

WHEN GOD USED A SNAKE

Numbers 21:5-9; John 3:14-15

Introduction: Not very many people like snakes and for most, the only good snake is one that has been flattened on the road by a big truck. Nevertheless, God used snakes to get His people back "in line" with Him where they needed to be.

I. GOD'S PEOPLE HAD REBELLED AGAINST GOD AND MOSES' LEADERSHIP

1. God had fed Israel quail and heavenly food, Manna, but the people had gotten tired of it.
2. God sent serpents/snakes to punish/chastise them for up to this time the snakes, which infested the area with probably some 30 varieties, harmless, deadly, had not bothered the people.
3. They were called "fiery" either from their color or from their bite which inflamed the human body, put it into a high fever, causing an insatiable thirst and bringing inevitable death.
4. God commanded Moses to make a serpent/snake of brass and set it upon a pole that those bitten might look up at it and be healed.
5. The people had already asked God to take away the serpents/snakes, but God left them and had Moses prepare the remedy that when the people were bitten, they might not die, but would indeed feel the pain.
6. The image was not to be worshiped and it was placed high enough and located centrally enough that anyone in the camp who was bitten could look up and see the brass image of the serpent/snake, thus obeying the command of God.
 - The image was a "pointer" to God and those who believed God's promise, lived.
 - There were doubtless many who doubted the brass serpent/snake would work, so that refused to look up at it. They tried their own remedies and died.
7. By the people looking at the serpent/snake on the pole, God granted the Israelites deliverance and gave them a lesson of dependence upon Him.
8. *John 3:14-15* teaches the same principle of belief in God and the results.

II. COMPARE THE SERPENT'S BITE THEN AND SATAN'S "BITE" TODAY

1. The devil has been called the "old serpent" from the very beginning, the time of creation.
 - Israel had fiery serpents
 - We have "the old serpent."
2. The bite of the serpent/snake was painful to the Israelites.
 - The "bite" of Satan, the serpent is painful and poisonous to our soul and conscience.

3. The bite of the firey serpent/snake brought death unless the proper remedy was applied.
 - The bite of Satan's sin brings death to one's soul unless the proper remedy is applied.

III. THE REMEDY FOR THE FIREY SERPENT'S BITE AND FOR SATAN'S BITE

1. The remedy for Israel was God, Himself who devised and preserved the antidote against the bite of the firey serpents.
2. It is through the Grace of God that today our salvation is accomplished, the antidote against the bite of Satan (sin).
3. Looking at a brass serpent/snake on a pole seemed to be a very unlikely method of cure.
 - It also seems unlikely that salvation/life can be accomplished by the death of a single man on an insignificant cross.
4. That which brought cure was made in the likeness of that which caused the wound.
 - So Jesus Christ, though perfectly free from sin, Himself, deliberately became our likeness of sinful flesh.
 - Jesus Christ became sin for all mankind.
5. The brass serpent was lifted up on a pole for everyone to look up at and believe.
 - Jesus Christ was lifted up, made a spectacle to the world.
 - Jesus Christ was lifted up on a cross.
 - Today Jesus Christ is lifted up through the preaching of the Gospel.

CONCLUSION:

1. The Israelites had only to look up at the brass serpent and live.
 - Any person who looks up to Jesus Christ in faith shall also live, but eternally.
2. The Israelites were aware of their danger, aware of the burning of the bites and ultimate death.
 - Today people must also be aware of their danger and the sting of sin and it's ultimate end.
3. Only the brass serpent being lifted up and Israel's looking upon it would bring them deliverance for no other method or remedy would work, only death would come.
 - Today Jesus Christ has been lifted up and any person who looks up to Him in belief/faith shall be saved.
 - There is no other method that will work to save the souls of men giving them eternal life than Jesus Christ on the Cross and a person's absolute, sincere belief/faith in Him.