areas of burma and people would read it and through reading it they would come to faith in jesus so the bible was to be translated and god's word was to be go out into all that's what jesus said in matthew chapter 28 all power is given unto me therefore therefore go out and preach the gospel to every nation and so when jesus tells us in verse 17 so that the world might be saved it means that every type of person every color of person every language and every category of person poor and rich and young and old all over the world today the promise what a promise god has given us in the church that the earth he says this the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the lord as the waters cover the sea one day i believe through the gospel this world will hear the gospel in its entirety we haven't reached that day yet what a day that will be i believe you can never put limits on god's power god is able right now to change to change the

minds and the hearts of this world and we have to act in faith and do what we can do to share that gospel are we being diligent in what we're doing to share the gospel tonight with our friends and neighbors it starts with ourselves like jesus and the woman on at samaria at the well at samaria just speaking to her gossiping the gospel to her conversing with her and through that conversation she was saved now it may not be that your conversation will lead to someone being saved but it might be just a link in the chain the problem is how willing are we how eager are

[ 20 : 11 ] we to just play that little small part in in spreading the gospel in order who knows what god will do through any one of us this evening god can do great things through one person for god did not send his son into the world to condemn the world but in order that the world might be saved through him well what was he talking about well he was talking about the the verses before where he talks about a particular incident that happened in the desert in the wilderness when moises was leading the children of israel through the wilderness on their way to the promised land they were always grumbling they were always complaining and frequently they rose up against god and complained about his goodness and there was one such occasion we read about it in number chapter 21 when they rose up against moises once again and this time god was angry with them and he sent fiery serpents which i presume to mean poisonous serpents amongst them and if they were bitten the serpents were everywhere they were crawling under their tents and behind a bush and in their in underneath their beds and in their shoes the snakes were everywhere so at any given moment you could put your legs out of the bed and you were bitten and if you were bitten it was only a matter of time before you died and thousands of people died what a tragedy that was and they only had themselves to blame for their own foolishness now here's what happened the time came when they realized they couldn't do a single thing to save themselves and so they started praying that was the point that was the point to which they had to come in order for them to realize once again how far they had drifted from the lord so they started praying and instead of just more instead of just god saying the word god taught them a very important lesson the lesson was this he said to moises i want you to construct a model serpent out of brass and i want you to make sure that you erect that you put that serpent at the top of a very very high pole make sure and this is really important that you put that the pole is high enough for everyone to see had to be high enough for two million people plus to be able to see so it must have been it must have the pole the pole must have been it must have been really high and the message was to go out at the same time that anyone who looks at the serpent would be healed now it doesn't get easier than that it doesn't get more straightforward than that that was it and what god was teaching them was an enormously important lesson that would that would run all the way through the bible into the new testament it was the lesson of faith that is what faith is because as moises erected the serpent and it was it became possible for everyone to see the serpent the message went all the way through the camp if you get bitten look at the serpent now you might have got people who say well that's the most ridiculous message in the world you might have had people who said well if god is going to save me if he's going to if he's going to heal me i'm going to be healed anyway i've just been praying to god and i believe god can do anything and if he's going to take away the poison then he's going to take away the there's no need for me to look some people possibly ignored moises message because they hated him anyway some people possibly hated god so they hated his message but i'll tell you what i would have done if i'd been bitten

by a snake and if i'd heard the message look to the bronze serpent i would have looked because it was only those who looked that were saved and that's the point that jesus is making he tells us in chapter and verse 14 as moises lifted up the serpent in the wilderness so must the son of man be lifted up that whoever look at that word whoever believes in him may have eternal life you see when you looked at that serpent you didn't just look at the serpent casually you looked to the serpent you see there's a difference between looking at something and looking to something when you look at something you're just you're just observing but when you look to something you're trusting you're depending alone on what you are looking to that's what faith is faith first of all here's god's message the message of god to the people in the wilderness was look to the serpent and and faith is not just hearing the message but doing what the message says looking to jesus so that whoever believes in him may have eternal life what does it mean tonight to believe in jesus what does it mean does that mean just to believe that he existed well everyone believes atheists believe that jesus existed does it mean to believe in god well the bible tells us that the devil believes in god he believes that the that god is there that he exists nobody there's nobody with more faith in that respect than the devil

himself he knows perfectly well that there's a god the devil is not an atheist well if it doesn't believe any of if it doesn't mean any of these things what does believing mean well in the bible to believe was to receive it was to take it was to accept and what god is asking you and i to accept tonight is the death of jesus as the payment for your sin and that is what faith is faith is looking to jesus as our savior it's that point where you come to where you where you know and you discover there is nothing in my life that that deserves god's goodness and i need more than anything else in the world to be forgiven and to be given a new life a new beginning i need to be born again do you need to be born again tonight you see because there's only two types of people here tonight those who have already been born again and those who haven't been born again and as you listen to god word you become aware of where you are in relation to god and you become aware of the fact that i'm not born again and you become aware that your greatest need your greatest priority in all the world is to have that relationship to god in which you're able to call him my savior and my father and my lord do you have that relationship have you come to that point of commitment where you've looked you see it might have been a really simple thing for the people in the in the wilderness to look to the serpent but it was a really significant thing because really what they were doing then was listening to god and doing as god had commanded them and invited them to do and it's the same when a person comes to jesus for the first time as you lift up your eyes for the first time and as you look at the jesus that you have looked at maybe thousands of times in your life but never looked to until now till that first time that's the moment when god will change your life forever that's the moment in which you enter into his kingdom by being born again it's the moment which god has been preparing you for it's the moment that you know you need tonight more than anything else in all the world you and i know naturally stand under the condemnation of god and we will continue to do so until that point which our sins are forgiven our guilt is cleansed and until we are set free from sin in jesus christ now i'm going to leave this with you and i'm going to ask you tonight are you born again or are you not do you know the lord or do you not do you look to him have you looked have you lifted your eyes like the people in the wilderness knowing that you've been bitten and it's only a matter of time before you die have you raised your eyes and looked not to the serpent in the wilderness but to the son of god who was lifted up high enough for everyone to see who knows what god is doing in your life you have no control over god's part and i want you to put that aside i want you to just concentrate tonight only on what god has commanded you to do and invited you to do to believe in the lord jesus christ so that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have everlasting life let's pray our father in heaven we pray that your word will that will rest in our hearts and take root in our hearts tonight perhaps as never before we believe in the power of your word we believe in the power of the holy spirit and we pray that your holy spirit will speak powerfully to each one of us lord we ask for every soul every precious soul who's gathered here this evening young and old and pray that they may know what it is to be set free from the guilt of sin and to be given everlasting life oh lord there is nothing more important in this world than to know you and to believe in jesus christ we ask these things in his name amen see you we'll see you we'll see you