

THE CHURCH IN NEW YORK CITY

CHILDREN'S MEETING LESSON

LESSON #21

DATE: February 9, 2020

SUBJECT: THE TRAVELS OF THE CHOSEN PEOPLE OF ISRAEL: Fiery Serpents

SCRIPTURE: Numbers 21:4-9; 1 Corinthians 10:9; John 3:14-15; Romans 8:3; 6:23; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Galatians 3:13; John 12:32-34; Hebrews 12:2

AIM: To show the children that we all sin, but that we can be forgiven by looking at the Lord and asking for forgiveness.

MEMORY VERSES TO CHOOSE FROM: John 3:14 (And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up,); Psalm 51:2 (Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, And from my sin cleanse me.); 1 John 1:9 (If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.); Psalm 40:1a (I waited patiently on Jehovah,...)

SUGGESTED SONGS: 180 (If We Confess Our Sins); 166 (All English Children Call Him Lord); 31 (Surely He Will Care for You); 73 (Alphabet Chorus); 8308 – *Bible Story Songs Moses Vol. 2, #8* (Do All Things Without Murmuring); 8318 – *BSS Moses Vol. 2, #18* (Ouch! I've Been Bitten); 33 (When Your Fears Grow Mountain High); 174 (When Ugly Satan Knocks at My Heart's Door); 25 (I Believe God); 9042 *BSS Mark, #23* (I Can Come to Jesus Every Single Day)

CRAFT IDEA: Make a “feel better” box using cardstock and fill with a few bandaids, tissues, cough drops, for someone who's sick.

APPROACH: Ask the children if they have ever seen a snake, either at a zoo or in the wild. Can they name any? Do they know any poisonous ones? (Cobras, rattlesnakes, cottonmouths, etc.) What happens to a person who is bitten by a poisonous snake?

BACKGROUND: The children of Israel were the people chosen by Jehovah. Jehovah was leading them to the good land and He was protecting them and caring for them. He brought forth water out of hard rock and fed them with heavenly manna (Deuteronomy 8:15-16). The Lord had promised His people the good land flowing with milk and honey and other wonderful things (Deuteronomy 8:7-8; Exodus 13:5). But, the children of Israel offended God with the evil deeds they committed, complaining and speaking evil against God and against Moses. In the prior lesson, Aaron died on Mount Hor and the children of Israel mourned for him for thirty days.

CONTENT: Now the children of Israel continued their journey from Mount Hor, which was at the border of the land of Edom. The Edomites, the people of Edom, would not let the Israelites pass through their land (Numbers 20:20-21), so they had to go around Edom by way of the Red Sea. The route through the desert was a much longer way to the good land and not an easy way to travel. Can you guess what the children of Israel did? They were impatient and started complaining again. They spoke against God and against Moses, saying, “Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and there is no water; and our soul loathes this light bread.”

Then something strange and horrible happened. Jehovah sent fiery serpents among the people. Those who spoke against God and against Moses were bitten and many died. So the people came to Moses to look for a way out. They surely did not want to die. They told Moses: “We have sinned, because we have spoken against Jehovah and against you; pray to Jehovah, that He may take away the serpents from us.” So Moses prayed for the people. Do you think God answered the prayer? Yes, God provided a way out, but the people had to do one thing. God did not take away the snakes just like that. In fact, God did not take away the fiery serpents at all. Instead, God told Moses to make a serpent out of bronze.

But this serpent that Moses made was very different from all the biting snakes:

- (1) **It was made of bronze**, a brownish mixed metal made mostly of copper. It looked like a serpent on the outside, but it did not bite and kill, and it did not have any venom (poison) inside like the fiery snakes.
- (2) This bronze serpent did not go into the midst of the people. Rather, **it was lifted up by Moses on a pole to let the people look at it.**
- (3) When anyone who was bitten by a snake looked upon the bronze serpent, **he lived**. For anyone to be rid of the deadly venom and live, all he needed to do was to look upon the bronze serpent on the high pole. The bronze serpent gave the people a chance to live and not die from the poisonous bites, while the fiery serpents brought death.

SUGGESTED APPLICATIONS: *Note to serving ones: It is not intended that we cover all the suggested applications, but based on prayer and fellowship, and the children's response, allow the Lord to lead and see which applications to cover.*

- **We need to be careful about complaining and murmuring.** As we have seen in past lessons, it is a very serious matter to complain and murmur against God. Ask the children to name some positive, good things the Lord has done for them, e.g., their home, their families, their teachers, being able to come to children's meeting, food to eat, etc. God provided for the children of Israel time after time, yet whenever they were in a tough situation, they began to complain again instead of praying and asking the Lord for help.
- **We need to be patient.** The route through the desert was a long way to the good land and not an easy way to travel. The children of Israel became impatient while on the way and again began to murmur and complain. Often, when we get tired of waiting for someone or something, we do the same. We must learn to be patient. One way to help us to be patient is to keep ourselves occupied while we are waiting. For example, our mom may have told us that we have to wait until the afternoon before she can take us to our friend's house to play. Instead of whining and complaining, we can read a book or do something else until the time comes. Before we know it, the time will come quickly and we can happily go. It is also difficult to be patient to wait in line at the grocery store, to wait for the bus, or to wait in a car when there is a lot of traffic. It is also hard to wait for our turn when we are playing games with other people. But we need to learn to be patient.
- **Only the Lord can save us from our sins.** *Note: Consider this application only for the older children. For younger children, we can mention in a simple way that the Lord Jesus died for them and is the One who can forgive sins.* Like the people of Israel, who kept complaining and rebelling against God, we also keep sinning against God. This story from the Old Testament helps us to know something about the Lord Jesus and about ourselves to realize that only the Lord Jesus can help us. When Adam disobeyed God and listened to Satan (Genesis 3:1-7), the poison of Satan (sin) got into Adam. (Romans 5:12, 6:23) Because we all are descendants of Adam, we all have this poison within us. We can give examples to the children to help them realize that they have sin within them, e.g., how easy it is to lie, to disobey, etc., even though they try hard not to sin. We cannot overcome this sin in us because Satan is very strong. About 1,500 years after this story took place, God Himself came to the earth as a man named Jesus. Just as the bronze serpent had the form of a serpent but had no poison, Jesus had the form of a sinful man, but He didn't have any sin. (Romans 8:3, 2 Corinthians 5:21, Hebrews 4:15) One day He was lifted up on the cross, just as the bronze serpent was lifted up on the pole by Moses. (Galatians 3:13) Those who believe into the Lord can be saved from their sins. That is why today we can pray to confess our sins to the Lord and He forgives us (1 John 1:9).

Adapted from the Church in New York City Children's meeting lesson 02/18/96, 02/15/04, 02/21/2010; 2/15/15