

John 3:9-15

“How are these things possible?” Nicodemus asked.

¹⁰ Jesus replied, “You are a respected Jewish teacher, and yet you don’t understand these things? ¹¹ I assure you, we tell you what we know and have seen, and yet you won’t believe our testimony. ¹² But if you don’t believe me when I tell you about earthly things, how can you possibly believe if I tell you about heavenly things? ¹³ No one has ever gone to heaven and returned. But the Son of Man has come down from heaven. ¹⁴ And as Moses lifted up the bronze snake on a pole in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, ¹⁵ so that everyone who believes in him will have eternal life.

Background

Nicodemus, a Pharisee and respected teacher, came to Jesus sincerely seeking truth. Unlike many Pharisees, he was earnest in his search. Though knowledgeable, Nicodemus didn’t grasp the concept of being “born again”—a spiritual rebirth through the Holy Spirit. Jesus challenged him for not understanding what Scripture already revealed, such as the prophecy in Ezekiel 36 about inner cleansing and renewal by the Spirit.

Jesus used the plural form of “you” to emphasize that the rulers of Israel were not accepting His message. He warned that if they couldn’t grasp basic spiritual truths, they wouldn’t understand deeper heavenly ones either.

Teaching Points

1. The Son of Man descended from heaven.

Jesus called Himself the “Son of Man,” a Messianic title highlighting His full humanity and divinity. Unlike anyone else, He came down from heaven, making Him uniquely qualified to speak of heavenly truths. We can’t understand spiritual things through human reasoning alone—we need divine revelation, which Jesus, the Son of Man, came to give.

2. The Son of Man was lifted up from earth.

Verse 14 refers to the event in Numbers 21 where poisonous snakes entered the Israelite camp because of their rebellion. When the people repented, God instructed Moses to lift a bronze serpent on a pole. Anyone who looked at it in faith was healed. This was a symbolic picture of

Christ's sacrificial death. Just as the Israelites looked to the bronze serpent for healing, we must look to Jesus, lifted up on the cross, for salvation. The serpent symbolized sin and judgment. Jesus bore our sins and the curse of sin on the cross. His death was necessary for salvation; He became our substitute, taking God's judgment so we could be made right with Him.

Application

1. Have you looked at Jesus lifted up?

Verse 15 says, *"everyone who believes in him will have eternal life."* Eternal life comes by believing in Jesus as the One who was "lifted up" on the cross for our sins. It's not enough to see Him as just a teacher, miracle worker, or even the Son of God. You must believe in Him as your sin-bearer, the One who died in your place. Have you looked to Jesus in that way?