

# The Bronze Serpent

Numbers 21:4-9

## MEMORY VERSE

JOHN 3:14

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

## WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

Small prizes for the children to find as "treasures" and some pre-made "wild goose chase" maps.

Paper plates, a large (3'x3') sheet of paper, some tickets that you make (possibly by using 1/8 of a page of construction paper) saying "Molasses Pass," two scarves or pieces of fabric.

A large bowl containing a few inches of water for hand washing (or wet wipes), bread dough or cookie dough (purchased ready-made), clean plastic table cloths, aluminum foil and plastic wrap or bags.

## ATTENTION GRABBER!

### Treasure Maps

Hide several treasures (small prizes, etc.) around the room in plain looking containers; make wild goose-chase maps (maps that lead the children to several places other than where the "treasures" are) leading to them.

Divide the class into groups (as many groups as there are treasures), and let them work together to find the treasures.

While they enjoy the treasure they have found, tell them how God always makes a way for us to be forgiven, and shows it to us very clearly. It is never too hard to understand or figure out (like a "wild goose chase" treasure map!)

## LESSON TIME!

The Israelites had just experienced God's faithfulness as He gave them victory over the Canaanites. Yet, after God had flooded them with His goodness, they turned their back on their loving Father and, again, became an unbelieving and complaining people.

### NUMBERS 21:4-6

Then they journeyed from Mount Hor 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."

So the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and many of the people of Israel died.

Instead of being thankful for the manna, the miraculous food God had provided them, the people, once more began to complain against God and Moses. Although they had witnessed miracle after miracle since God had freed them from bondage in Egypt, they yielded to a heart of utter disbelief: "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness?"

Sin has consequences. The Lord sent fiery serpents to punish a people who had given themselves over to complaining and unbelief.

It is vital that we do not turn our hearts against God as did the children of Israel. In such a state, we are testing God (asking for His judgment). The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 10:9, "...nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents." God is holy and must judge sin.

### NUMBERS 21:7

Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, "We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD and against you; pray to the LORD that He take away the serpents from us." So Moses prayed for the people.

The people realized they were sinning against God and confessed their sin before the Lord. Moses prayed for the people. He did not rebuke them with a "serves you right" kind of attitude; instead, he lifted them up to the Lord.

### NUMBERS 21:8,9

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Make a fiery serpent, and set it on a pole; and it shall be that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, shall live."

So Moses made a bronze serpent, and put it on a pole; and so it was, if a serpent had bitten anyone, when he looked at the bronze serpent, he lived.

It is impossible for sinful man to please a holy God; it is equally impossible for sinful man to resolve his own condition. God, himself, must provide the way of salvation for lost man.

God in His love for the Israelites provided a way for them to escape the dreadful consequences of their sin. God provided a bronze serpent for the Israelites. Those who were bitten by the snake needed only to look at the bronze serpent and be healed.

Just as the Israelites looked to the bronze serpent in faith, we must look in faith to the cross of Jesus for redemption from our sins. The bronze serpent was a symbol of judgment—that which sentences one to death. So, Jesus took our judgment upon the cross of Calvary when, as the sins of the world were poured upon Him, He became “sin” for us. (See 2 Corinthians 5:21). **God provides a way of forgiveness for us.**

Are you a Christian? Sin is like a poisonous snakebite. Every one of us has been bitten. The Bible says all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). Sin causes us to be separated from God--“for the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23a).

Yet, God in His great love for us has provided the way of forgiveness—the way of escape from the consequences of our sin. If we will just “look” by faith to Jesus who bore our judgment, we will be saved. In John 3:16 we read, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that who ever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” Though the wages of sin is death, “the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23b). **God provides a way of forgiveness for us.**

## **Molasses Tag**

You will need paper plates, a large (3’x3’) sheet of paper, some tickets that you make (maybe 1/8 of a page of construction paper) saying “Molasses Pass,” two scarves or pieces of fabric.

Play this unique game of tag by choosing 2 people to start out as “it.” Give them each a scarf for tagging (absolutely no popping). They only have to touch someone with the scarf for them to be tagged. Tagged kids have to go sit on the pancakes (paper plates you have separated and placed on the floor in the corner of the room).

Explain that your game begins in the wintertime when cold molasses moves very slowly; in the summer time molasses moves very quickly. They must listen closely for the changing of the seasons as you call them out. When it is winter, they must move as slowly as you show them. Anyone moving faster will be a fly in the molasses and taken out of the game immediately.

Be prepared for the flies with one large square sheet of paper for them to stand on, this is the “fly paper.” You call out at intervals “summertime” and “wintertime,” after the fly paper gets a few flies, give them the “molasses passes” which lets them get back into the game. The former flies may give their passes to flies that are waiting. Play several rounds if possible.

Getting the free pass to re-enter the game was an undeserved gift since they broke the rules of the game, just like God’s forgiveness is undeserved but He always provides it.

## **Savory Serpents**

Bring a large bowl containing a few inches of water for hand washing (or wet wipes). Choose bread dough or cookie dough for the serpents, both may be purchased ready made. Cover tables with clean plastic table cloths, spread a clean plastic table cloth on the floor or let each child work on a cookie sheet.

Give each a portion of dough (sprinkle work surfaces with flour) and show them how to roll a long snake. Give each a generous sheet of foil and show them how to roll it up into a stick shape for the pole. Wrap the serpent on the pole.

Give them a plastic bag or plastic wrap for transporting their creation home to the oven and also baking instructions.

## PRAYER

Lead the children in a prayer of thanksgiving for the great salvation that the Lord has provided for us. If there are any children who have not yet responded to the gospel, give them opportunity to do so.