

Snake Salvation

I. Slide1 **Announce:**

- A. Slide2-5 Larry: Christian Audio. Sun Night Prayer. Rise High Camp. Xmas Giving opp.
- B. Slide6 Christmas Eve Service Times: 3, 5, 7 PM. Inside. Fam Style Service.
- C. Slide7 Advent Daily Devo: Advent is a season of expectant waiting and preparation for the celebration of the Nativity of Jesus at Christmas as well as the return of Jesus at the second coming. [dates back at least 480ad]
 - 1. The season of Advent anticipates the coming of Christ from 3 diff perspectives. [Since the time of Bernard of Clairvaux (1153)]. Christians have spoken of the 3 comings of Christ: in the flesh in Bethlehem, in our hearts daily, and in glory at the end of time. [Christianity Today. Diff Authors. Advent starts today. Pick 1 up]
- D. Slide8 ESV: prob 1st of the year. (close to NKJV. Holiday gift? replacing pew bibles soon)

II. Slide9a **Intro: Snake Salvation**

- A. Here we have the first of Jesus' 12 main conversations/teachings in John.
 - 1. In ch's 3 & 4 we eavesdrop into 2 private conversations Jesus had with a couple of Israel locals (1 man & 1 woman).
 - a) The Man - a respected religious leader; a Jew; one people looked up to.
 - b) The Woman - a not so respected woman; a Samaritan; looked down upon.
 - c) Both took Jesus' words too literally & miss the deeper meaning. Both were sincere inquirers. Both, Jesus works very patiently with & offers both eternal life.
- B. Slide9b I chose Snake Salvation for my title, then I googled it & found out it was a National Geographic Channel reality television show. Gregory Coots was a Pentecostal pastor in Kentucky who was featured in the show, which documented the lives of people who practice snake handling...until he died in 2014 from a rattlesnake bite during a service. [still a great title]
 - 1. We need to read 1 backstory so my snake-title makes sense Num.21:4-9

III. Slide10 **SNAKE BITTEN (1,2)**

A. **Slide11a NIC'S RESUME (1)**

- B. Nicodemus at the top of the religious ladder, looking down. *Yet now we see him stepping down from that ladder...to walk the streets looking for answers.*
- C. **Slide11b 3 Facts** about Nicodemus: *conqueror [he had power, position & prestige].*
- D. In spite of all he had, he wanted to know more about *Jesus' teaching.*
1. **A Pharisee** - *to be separated*, stood aloof from society in self-rt smugness. They were dedicated to preserving, interpreting, & defending Jewish Law; which they legalistically forced upon the people of Israel.
 2. **A ruler of the Jews/member of Sanhedrin** - court of 70 men, who had religious jurisdiction over every Jew in the known world.
 3. **The Teacher of Israel** - indicates he had preeminent status in religious circles.
- E. *If heaven could be earned from one's accomplishments, Nicodemus would have had change left over.*

F. **Slide12a NIC AT NIGHT (2)**

- G. Jesus doesn't condemn Nicodemus for coming at night so neither will I. (yes, all 3 x's he's mentioned its mentioned)
1. It's amazing he came to Jesus at all! *Better to come at night then not at all.*
 2. Jesus is always accessible, to the one who **comes**.
 - a) **Slide12b** *The one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out.* Jn.6:37

H. **Slide13a NIC GETS SAVED???**

- I. What we know of Nicodemus is only found in **John's** gospel.
1. **Ch.3** he **Desires** Jesus; **Ch.7** he **Defends** Jesus; **Ch19** his **Devotion to Jesus**
 2. His faith seems to develop over these **3 episodes**. Tenney calls him, *A secret disciple whose faith grew slowly.*
 - a) **Jn.3** - learns of his new birth. Honors Jesus as Rabbi. Knows He's from God.
 - b) **Jn.7** - defends Jesus before the Pharisees arguing for just treatment.
 - c) **Jn.19** - brings 100 lbs. of myrrh & aloes to prepare His body for burial. Note: it calls Joseph of Arimetha a disciple but doesn't introduce Nick that way.

3. Slide13b Borchert says, “*it was enough spice to bury a king royally. The Johannine Death Story thus makes clear that Jesus was a King.*”

J. Slide14a **REGENERATION VS. RELIGION**

- K. **Religion** attempts to *turn over new leaves*; **Regeneration** *transforms lives*.
Religion is *man’s* effort to reach **God**; **Regeneration** is **God’s** effort to reach *man*.
- L. **Man’s plan of salvation** involves an *external series of good works* (church attendance, baptism, giving, benevolent deeds, etc.)
God’s plan is an *internal gift from Himself* (impartation of *new life* by means of a *sp. rebirth*)
- M. It is not a **change of my name**, but a **renewal of my nature**, so that I am not the man I used to be, but a new man in Christ Jesus.
- Slide14b To **wash & dress a corpse** is a far different thing from **making it alive**: **man** can do the one, **God** alone can do the other. *Spurgeon*
 - To be **unregenerate** is to be **unsaved, unpardoned, w/o God, & w/o hope**.

IV. Slide15 **SNAKE BITE KIT (3-8)**

- A. Slide16a **WHERE DO BABIES COME FROM?** (3-7)
- B. **Most assuredly** (vs.3,5,11) - In the **original** - ἀμήν ἀμήν. *Amen, Amen*.
- It’s a word of **finality**. It is Jesus’ **last word**. **No more can be said**.
 - Do you need more from the Savior than His Amen?**
- C. Little did Nicodemus realize, that when he met Jesus, he, *the leading teacher of Israel*, would be the one **raising his hand** as the **student**.
- Slide16b Dr. David Jeremiah said, *Nicodemus believed Jesus was a teacher come from God, not God come to teach*.
 - Note**: Jesus **doesn’t** go for the **jugular**, but for the **heart**...the **heart** of the **matter & heart** of His **message**.
 - Instead of **jots & tittle** of the **Law**, He speaks about **words of life**.

- D. Nicodemus' response was not a foolish question. He knew what it meant in his Jewish dictionary. **Slide16c** He was not *gynecologically challenged*, he understood the whole birth process.
- Nicodemus' misunderstanding (4) stems from the *ambiguity of this phrase*. The Greek adverb used here, *anōthen*, can mean **from above** (i.e. **heaven**), **from the beginning**, **for a long time**, or **again**.
 - Slide16d** That is, the term can indicate either **timing** or **location**.
 - Jesus** is using the word to point to a **location** (**heaven**, the *source* of the rebirth), **but** Nicodemus understands it in reference to **time** or a **repeated activity** (that the birth must happen multiple times).
 - He understood a radical change was necessary. But **HOW** does it happen? (9)
 - Listen to his **heart cry**. He desires a **change**. He wants to be **different**.
 - Slide16e** Tennyson Poem: *And oh for a man to rise in me, That the man that I am may cease to be. Maybe you long for the same today?*
- E. **Slide17a** Have you ever seen someone *frame their Birth Certificate*, hang it on their wall, & insist on showing it to everyone? A birth certificate is *important* if you need to prove your birth took place. **Buuut** *what matters most* is that you are **alive now**, and that your present life, *day by day and moment by moment*, is showing evidence of **health and strength and purpose**.
[our new birth is *so important*, it matters that it happened. **But** its not an end all]
- So please, make sure this **has** taken place, **but** if your christianity only points **back** to yesteryear...then **Houston, we have a problem**.
- F. The Jews & Nicodemus knew what was important was *being born into the right family*, i.e. being *a child of Abraham*. **Now** Jesus is saying, *God is starting a new family in which ordinary birth isn't enough, you need to be born all over again, born from above*.
- G. Two famous personalities popularized the phrase *born-again* into our modern speech.
- Slide17b** One was **Jimmy Carter** who described himself as a *born-again Christian* when he got an office.

2. Slide17c The second was **Charles Colson**, the former hatchet man in the Nixon White House, when he wrote a best-selling book by the title **Born Again**. Where he chronicled his own experience of conversion to Christianity.
- H. Unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God. 2 things create this necessity: the nature of the human heart and the nature of Heaven.
1. The nature of the human heart - we're born in sin. The sinner is spiritually dead. Being unregenerate, he lacks eyes to see the kingdom and the power to enter it.
 2. The nature of Heaven - if the unregenerated person could go to heaven, he would be the most miserable person there, seeing he would not have a heavenly nature to enjoy the people and the provisions of heaven.
[Read *The Great Divorce*, by C.S.Lewis, *a theological dream vision*, bus to heaven]
- I. Some think *born of water* refers to water baptism.
1. The danger with understanding it as water baptism is that it could be misconstrued as making **baptism** a requirement for salvation.
 2. I think context defines it, it's likened unto being *born of flesh*, in next vs.(6).
 3. The *birth of the flesh*...coming in a *sac of water*.
 - a) **Flesh** is flesh; **spirit** is spirit. A **vegetable** stays a veggy; a **pig** stays a piggy.
There's no evolution from **flesh** to **spirit**.
- J. **Regeneration** is the act of God alone, in which He renews the human heart, making it alive when it was dead. It is the gift of God's grace. It is the immediate, supernatural work of the Holy Spirit wrought in a us. It's effect is to quicken us to spiritual life from spiritual death. It changes the disposition of our souls, *inclining our hearts to God*. And the fruit of regeneration is faith. *Sproul, pg.1664 Geneva Bible*
1. **A.K.A.** Regeneration, rebirth, renewed. Born-again, born from above, born of the Spirit. **A new generating, a new genesis, a new beginning. New life, new birth, new creation. And** spiritual resurrection.
It is more than *turning over a new leaf*, it marks the beginning of *a new life* in a *radically renewed person*.

- a) Our spiritual rebirth is the **starting point** of our **spiritual life**. It is by divine initiative. An act that is *sovereign, immediate, and instantaneous*.
An awareness of our conversion may be gradual. Yet rebirth itself is instantaneous.
- b) *No one can be **partially reborn** any more than a woman can be **partially pregnant**.*

K. (7) Do not marvel that I said to **you** (sing.), **You** (pl.) *must be born again*.

1. The first **you** is **singular** and the second is **plural**. (making it personal now)
2. The implication is that being **born again** is necessary for **all people**, not just Nic

V. Slide18 JESUS THE HEAVEN MAN (9-13)

- A. (13) No man has gained the heights of heaven. **What Jesus spoke, came from the very secrets of heaven, that HE brought down.**
- B. No one had/has the same **experience & authority** with *heavenly things* as Jesus does.

VI. Slide19 JESUS THE SNAKE MAN (14,15)

- A. **Numb.21:4-9. Remember**, Israel murmured against God & Moses, so He sent fiery/*poisonous* serpents. The serpents **killed** a number of them, & made many others **sick**.
1. As a **remedy** for their sin, God had Moses make a bronze serpent & **raise it on a pole for all to see**. If the people **looked at** the serpent with even a hint of faith in God's provision, they were healed.
 2. All this was a striking **foreshadow** of Christ being **lifted up on the cross** to **save** those who were **dying** of sin & **looked** to Him in faith. Alludes to both the **crucifixion and** the **exaltation** of Jesus, in His **death and resurrection**.
- B. **Slide20a Note 2 things:** (1) The poisonous bite was **terminal** (2) Only **one cure** was provided.
- C. **Look with faith! Not**, concoct some remedy. **Not** fight the serpents. **Not** even rebuke the serpents. **Not** make an offering. **Not** pray. **Not** look to Moses. **And especially Not** just *try a lot harder to be good...you might as well try to teach a snake to sing*.
1. All that we can do, all that was/is required is a **simple look of faith**.
 2. Didn't even matter how many times they were bit, or how infected they were.

3. Like the **thief** on the cross, who merely **looked** to Jesus & said,
Lord, remember me when You come into your kingdom. Jesus said to him,
Assuredly I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.

a) Slide20b Jesus took our **infected nature** upon Himself, bore our **venom**, & imparts
 a **new nature** to us.

D. Are you **more religious** than Nicodemus? And yet Jesus told him he was still missing
 heaven by 18” *so to speak*.

1. **Christ** had to **die** (vs.14). **Sinners** have to **believe** (vs.15).

E. Slide20c Today, will **you** look to Jesus and receive **His serum** for your *snake bite of sin*?

1. *Without the new birth*, Jesus said in vs.3, *you can't even see God's kingdom.*
 You can't glimpse it...let alone...**get in!**

2. **You must be born-again.** You must have *Heavens birth certificate*.

3. **Listen friends...**you don't have to let the snake kill you. God's action in *the*
crucifixion of Jesus has *planted a sign* in the middle of history. It reads:
 Slide20d **SEE, BELIEVE, LIVE!**

F. **Communion:**

1. **Bread** -

2. **Cup** -