



# LOOK UP

By Robert Prins

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By Robert Prins, August 2023

“Don’t look down!” Dan was staring intently at a most unusual sight. A pole had been erected in the desert with a bronze snake hanging from the top.

“Keep looking,” his father urged. “Don’t look down!”

Dan shuddered. Snakes gave him the heebie-jeebies. He hated them. Their camp had been over-run by snakes. But these were no ordinary snakes – their lethal bites were accompanied by bursts of fire. They were everywhere. Snakes slithered into tents and burst out from the cooking pots. In the open, serpents slithered within striking distance.

It had started the previous night. A high pitch scream echoed around the campground. The first victim had died quickly from the toxic venom. Everyone knew where she had camped, because her tent caught fire and burned. But the cries grew more as the snakes invaded. Now there were snakes everywhere. Panic, screams, confusion, wailing. Fires sprung up causing mayhem. Hundreds of people died and were dying.

The pole with the snake was lifted up in the middle of the camp. Word was passed around, “You won’t be harmed by the serpents if you keep your eyes on the bronze snake.” It hardly seemed possible, but what was the alternative?

Dan was looking up at the snake on the pole. It was not easy keeping his eyes fixed there when so many snakes were slithering around his feet. Just as the pole was being erected, Dan's father had been bitten. With his last effort he had look up, and at that moment the poison left his body. It was a miracle. Fang marks and the burns were still there, but Dan's father would live.

He was calling out to Dan, "Don't look down!"

Dan felt the cold scaly movement of a snake slithering over his foot. He felt heat on his leg. It was a sure sign a snake was going to bite. Dan breathed hard, trying to stay in control. He was looking up, but the urge to look down at the snakes by his feet was intense. He knew that while he looked at the snake on the pole, he couldn't be harmed. No one looking up had been bitten.

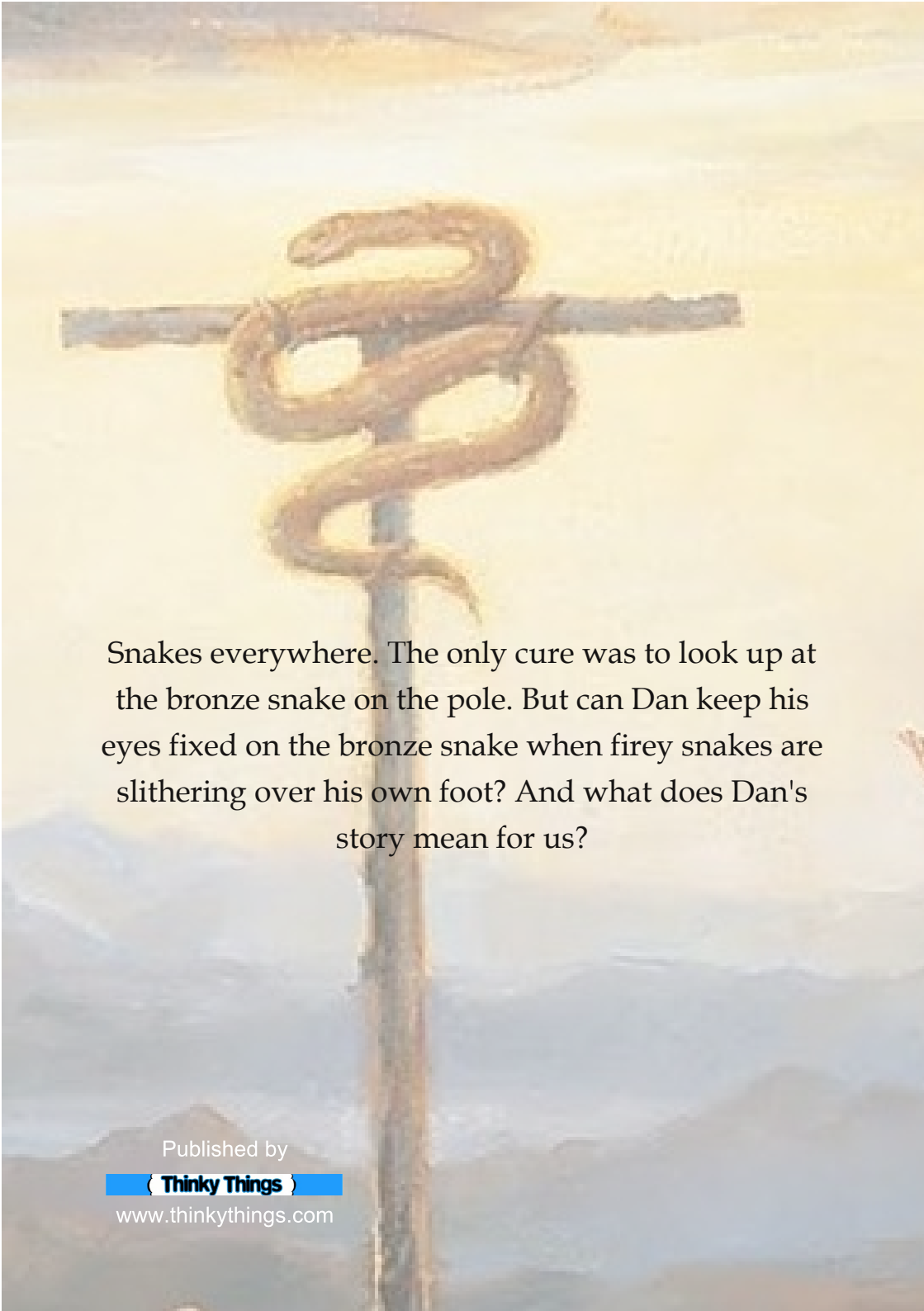
The temptation was too great. Dan glanced down for just a moment to see a snake poised to strike his bare ankle. He jumped and took a step to avoid it, but leapt into the path of another snake. Pain arched up his leg as fangs buried themselves into his calf muscle.

"Look up, look up!" he heard. Dan struggled with all his might to look back up to the bronze snake. As he looked up, the pain subsided. He would live to die another day.

The Bible tells us that we need to look to Jesus just like the Israelites needed to look to the bronze snake. By looking to Jesus, we can be cured from the sting of sin and the curse of death.

Look up.

*Numbers 21 v 4 – 9; John 3 v 14.*

A bronze snake is coiled around a wooden pole. The background is a hazy, mountainous landscape under a pale sky. The snake is the central focus, with its head raised and its body forming a series of loops around the pole. The pole is a simple, weathered wooden staff. The overall scene is somewhat desaturated, with a focus on the textures of the bronze and wood.

Snakes everywhere. The only cure was to look up at the bronze snake on the pole. But can Dan keep his eyes fixed on the bronze snake when firey snakes are slithering over his own foot? And what does Dan's story mean for us?

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