

Matthew 10:16

Wise as serpents harmless as doves

We are given a point of consideration here it draws to the attention two creatures as examples of conduct and application. These are the serpent and the dove. The consideration of them should be what the word of God speaks about them in terms of characteristics and how these traits apply to us as human beings. Essentially what lessons such consideration can exhort us with. Let's look at the serpent first.

The use of the term serpent is important it draws us to the book of Genesis chapter 3 and the description provided there. This animal of Creation is possessed with certain abilities. It had eyes to see. It had a thinking brain/mind which enabled it to deduct things from what it saw. It had ears to hear/listen again this sense could allow its mind to consider what it heard. It had the ability to speak/ convey not just concepts, but specific information to embellish any concept. Each of these functions were necessary to impart the words unto Eve. These words caused her to think upon them and envision matters about what they declared. The serpent was in a form, before God pronounced his judgements upon the transgression situation that occurred. The general ability to see and hear, are qualities we all possess they can be used wisely or falsely. They can reveal truth or propagate foolishness - the difference between the two effects is the process of control in the mind. James 3 talks of the danger of an untempered or uncontrolled tongue - it is unruly in all its doings. The same chapter talks of the necessity of controlling or harnessing the tongue and does so in a way that likens this quality as rare, difficult but very valuable, as a characteristic to have. To have this quality requires the individual person to maintain this control or management on a regular basis. The English adage think before you open your mouth is a brief but apt reminder of this process.

The difference between a good use or an unruly use of the tongue is how the mind is engaged. Romans 7 illustrates the difficulty to it. Romans 8 speaks of a state of mind - spiritual or of the flesh. The book of Proverbs tells us that the beginning of knowledge is the fear or respect of the Lord. Jesus when tempted always countered with a scriptural reference: "It is written..." This shows us that a constant application of God's word can be a useful if not necessary aid against transgression or sin. Wisdom was a trait associated with the snake- the Pharaoh's of old used the representation of an viper to indicate their power and position and as they /Egypt represent the world of mankind, it shows how the scope of humanity promotes wisdom, while also not considering its greatest source: THE CREATOR GOD ALMIGHTY. The snake as differing from the serpent is the result of God's judgement upon the serpent, "upon thy belly thou shalt go". Illustrating how mankind and its works are unto condemnation and the end of which is death. Given all this - what is the meaning of "be wise as serpents?" It is to employ the sense in a perceptive way to think about our surroundings and the direction we should go.

Firstly while the fallout or consequences of the words it spoke were dire the observations were not completely wrong however they were incomplete in there statement. Eating the fruit would give of Knowledge of Right and Wrong/good and evil even "being like unto the gods" - this assertion lacked an understanding of how this would impact Adam and Eve. They were as children being taught of God's ways - they had no experience of life, no awareness of dangers they were fragile yet at the same time they were eager and impatient to get knowledge. The serpent at this point was in a figurative elevated position, from which it would be reduced "on thy belly thou shalt go"... Reasoning - is the position all human beings have the capacity to do. How good that process is, is dependant upon the tools we have or are given and more

importantly how we actually use them then choose to act upon the rational or conclusion reached. Hence there was a latent wisdom with the serpent, but this was not exercised properly by consideration of Gods plan and purpose. This also is why Jesus uses the qualifying description harmless as doves.

To consider: How do we consider the terms be as harmless as doves? Again, referring to the scripture, doves were used in the process of making an offering to God. They are in this way representing a mediatorship role. Additionally in the account of Noah and his family, being able to come out of the ark and into the promised land the dove brought the sprig of an olive tree to show the judgement waters had receded. This shows that when we interact in the world, we should be in the role of Godliness or Spirit mindedness to be of one mind with God and his ways. Our deeds and words should impart truth and the way of God given Salvation. Wise in the use of our God- given capabilities.