

Unbelievable

Episode 6: Snakes On A Plain

INTRODUCTION - What Is Your Kryptonite?

Matthew 18:8-9

THE STORY - The Instinct of Idolatry

Numbers 21:4-9 + 2 Kings 18:4

- CONTEXT: Israel has wandered in the wilderness for decades. They have received the Commandments (the Torah), have scouted out the "promised land", and are involved in some battles for territory.
- ARE WE THERE YET?: The Israelites become "impatient" with their journey and return to "grumbling". But for the first time their complaint is directed against God himself along with Moses, suggesting that God has tricked them into coming into the wilderness to die.
- GOD SENDS SERPENTS: God drives Israel to the point of repentance by sending poisonous snakes to bite them. His tactic works and the people ask for help.
- GOD'S CREATIVE SOLUTION: God commissions a work of art - a snake sculpture mounted on a pole. Moses made it and placed it where all could see. If bitten, people could be healed simply by looking at the statue.
- THE UNTOLD STORY: Israel treasures the statue and preserves it for generations until we later find out they have been worshipping it in their Temple.

LOOKING DEEPER - Reading Below The Lines

TAKE OUT #1 - *Our repentance and God's forgiveness doesn't always remove all consequences.*

The people asked God to remove the snakes. Instead, he gave them a way to deal with the snake bites.

TAKE OUT #2 - *God always looks for the creative, relational way to get something done.*

God gives each of us gifts and then asks us to represent him creatively and collectively, as one body. (e.g., 1 Corinthians 12)

TAKE OUT #3 - *God's rules are made to be "broken". (And if "broken" sounds too risky to you, then cross it out and write "internalized", since that is where I'm going with this point.)*

Like a nut, we break the shell to get at the heart of each law. Like I told my kids last month - don't just follow the rules, follow the reason for the rules.

Exodus 20:4; Numbers 15:39; Hebrews 12:2

TAKE OUT #4 - *We must cultivate consciousness of our own tendency to worship the ways God works rather than God.*

Our challenge is to find the balance between celebrating how God works in our lives without worshipping any one way.

CONCLUSION - Healing Our Snakebites Today

John 3:14-15

HOME CHURCH QUESTIONS

Warming Up...

1. After briefly reviewing this week's message, share one new thing you learned or one thing that most challenged, convicted, or encouraged you.

Look To The Book...

2. The story of Moses and the bronze serpent raises questions about how God's people should follow God's laws. Review the paradox between Exodus 20:4 and Numbers 21:8. How do Christ's words in the following three passages help us understand how God wants us to relate to his written word? a) Matthew 5:17-20; b) Luke 16:14-17; and c) John 7:19-24.

So What?...

3. Recall "Take out #4". What might be some modern examples of "serpent worship" among Christians today? In what ways do you personally tend to glorify particular ways God works over others? Pray for each other (and the contemporary church as a whole), that we will walk the balance between celebrating God's diversity while gratefully enjoying the specific way he is working in our lives today.

Bruxy Cavey @ THE MEETING HOUSE - Sunday, August 13 / 20, 2006