

REFLECTION

4th SUNDAY OF LENT

Gospel John 3:14-21

One job early Christian preachers had was to explain to prospective Jewish converts how the Old Testament pointed to Jesus.

One way they did this was to show how key Old Testament persons and events pointed to key New Testament persons and events.

For example, they showed how Abraham's son, Isaac, pointed to Jesus.

Isaac was an only son, as Jesus was. Isaac was deeply loved, as Jesus was. Isaac was given for sacrifice, as Jesus was. Isaac was to be offered on a hill, as Jesus was. Isaac carried the sacrifice wood, as Jesus did.

Paul makes similar comparisons between the Old Testament and the New Testament. For example, in his First Letter to the Corinthians, Paul compares Adam and Jesus. He writes: "The first man, Adam, was created a living being; but the last Adam (Jesus) is the life - giving Spirit... the first Adam, made of earth, came from the earth; the second Adam (Jesus) came from heaven. Those who belong to the earth are like the one who was 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."

In today's gospel, Jesus draws yet another parallel between the Old Testament and the New Testament. He says: "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, so that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life." Jesus parallels this Old Testament event to his crucifixion on Calvary. He explains that whoever looks upon him, with faith, will be healed, spiritually, just as the Israelites were healed when they looked upon the bronze snake.

John follows the reference to Jesus' crucifixion with these words in verse 16: "For God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not die but have eternal life." And verse 17 reads: "For God did not send his Son into

the world to be its judge, but to be its savior.” These two verses, in the third chapter of John’s gospel, have been called a summary of the Bible.

And so, today’s gospel is a rich one.

First, it contains a beautiful summary of the Bible.

Second. It contains a beautiful illustration of how the Old Testament and the New Testament fit together.

Finally, it illustrates how Jesus is our lifeline as we pass from earth to heaven. Recalling these words of Paul in today’s second reading.

They make a fitting climax to what we have been saying. Paul tells us: “It is by God’s grace that you have been saved. In our union with Christ Jesus, he raised us up with him to rule with 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.”