

Message Seven

**The Reality of the Sin Offering,
the Bronze Serpent,
and the Destruction of the Devil**

Scripture Reading: Lev. 4:3; 2 Cor. 5:21; Rom. 8:3;
John 1:14; 3:14; 12:31; 1 John 3:8b; Heb. 2:14

I. As the reality of the sin offering, Christ was “made sin on our behalf”—2 Cor. 5:21; Lev. 4:3:

- A. Christ did not know sin in an experiential way by contact or by personal experience, for in His nature and substance there was no sin; nevertheless, Christ was made sin (not sinful) on our behalf to be judged by God—2 Cor. 5:21; Rom. 8:3.
- B. Christ died on the cross not only for our sins but also as sin itself, having been made sin on our behalf by God—2 Cor. 5:21:
 - 1. We were not only sinful—we were sin itself; we were the constitution of sin, the embodiment of sin—Rom. 5:12, 19; 6:6; 7:7, 11, 17, 23.
 - 2. After God laid our sins upon the crucified Christ, God considered Him the unique sinner—Isa. 53:6b, 11c, 12d; 1 Pet. 2:24.
 - 3. When Christ died for us as our Substitute, God considered Him not only the sin-bearer but sin itself; when Christ was crucified, sin was crucified—Rom. 6:10.
 - 4. As the One who was made sin on our behalf, Christ was judged by God once for all—2 Cor. 5:21.

II. As the reality of the sin offering, Christ the Son was sent “in the likeness of the flesh of sin and concerning sin” so that God could condemn sin in the flesh—Rom. 8:3:

- A. As the Word that was with God and that was God, Christ became flesh—John 1:1, 14:
 - 1. In the Bible, especially in the New Testament, *flesh* denotes the fallen man, not the God-created man—Gen. 1:26; 6:3; Rom. 3:20.
 - 2. Our flesh is not only flesh but also sinful flesh; however, the flesh of Christ was not sinful flesh.
 - 3. When the Word became flesh, the flesh of Jesus was joined to fallen man with sinful flesh, but in His flesh there was not the element of sin; Satan could not enter into Jesus’ flesh.

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- B. God sent His Son only “in the likeness of the flesh of sin”; the Son did not actually have the flesh of sin but only the form, the likeness, of the flesh of sin—8:3:
1. That the Word became flesh means that the Triune God became a man of flesh in the likeness of a sinful man—John 1:1, 14.
 2. Christ became flesh to be indirectly involved with sin—only in the likeness of the flesh of sin but not in the reality—Rom. 8:3.
 3. By so doing, God entered into humanity and became one with sinful man; however, He had only the likeness of a sinful man but not the sin of a sinful man, only the form of a fallen man but not the sinful nature of a fallen man.
 4. In His death Christ as a man in the flesh caused sin to be condemned in the flesh by God—v. 3:
 - a. The flesh is of sin, and the Son of God did indeed become flesh (Heb. 2:14; 1 Tim. 3:16); however, He had no participation in the sin of the flesh.
 - b. When God the Father sent God the Son concerning sin and to deal with sin, even to abolish it, He sent Him not in the reality of the flesh of sin but in the likeness, the appearance, of the flesh of sin—John 1:14; Rom. 8:3.
 - c. While Christ was on the cross, God condemned sin in the flesh of Jesus Christ, the One who was sent in the likeness of the flesh of sin—v. 3.

III. “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up”—John 3:14:

- A. As the One who was sent by the Father in the likeness of the flesh of sin, Christ is typified by the bronze serpent in Numbers 21:4-9:
1. When the children of Israel spoke against God and against Moses, “Jehovah sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people, so that many people of Israel died”—v. 6.
 2. God told Moses to make “a fiery serpent, and set it on a pole”; “Moses made a bronze serpent and set it on the pole; and if a serpent had bitten any man, when he looked at the bronze serpent, he lived”—vv. 8-9.

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- B. The incident in Numbers 21 was sovereignly prepared by God to reveal a particular type of Christ:
 - 1. As a serpent in form, the bronze serpent lifted up on a pole is a type of Christ lifted up on the cross for us—John 3:14:
 - a. In verse 14 the Lord Jesus applied this type to Himself, indicating that when He was in the flesh, He was in “the likeness of the flesh of sin” (Rom. 8:3), which likeness is equal to the form of the bronze serpent.
 - b. The bronze serpent had only the form of the serpent but was without the serpent’s poison; Christ was lifted up only as a serpent in form, for He did not have the poisonous nature of a serpent.
 - 2. As sinful human beings, we actually are serpentine; in our fallen nature we are children of the old serpent, the devil—1 John 3:10; Matt. 12:34; 23:33; Rev. 12:9:
 - a. We are all serpentine beings with the poison of the serpent in our nature; in our fallen nature we are not only sinful—we are serpentine as well.
 - b. In the sight of God, the entire fallen human race consists of poisonous serpents—Matt. 12:34; 23:33.
 - 3. Because we are such serpents, we needed a Substitute; we needed Christ to die for us in the form of a serpent but without the poisonous element of the serpent—John 3:14; Rom. 8:3.

IV. “For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil”—1 John 3:8b:

- A. As sinners, we need God’s salvation, and as those who are snared and troubled by the devil, we need the Lord Jesus to destroy the works of the devil—1 Tim. 1:15; 1 John 3:8.
- B. When the Son of God was on earth, He destroyed the works of the devil—Mark 1:23-28; Matt. 12:28; 15:22-28; Luke 4:39; 13:10-17:
 - 1. Often Satan’s work was not obvious; he hid behind natural phenomena.
 - 2. Although the devil hid behind many natural phenomena, the Lord Jesus rebuked him—Mark 4:35-41.
- C. In 1 John 3:8 the Greek word translated “destroy” may also be translated “undo, dissolve”:

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1. The devil has sinned continually from ancient times and begets sinners that they might practice sin with him—vv. 8, 10; John 8:44.
2. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might undo and destroy the sinful deeds of the devil, that is, condemn, through His death on the cross in the flesh (Rom. 8:3), sin initiated by him, the evil one; destroy the power of sin, the sinful nature of the devil (Heb. 2:14); and take away both sin and sins.

V. “Since therefore the children have shared in blood and flesh, He also Himself in like manner partook of the same, that through death He might destroy him who has the might of death, that is, the devil”—v. 14:

- A. The manifestation of the Lord Jesus destroyed the works of the devil, and the death of the Lord Jesus destroyed the devil himself—1 John 3:8; John 3:14; 12:31; Heb. 2:14.
- B. It was through His being a serpent in form that the Lord Jesus crushed the head of the old serpent, the devil—John 3:14; Gen. 3:15; Rev. 12:9:
 1. The serpent is a symbol of the devil; the Lord Jesus was crucified as a serpent in form in order to deal with the devil, Satan.
 2. In this way He judged the ruler of this world: “Now is the judgment of this world; now shall the ruler of this world be cast out”—John 12:31:
 - a. Satan as the old serpent, the ruler of the world, had injected himself into man’s flesh.
 - b. Through His death on the cross in the likeness of the flesh of sin, the Lord destroyed Satan, who is in man’s flesh—Rom. 8:3; Heb. 2:14.
 - c. By judging Satan in this way, the Lord also judged the world, which is hanging on Satan; hence, the Lord’s being lifted up caused the world to be judged and its ruler to be cast out—John 16:11; 12:31.
- C. In His crucifixion Christ destroyed the devil—Heb. 2:14:
 1. In verse 14 the Greek word translated “destroy” can also be rendered as “bring to nought, make of none effect, do away with, abolish, annul, discard.”

CRYSTALLIZATION-STUDY OUTLINES

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2. In His humanity and through His work on the cross, Christ has destroyed the devil.
 3. Christ died not only as the Substitute of fallen men, who had been bitten by the serpent, but also to destroy the devil—John 3:14; Heb. 2:14.
- D. Hallelujah, through Christ as the reality of the sin offering, the devil has been destroyed!