

=THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL=

Lesson 10

The Brazen Serpent

AIM: to help my class to see Jesus in the plan of salvation as presented in this Old Testament Scripture, Numbers 21:5-9.

POINT OF CONTACT: Ask, “How many of you have ever had a ‘run-in’ with a snake? What kind of snake? Where?”

I. THE SIN THAT CAUSED THE SERPENTS. See Numbers 21:5.

1. We find the Israelites complaining again. They forgot what happened when they complained and begged for flesh (Numbers 11) and when they complained at Kadesh-barnea (Numbers 13 and 14).
2. They complained that their being in the wilderness was because of Moses and the Lord.
3. They despised the manna that God provided in the morning. This was a serious charge, for they were accusing God of either not loving them or of being incapable of supplying their needs.
4. The best way to keep from despising God’s gifts to us is never allow them to become even commonplace. We need to thank the Lord every day for salvation, soul-winning power, etc. In I Corinthians 10:9-11 we learn that these things happened to the Jews to warn us.

II. THE SUFFERING THAT RESULTED. Read Numbers 21:6.

1. The Lord sent fiery serpents. Deuteronomy 8:15 teaches that the serpents were there all the time. Therefore, God simply withheld His protection at this time.
2. The Jews learned again that we reap what we sow. Just as surely as day follows night, we must reap what we sow. See Galatians 6:7.
3. It did not matter whether these Israelites were rich or poor, educated or uneducated, high or low on the social ladder. The only thing that mattered was that they had experienced a fatal snake bite.
4. Each one of us has suffered from snakebite, Genesis 3; Romans 5:12.

III. THE SALVATION THAT GOD PROVIDED.

1. The people confessed their sin and did it in definite terms, Numbers 21:7.
2. Moses prayed for them. Moses was probably a much better Christian than most of us in this matter.
3. At God’s command, Moses made a serpent of brass. This serpent pictures Jesus Himself. See John 3:14, 15. Brass pictures judgment, and Jesus was judged on the cross for our sins. See II Corinthians 5:21.
4. The serpent was placed on a pole, which pictures the cross, Numbers 21:8, 9.
5. Notice that “every one” (verse 8) and “any man” (verse 9) could be healed.
6. Any poor snakebitten Israelite could be saved by looking to the serpent on the pole. Today any poor sinner may be saved by looking to Jesus.
7. The Israelites were healed in the same way that sinners are saved today—“by grace through faith.”
8. The brazen serpent was not Jesus. It only pictured Him. Yet in later years it had to be destroyed because the Jews were offering incense to it. See II Kings 18:4. Many people today “offer incense” to baptism, the Lord’s Supper, and other things that only picture Jesus.