

God's Plan of Salvation:

1. Hear - Romans 10:17
2. Believe - Mark 16:16
3. Repent - Acts 2:38
4. Confess - Romans 10:10
5. Be baptized - Acts 22:16
6. Live faithfully - Revelation 2:10

Announcements:

Sick: Mrs. Calvert, Mr. Hadley, Ashley Law, Ms. Kim (Ashley Law's mother), Lamar Mathis, Mr. and Mrs. Pete Newsome, Ms. Sowder, Ms. Ward, Mr. Winns.

If you would be interested in any of the following ways to study the Bible, feel free to let us know:

- Home Bible Study - We will come into your home or other place you feel comfortable and study the Bible with you. Bible questions are welcome in these studies and we will seek to give a Bible answer.
- Correspondence courses - We will be glad to mail you a correspondence lesson that you can fill out and mail back to us and we will send you the next lesson.
- Call us with your Bible question - #503-707-6014.
- Visit our website: www.oakgrovechurchofchristjenningsflorida.com
- Come and visit - We always strive to have good, practical Bible instruction at each of our assemblies.

Oak Grove Church of Christ Bulletin
2922 NW 76th Terrace, Jennings, FL 32053

March 28, 2021

The Bronze Serpent

By Derek Long

In Numbers 21 the Israelites are approaching the end of their forty years of wandering in the wilderness due to their failure to trust God and take possession of the land of Canaan (Numbers 14:32-34). During their wandering in the wilderness, the children of Israel have struggled with complaining (1 Corinthians 10:10). In Numbers 21 the problem of complaining surfaces again among the children of Israel. Numbers 21:4-5 tells us, "Then they journeyed from Mount For by the Way of the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom; and the soul of the people became very discouraged on the way. And the people spoke against God and against Moses: 'Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and our soul loathes this worthless bread'" (NKJV). Israel had not been allowed to pass through the territory of the Edomites (Numbers 20:14-21). As a result, they must take a different route to the land of Canaan. The text tells us the people "became very discouraged on the way" (Numbers 21:4, NKJV). Do we allow times when things do not go exactly as planned to discourage us? In times of discouragement, we need to be extremely careful that we do not begin complaining as the Israelites did here. When we end up

complaining, we need to remember oftentimes we end up speaking not just against some man but also “against God” (Numbers 21:5, NKJV). God wants His people to be different than those in the world and one way we are to be different is by not complaining (Philippians 2:14-15). God responded to the people’s complaints by sending fiery serpents among them which bit the people and many of the Israelites died (Numbers 21:6). God takes complaining seriously! The Israelites recognize their sin and ask Moses to pray for God to take away the serpents (Numbers 21:7). Moses prays for the people and God instructs him to put a bronze serpent on a pole so that when someone was bitten by a serpent when they looked at the bronze serpent, they would live (Numbers 21:8-9).

The New Testament would say the Old Testament was written for our learning (Romans 15:4). The event of Israel with the fiery serpents is an event from which we can learn some valuable lessons. What are some valuable lessons we can learn from this event in Israel’s history?

1. God may not fulfill our requests in the way we initially think they should be granted. The people want the serpents taken away but God does not take away the serpents. Instead, God provides them with a means to avoid dying if they are bitten by a fiery serpent.
2. The bronze serpent on the pole foreshadows Jesus’ death upon the cross. Jesus refers to this event in Israelite history when speaking of how He must die. John 3:14-15 says, “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life” (NKJV). The Israelites were saved from death by a serpent upon a

pole. We are saved from spiritual death by Jesus who was lifted up upon a cross (John 8:28; 12:32-34; 19:17-18). The Israelites had to believe looking at the serpent upon the pole would save them from death. We must believe Jesus’ death on the cross is capable of saving us from our sins.

3. The people had to do something to receive the salvation offered to them by God. Numbers 21:8-9 makes it plain a person had to look at the bronze serpent to live. An Israelite could have said they believed they would be saved from the death by looking at the serpent and yet refused to look upon it and would have died. Many people today claim to believe Jesus’ death will save them from their sins but they refuse to do what God says is necessary to come in contact with the benefits of Jesus’ death. Romans 6:3-4 shows us baptism is how we come into contact with the benefits of Jesus’ death. A person who refused to be baptized for the remission of their sins (Acts 2:38) or to have their sins washed away (Acts 22:16) is like an Israelite refusing to look at the bronze serpent after being bitten by a fiery serpent.

Will we learn these important lessons from Numbers 21:4-9 and avail ourselves of the salvation God is offering to us through His Son?