

The Vipers' Den

Easter Sunday

April 16, 2017

Welcome to where we're learning to surrender our heart ... *and our tongue!*

Jesus said: "the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does." (Jn 5:19)



The last thing the Son was shown, *before* He rose in triumph, was to be hung on a cross; **not at the hands of the Romans, as much as at the tongues of His own religious rulers.**



Deliver me, O Lord, from evil men; preserve me from violent men, who plan evil things in their hearts ... **They sharpen their tongues like a serpent;** *[hypocritical, forked tongues condemned Him]* **the poison of asps is under their lips.** *[About 8" under: in their hearts]* – Psalm 140:1-3 NKJ



Jesus' brother, James, later alerts us that "the tongue is a fire ... and is set on fire by hell ... an unruly evil, full of deadly poison." (James 3:6-8) So, on this Easter morning: **how much venom is under your tongue?**



We're well aware of Jesus' final assignment on the cross; but, **what do you suppose the first thing was, He was shown to do?**



In 70^{AD} the Temple was **destroyed** just as Jesus had predicted when He left it for the last time. Let's go back and listen in: "Look, Teacher! What massive stones! What magnificent buildings!" (Mrk 13:1) "I tell you the truth, not one stone here will be left on another ..." (Mat 24:2)



This is where Mary and Joseph brought eight-day-old Jesus, to name Him, present Him, and dedicate Him ... *among other things.*



Now, Bethlehem's Rabbinical Shepherds, tending the sacrificial lambs, had been spreading the angels' news that the Christ is born. So, **you can imagine the anticipation in the Temple!** (Lk 2:17-18) When the baby arrives, **He's treated like royalty!** Two renowned Temple prophets, Simeon and Anna, confirm to everyone waiting and crowding in to see, that He will be their salvation! (Lk 2:21-38) Then the unthinkable happens: King Herod kills the baby boys in Bethlehem.

And, **word is spread that the child is dead.** (Mt 2:16-18) Nobody knew an angel had warned Joseph to flee to Egypt. (Mt 2:13-15) Just as nobody knew, after Herod died, that they returned; because, fearing being known in Jerusalem, they went to Nazareth. (Mt 2:19-23)



And the Child grew and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him. His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. – Luke 2:40-41 NKJ

Carefully guarding young Yeshua’s identity: *“Stay away from the Temple, Yeshua; they’ll recognize you. Let everyone think you’re dead, that’s a good plan.”*

And when He was **twelve years old**, [when Jewish boys are obligated to follow the Law] they went up to Jerusalem according to the custom of the feast. When they had finished the days, as they returned, **the Boy Jesus lingered behind** in Jerusalem. – Luke 2:42-43a NKJ

Why? Well, are you aware of the prophecy regarding young Yeshua?

The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding ... and **a little child shall lead them**. ... The nursing child shall play by the cobra’s hole, and **the weaned child shall put his hand in the viper’s den**. – Isaiah 11:1-10 NKJ

Okay. So, here’s the thing: **when did that happen?** Definitely *before* He turned 13! That’s when a Jewish boy becomes a man. **Ever wonder why we’re given this one childhood adventure?**



These are Jesus’ first instructions from the Father: figure out what the **“viper’s den”** is (here’s a clue: you’ve been **“playing by”** it). Now you must **“put your hand into it,”** alone, and **“lead”**. And, **time’s running out; He’s twelve! They come every year. Next time He returns to Jerusalem, it’ll be too late.**



In Hebrew, the word for hand, “yad”, is also what they called a pointer used for reading and leading others in the scrolls. This one’s a couple hundred years older than Jesus!

Imagine His mind racing through the Word, *matching the comparables* to solve this **riddle**.

- Their wine is the poison of serpents ... (Deut 32:33)
- It becomes cobra venom within ... (Job 20:14)
- They’re like the deaf cobra ... (Psalm 58:4)
- Vipers which cannot be charmed ... (Jer 8:17)
- I will make Jerusalem ... a den of dragons ... (Jer 9:11)
- Has this house ... called by my name, become a den of robbers ...? (Jer 7:11)
- The poison of vipers is on their lips. (Psalm 140:3)
- And they shall bite you ... (Jer 8:17)

The rulers are a brood of vipers, the Temple their den of thieves! Just before the cross, just prior to predicting the Temple’s destruction, Jesus publically declares both these. (Mt 21:13, 23:29-33)

But, at twelve, the Father having shown Him what to do, young Yeshua enters the massive Temple complex, *all alone*, and asks for an unscheduled meeting with Israel's most powerful men.

"Hi. I'm *Jesus*, the One Simeon and Anna announced here when I was a baby. I know everyone thinks I'm dead; but, I'm not. Could I please speak to the men in charge?"

"How old are you? Where were you born? Who are your parent's? Why are you here?"

"I have a lot of questions."

And Joseph and His mother did not know it; but supposing Him to have been in the company, they went a day's journey, and sought Him among their relatives and acquaintances. So when they did not find Him, they returned to Jerusalem, seeking Him. [Fearing the worst; yet, avoiding the Temple till they had no choice] Now so it was that after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers. – Luke 2:43b-47 NKJ

For three days those old vipers sat speechless, spellbound, *charmed*, as the "yad" of a child lead them on paths never taken, connections never made, and comparables never even considered. And, as young Yeshua listened to the forked tongues of the most authoritative in the Temple, He could see how alone He really was. *So, how much venom is under your tongue?*

Though evil is sweet in his mouth, and he hides it under his tongue [as authority, offense, outrage, and blame] ... It becomes cobra venom within him. ... He will suck the poison of cobras; the viper's tongue [in his own mouth] will slay him. – Job 20:12-16 NKJ

Revelation (19:15) says that *Jesus' tongue is a Sword; God's Word*; (Eph 6:17) *it's a weapon of love against tongues of hell which must be reloaded repeatedly and often*. Instead of a serpent's tongue, we must choose to speak with a *healing tongue*. Proverbs 17:4 says: "*a healing tongue is the Tree of Life*".



Did you know that *snake saliva is extremely slippery*? Helps 'em swallow what they shouldn't be able to! *The choice is still ours: the serpent's slick tongue or the Tree of Life.*



So when they [Jesus' parents] saw Him, they were amazed; and His mother said to Him, "Son, why have You done this to us? Look, Your father and I [I think she means 'step-father' (Lk 1:35)] have sought You anxiously." [As opposed to having sought Him eagerly in the Word] And He said to them, "Why did you seek Me? [Fear? Panic? Desperation?] Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" [Even Jesus' parents didn't know God's Word] But [not only did they not know] they did not understand the statement which He spoke to them. – Luke 2:48-50 NKJ

When young Yeshua left the Temple that day, that was that. They all kept silent for fear of a massive reaction requiring a Roman response. Same excuse they later make for *killing* Him. (Jn 11:48-52)

Then He went down with them [**His parents**] and came to Nazareth, **and was subject to them**, [**It'll be 18 years before the Father shows Him the next thing He must do**] but His mother kept all these things in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men. – Luke 2:48-52 NKJ

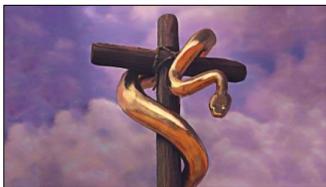
They still went to Jerusalem each year. (Ex 23:14–17) And, you can bet those in power were watching and waiting, thinking they knew what He'd return to do ... right until the day He came and did it. **At 30, He returned to the Temple, and took a whip to 'em!**

When He had made a whip of cords, He drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen, and poured out the changers' money and overturned the tables. – John 2:15 NKJ

Though they'd been amazed by His insights, they hadn't taken anything to heart. He'd grown. **They were still infants.** They ask for an answer but have no ability to understand Him when He speaks with the tongue of Scripture, telling 'em to tear down the Temple and He'll rebuild it in three days. (John 2:18-23) Then He performed many miracles for the people. And, any surviving Rabbinical Shepherds (now in their 50s, 60s, and 70s), would've approached in stunned disbelief: *"You're alive! We all thought you were dead. We were there at Your birth. But, we thought God gave up on us."*



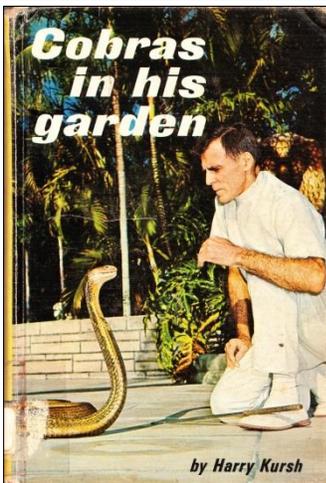
And, Nicodemus, one of the rulers, came at night looking for answers. Jesus chastised him for being an ignorant teacher of Israel, and pointed him toward the answers he sought, saying ...



Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life. For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. – John 3:14-16 NIV



Moses lifted a bronze serpent on a cross-pole, as a God-given anti-venom, so that all those bitten could turn to it in faith, for healing and salvation. (Num 21: 8-9) Know how to make antivenom? **Capture a bunch of vipers** (a brood should suffice). Open their mouths and make 'em bite a skin-covered vessel. **Inject small doses over a long period of time into a sheep. Then, drain the blood, purify, concentrate, and deliver.**



World renowned snake handler, Bill Haast, injected himself over the years with small doses of venom from *every poisonous snake*. His immune system was so powerful that, before dying in 2011 (at the age of 100), **Bill flew around the world 21 times, to save otherwise hopeless victims with a transfusion of his own blood.**

We desperately need an ultimate anti-venom, because we keep ingesting the deadly poison under our tongue. And so, our Savior entered the true Temple; and, with His own blood, sacrificed once for all, He now cleanses our sin, grants us His Spirit, leads us into truth, and saves us from death. **If we'll surrender our heart ... and our tongue.**