

Greg didn't seem to have trouble in the class. He asked some interesting questions and he engaged the professor in a brief discussion about the bronze serpent in Numbers 21 which Jesus referenced in verse fourteen. Greg acknowledged that he saw the relationship between the fiery snakes and sin. The salvation received by simply looking upon the one lifted up for all to see was true both with the bronze serpent and with Jesus on the cross.

"Don't you think that sometimes Christians kind of treat the cross like the ancient Israelites ended up treating the bronze serpent?" Greg asked Dr. Cabrera.

"How so?" the professor asked.

"Well, in 2 Kings 18, King Hezekiah destroyed the bronze serpent because the Israelites were worshipping it for its own sake rather than honoring it as a representative of the salvation that came through it. It seems to me that more than a few Christians virtually worship the cross rather than simply honoring it as part of the plan of salvation."

"Why do you think that?"

"No offense to the worship teams," Greg smiled apologetically at the musicians and singers in the class, "but we sing lots of songs about 'at the cross' and 'on the cross' and the nails and suffering. I just think maybe we put too much emphasis on the cross and not enough on the rest of the plan of salvation."

“Why do you think that’s a bad thing? Didn’t we receive our salvation at the cross?”

“I don’t think it’s as simple an answer as we want it to be,” Greg shook his head. “Sure, the cross is a really, really big deal, but you take away the rest and it’s nothing.”

Some of the other students gasped in shock, but Dr. Cabrera just looked thoughtfully at Greg and stroked his chin. “Nothing’s a rather strong word, don’t you think?”

“Not at all,” Greg spoke passionately. “Without the incarnation, Jesus is just a man who died on the cross. Thousands of men did that. The cross itself required God to hang upon it for it to have eternal significance. Then we needed the resurrection too, because salvation without eternity, well, it isn’t really salvation. And there’s the unfulfilled promise, the Second Coming and the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. If it doesn’t happen, then none of the rest means anything because then God has broken a promise and he can’t do that and be God.”

“You have a point,” the professor nodded thoughtfully. “Would you have us destroy our crosses like Hezekiah destroyed the bronze serpent?”

“Maybe some of us need to,” Greg said, “if we’ve made the cross more important than the divine man who hung upon it and used it as an instrument of glory for the Father.”

“That’s an interesting observation,” the professor said. “What do the rest of you think?”