

Church of God Sunday School

MOSES MAKES A SERPENT OF BRASS

Numbers 21:1-9

When King Arad, the Canaanite, heard that the Israelites were traveling his way on their continued journey through the wilderness, he came and fought against them. He even captured some of them!

The Israelites made a vow to God that if He would deliver the Canaanite people into their hands, they would, without a doubt, destroy their cities. God heard their cry for help, He delivered the Canaanites into their hands. The Israelites destroyed the cities of the Canaanites. God called that place Hormah.

Then the Israelites journeyed to the land of Edom (*EE-duhm*). But the people of Edom would not allow the Israelites to pass through their country (Numbers 20:21). So they had to go around Edom, "by the way of the Red sea."

The people became discouraged because the way was long and hard. They began to murmur and complain against God and Moses. (How quickly they forgot the recent victory God had given them over the Canaanites!)

The Israelites asked Moses why he had brought them out of Egypt to die in the wilderness. They said they had no water to drink and no bread to eat. (They still had manna, but they said, "Our soul loatheth [hates] this light bread.") The children of Israel were not thankful for what God had provided!

They forgot about the quails that God gave them when they had asked for meat (see Exodus 16:13). They forgot about the water that came from the rock in such a miraculous way when they had been thirsty (see Numbers 20:11).

To show those people just how sinful their complaining and grumbling was, God sent fiery serpents (poisonous snakes) among them, to bite them. Israel had passed unharmed by these serpents many times before (Deuteronomy 8:15), but this time God did not

protect them. Many people died of the snake bites.

Think of how the camp of the Israelites must have looked with all those snakes crawling everywhere! Think of the people crying and screaming because they could not get away from the snakes. How awful it would be to see your friends dying from a snakebite, because they had complained and grumbled against God. Would you have been bitten, if you were an Israelite then?

The deaths of so many people caused the others to think of what they had done. They came to Moses and confessed that they had sinned when they murmured against God and against him. They asked Moses to pray to the Lord, to take away the snakes. So Moses "prayed for the people."

God said to him, "Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live."

Moses quickly went to work to make a snake out of brass. When it was finished, he put it up on a pole. It was high enough so that all could see it—the men, the women, even the boys, and

the girls. Then when a person was bitten by a snake, if that person looked up at the snake on the pole, he or she did not die but lived!

One time a man named Nicodemus came to Jesus. Jesus told Nicodemus that in order for a man to see the Kingdom of God, he had to be born again, meaning that he had to have his sins forgiven. Jesus told Nicodemus that just as the serpent in the wilderness was lifted up (on the pole), even so must the Son of man (Jesus Himself) be lifted up (on the Cross) for man's sins. (See John 3:14-15.)

If we look by faith to Jesus' death on the Cross and believe that Jesus hung on the Cross for our sins, then



our sins can be forgiven. We can be saved and given new life, just as the Israelites were, when they looked to the snake on the pole. Remember, only those who looked to the snake on the pole were saved from death.

We are not any different from the Israelites, as far as grumbling and complaining go. We, too, can be carried away by a complaining spirit if we are not always careful to be thankful. How awful it would be if God allowed trouble to come to us because we were guilty of complaining!

Have you ever grumbled or complained about something that has happened to you? Do you grumble when Mother or Dad tells you to do something? Do you grumble if you feel that you did not get something that you deserved?

God sees everything that happens to you in your life. He wants you to be thankful, no matter what you have to do or what comes your way. Life will not

always give you just what you think you should have. For instance, you may not always have a well body. Everything will not always be just the way you want it to be; but you can always be thankful.

Jesus is the only One who can forgive sins (see Mark 2:5-10 and 1 Timothy 2:5). Have you asked Jesus to forgive *your* sins? Jesus wants you to ask Him. He wants you to repent (to turn from sin) and look to Him to be saved from your sins, the way the Israelites looked to the snake on the pole, for the healing of their snake bites. Will you look to Jesus?

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**MEMORY VERSE:**

*"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up."*

—John 3:14

