

The Cross of Christ: the Revelation of God's Love (Ioannis Karavidopoulos)

[Ξένες γλώσσες / In English](#)



'No one has ascended into heaven other than he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, so that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him' (Jn. 3, 13-17).

Christ's words in this excerpt from Saint John's Gospel form part of the discussion He had with Nicodemus, the Jewish leader who came in secret, at night, unknown to his co-religionists, to make his confession to the Teacher sent by God. This Teacher performed miraculous works and signs which testified to the fact that God was working through Him. Christ accepted Nicodemus' secret confession, He found him a man of good will and revealed to him some basic tenets of His teaching, which were also an explanation of his whole task and of the purpose of His

incarnation.



In the beginning He talks to Nicodemus about spiritual rebirth as a necessary condition for understanding and experiencing the kingdom of heaven, and then broaches the subject of the core of His teaching and His mission: His being raised on the cross, which is a revelation of the love God has for the world. Since his interlocutor is Jewish, He gives him an example from the history of the Old Testament, a prefiguration of this event which will save the world. He explains that, just as Moses raised the bronze serpent in the desert, so the Son of Man must be raised (meaning on the Cross), so that those who believe in Him will have eternal life. He is referring to the events narrated in Numbers (21, 4-9), where poisonous snakes entered the camp of the Israelites in the desert and caused many deaths among the people, who were muttering against God. But God, Who had liberated and saved them didn't allow His people to be lost. He commanded Moses to raise a bronze serpent on a pole. Anyone bitten by a snake would only have to look at this in order to escape death. In this story, Christ, Who interprets the Old Testament with authority, forecasts His crucifixion.

God's love for us has been expressed in a variety of ways throughout history, nowhere more so than at the sacrifice on the cross, which is not merely a historical event, but evidence of the supreme love God has for us, who have been bitten by the serpent of sin and thus condemned to death. The cross of Christ is not merely an event in our common history, but one of vital importance for each and every

one of us individually. Its meaning and content are of great relevance to our very existence. The sole purpose of Christ's death and subsequent resurrection was to grant us life.

We all know how we long for a happy life for as long as possible and how the fear of death paralyzes us, making us anxious and worried. In the final analysis, Christ's death on the cross was not due to any person, Jew or Roman, but rather to God's love for the world. And in a paradoxical way, which transcends all human reason, this death provides us with life which is without end, without the fear of death, eternal.

People today- and in every age- need to understand the meaning of this passage in John's Gospel, which is that God is not just a hard taskmaster and righteous judge, but that He's first and foremost the loving Saviour of the human race. And this love isn't merely emotional. It found expression in a particular historical event: the crucifixion of Christ.