

**“For God so loved the world...”**

*In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.*

**Once upon a time**, the **earliest** of **Christian** preachers had to explain to **prospective Jewish converts** just how all of the **Old Testament** was aimed at or pointed to **Jesus Christ**. For the Jews of our Lord’s time, the **New Testament** hadn’t even been written yet!

One way they tried to do this was to show how certain **Old Testament** people & events aimed at what would eventually be **New Testament** people & events...all aimed at **Jesus, the Messiah**.

**For example**, **Isaac** was an only son... as was **Jesus**.

*Isaac was deeply loved... as was Jesus*

*Isaac was given for human sacrifice... as was Jesus.*

*Isaac was offered on a hill... as was Jesus.*

*Isaac carried the wood of sacrifice... as did Jesus.*

**For example**, **Paul** compares **Adam** and **Jesus**. He writes:

**“The first man, Adam, was created a living being; the last Adam (Jesus) is life giving spirit....”**

**“The 1<sup>st</sup> Adam, made of earth, came from the earth; the 2<sup>nd</sup> Adam (Jesus) came from heaven. Those, who belong to the earth, are like the one made of earth; those, who are of heaven, are like the one who came from heaven.**

**Just as we wear the likeness of the man made of earth, so we will wear the likeness of the Man from heaven.”** 1st Cor.

*In today’s Gospel, which I just read to you from St. John, Jesus, himself, draws a parallel between the Old Testament and what will become the New Testament. He says of himself:*

**“Just as Moses lifted up the bronze snake on a pole in the desert, in the same way, the Son of Man must be lifted up, (not on a pole, but on a cross), so that everyone (who looks on him &) believes in him, may have eternal life.”**

What **that’s** all about is ...at a certain point, when the **Israelites** were in the desert, they began to complain, bitterly, against **Moses** & **God**. In response, **God** sent deadly snakes among the people, who, in turn, quickly came to their senses and begged **Moses**, in apology, to ask **God** to rid them of the snakes. And this is what transpired, to which **Jesus** refers in today’s Gospel:

**“Then the Lord told Moses to make a metal snake and put it on a pole, so that anyone who was bitten could look at it and be healed. So, Moses made a bronze snake and put it on a pole. Anyone who had been bitten... would look at the bronze snake and be healed.”** Num.21:7-9

(Incidentally, the medical profession uses the snake on a pole as their symbol.)

So, you can see why **Jesus** used this **Old Testament** event in the desert, as a parallel of his crucifixion on **Calvary, Golgotha Hill**. To be explicit, he explains that anyone, who looks upon him crucified, with faith, will be healed spiritually, just as the **Israelites** were healed, physically, in the desert, when they looked, with faith, upon the coiled snake on the pole.

Now, this gets especially interesting, for the author of **this** Gospel, **St. John**, follows our Lord’s reference to his crucifixion with, arguably, two of the most quoted excerpts of all scripture, **quotes, ‘lifted’ by our space program engineers**. Let me explain. **John** says in verse 16 (chap. 3):

**“For God so love the world that he gave his only son, so that everyone who believes in him may not die, but have eternal life.”** Jn.3:16

*In verse 17 (chap. 3) he continues:*

**“For God did NOT send his son into the world to condemn the world, but that it might be saved through him!”** Jn.3:17

A number of years ago, those two verses, **John 3:16 & John 3:17**, took on extra special meaning for many bible readers. It involved our astronaut program. Space engineers were designing space suits for the **Command module pilot** and for the **Lunar module pilot**.

A part of the design of each space suit was an umbilical cord, consisting of long, flexible tubing. The purpose of the umbilical cord was to supply oxygen to the astronauts when they “walked” in space or passed from one module to another. Later space technology would eliminate the need for this cord.

At this stage of the space program, nevertheless, the suit receptacle into which the **Command** pilot’s cord fit was called **“J3:16.”** The suit receptacle into which the **Lunar** pilot’s cord fit was called **“J3:17.”**

**Why were they so designated & so named you ask?—Well, I am glad you asked that question!**

Designer, Frank Denton, said he named the two suit-receptacles after the two Gospel passages: John 3:16 & John 3:17. And he reasoned it this way:

**“Just as J3:16 & J3:17 supply the astronauts with what they need to survive in their journey from one space module to another, so John 3:16 & John 3:17 supply us with what we need to survive our journey to heaven.”**

And so today’s Gospel is quite rich. It contains a beautiful illustration of how the Old Testament and the New Testament fit together.

It also illustrates how Jesus is our lifeline, as we pass from earth to heaven. In other words, just as the umbilical cord supplies the astronauts with life-giving oxygen, so Jesus supplies us with life-giving grace, especially in this Lenten time, as we approach the great victory of...  
Easter Sunday!

*I now close with these words of St. Paul:*

**“It is by God’s grace that you have been saved.  
In our union w. Christ Jesus, he raised us up w. him to rule w. him in the heavenly world....  
It is by God’s grace that you have been saved through faith.  
It is not the result of your own efforts, but God’s gift....  
God has made us what we are...”**

**...and we are to use his gifts wisely!**

May our ever-loving Creator, our Abba, bless you...  
The Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.