

## **Bible and the Headlines: Snake Charmers**

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Ever since the Garden of Eden human beings have had a snake problem (Gen 3:15). The headlines show this is one problem ChatGPT cannot solve for us.

The research website “c&en” (Chemical and Engineering News) on October 30 announced, “Nanobody-Based Antivenom Neutralizes Snake Bites.” The article highlights the work of a Danish chemist to produce an anti-venom that works on a broad spectrum of African snakes, “Many effective antivenoms exist, but they typically only work for one species of snake.” The chemist used the immune response cells from llamas to create a serum that works for 17 different venoms, including cobras and mambas.

Australia’s UPI on October 31 featured, “Venomous Snake Rescued from Backyard Swimming Pool.” The pool’s owners enlisted the aid of professional snake wranglers. The wrangler, “. . . fished the snake out of the water with his bare hands and the swimming serpent was returned to the wild.” The residents had misidentified the snake as a type more deadly than the one taking a bath in their pool.

Al Jazeera on November 1 carried a video on, “India’s Snake Rescuers: Can Humans and Serpents Coexist in a Megacity?” The segment looked at the work of professional snake handlers in the city of Bangalore. The video notes, “More than 30 species of snakes can be found in the metropolis, including the highly venomous Russell Viper, King Cobra, and Spectacled Cobra, leading to dozens of deaths every year.” The snake handlers are in particular demand during the monsoon season when the weather pushes snakes and humans into close quarters.

The first snake handler in the Bible was Moses. After God turned Moses’ staff into a snake to verify his credentials to Pharaoh, God told Moses, “Reach out your hand and take it by the tail.’ So Moses reached out and took hold of the snake and it turned back into a staff in his hand” (Ex 4:4). God also revealed an anti-venom to Moses, “So Moses made a bronze snake and put it up on a pole. Then when anyone was bitten by a snake and looked at the bronze snake, they lived” (Num 21:9).

A different anti-venom was revealed in the New Testament. Jesus told His disciples, “These signs will accompany those who believe, in my name they will . . . pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all . . . ” (Mar 16:17-18). This gift was demonstrated by the apostle Paul when he was bit by a snake following a shipwreck, “When the islanders saw the snake hanging from his hand, they said to each other, ‘This man must be a murderer; for though he escaped from the sea, the goddess Justice has not allowed him to live.’ But Paul shook the snake off into the fire and suffered no ill effects” (Act 28:4-5).

Our snake problem is finally solved when Christ comes back to rule. The Bible tells us, “Then the infant will play near the cobra’s den, the young child will put its hand into the viper’s nest ”(Isa 11:8). We won’t need snake handlers or anti-venoms (or ChatGPT) when He comes.