*The Man Who is a Snake –* **The Story of Nicodemus ... AD 33**

My name is Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, even of the strictest, most prestigious sect called the Pharisees. I was raised as a high class, moral, and well-educated individual and as much honored for my religious leadership. As a teacher of the Jews, I was highly esteemed as a good man who feared God.

One day we all had heard of a man who lived in the despised country-side of Galilee. People couldn't stop praising this man. But whoever came from such a place? We surely thought it was a hoax of some sort – especially the reports concerning him performing miracles, I don't know how to describe it, but something had stirred within me about this man. He was a young man, even uneducated, but for some reason his speaking was profound. My peers didn't share the sentiment I had. Yet, now so many reports had been made of this man, even from reliable sources.

Within a few months, I heard that this man, Jesus, had come to Jerusalem, and again something within me almost leaped. I felt like I had to meet him. I decided to approach him at night so as not to be seen by others. When I found him, he was much younger than I, but I knew he had something that I didn't have ... but what? So, I asked him, “How could any man do the kinds of miraculous signs you do unless God was with him?”

What he said was mind-boggling: "Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God." On one hand, I knew that to be born of water referred to the baptism of John the Baptizer, Although, John the Baptizer was like a wild beast, none of us could deny he had the authority of God with him. He called us “Offspring of Vipers!” Yet, no one could refute him. He was the one who first mentioned this Jesus.

On the other hand, what is born of the Spirit? Jesus went on to explain that I was born physically, but I needed to have another birth, to be born spiritually. He said, “That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the spirit is spirit.” Eventually, I realized that he was referring to something within me called my spirit. He told me that my morality could not save me, but only by being born within my spirit could I gain what was I seeking from him ... new life.

Within a few moments my clouds of misunderstanding blackened as he recounted the story of Moses lifting up a brass serpent in the wilderness. He made it clear that to be saved I had to look up to him as my forefathers had looked to the brass serpent. It seemed that he too, as John the Baptizer, was calling me a serpent like the poison serpents which attacked my people 1200 years ago. Jesus told me that I had been injected with the poison of a serpent, so that I shared in a serpentine nature. As a result, I was destined to die unless I look up to him.

These new teachings were too mysterious for me at that time, but I could not help but follow Jesus from afar. At one point I even got beyond myself and defended him before my colleagues who wanted to kill him. But it was not until they had actually crucified him that I understood what Jesus spoke to me that evening three years earlier.

As a most moral, law-keeping man among men, my life was for God, for education, for morality. I strongly believed in Jewish tradition and religion that had been carefully passed down. Yet, Jesus made it clear that I was a snake; a man who had been poisoned in my nature, and was destined to receive judgment. The only escape was to look to the uplifted Jesus on the cross as my Savior. His death not only removed the judgment for my sin, but also released His life for me to receive into my spirit. I believed in Him and received His life; I knew that this meant to be born anew in my spirit with the life of God.

CTR *[Based on John 3:1-20]*