

It seems so simple, maybe even too simple -- just look and live physically. It points to the simplicity of the Gospel -- just believe and live eternally!

It was not enough to know about the serpent. You had to look upon it.

Hmmm #1: Is this not the essential act of saving faith? Looking to Christ...looking away from ourselves, from our good deeds and our bad deeds, and looking to Him alone? Surely this is one of the reasons why Jesus will point to this passage when He's trying to explain faith to Nicodemus. Before He said, in 3:16, "*For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life*" ...before He says that, Jesus says, "[Nicodemus,] *As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believes in Him may have eternal life. For God so loved the world....*"

Isaiah 45:22 *Look to Me, and be saved, all you ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other.*

Hmmm#2: It is interesting that the first use of word for *standard* (nec/nes) was in Exodus 17:15ff when Moses recorded the great Name of the LORD on an altar, "*The LORD is My Banner.*" (banner = nec/nes).

Hmmm#3: About 700 years later, King Hezekiah had the bronze serpent destroyed because people had made it an idol. It had become an object of worship. Nowhere in Scripture do we see God asking them to ever use the bronze serpent again...it was just for this time frame.
2 Kings 18:1-4:

What did God develop in you today? As you are walking with God, consider:

The people "walk" with God in the military endeavor. They become discouraged soon after. In their discouragement they boldly sinned. God sent judgment. They truly repented. God was merciful and gave them a path for salvation from His wrath.

There is a good lesson for us today, that when God gives us a command in Scripture, one we might even consider "unusual", we should obey without question and without hesitation so that we too might experience the blessings of obedience.

Series: The Life and Times of Moses
Text: Numbers 21

Title: You Want Us To Do What?
Topic: Obey even unusual commands

Review:

- ✓ We saw that people *contended* with God. This caused Moses to slip up. God uses imperfect instruments...
- ✓ Moses was judged by a stricter standard due to his leadership position and his close relationship to God.
- ✓ In our actions and words we sometimes ruin negatively the picture of the work of Christ.

Lesson:

I. Verses 1-3: The _____.
This is thought to be the same location where their fathers got defeated 38 years ago right after they refused to travel into the PL.

The name Hormah previously depicted a place of _____. Now it is a place of _____. What made the difference?

Today: There is a message for all of us in our lives when we have a trial or an adverse situation. We can choose to confront the situation in our power or in the dependence of _____ power.

II. Verses 4-6: The _____.

"This is a place of hopelessness and sadness deeper than all the open desert we had crossed. There was something sinister, something actively evil in this snake-devoted land, proliferant of salt water and barren palms and bushes which neither serve for grazing nor for firewood." Lawrence of Arabia

Today: When Israel acts like this, they act just like you and me. This passage speaks of me and you, and of our sin, and we're not very creative in it. We go back to the same patterns over and over again.

Bible extra:

Psalms 78:18, 19, & 38:



Israel's sin.

They blaspheme God. Verse 4...*the people became impatient on the way, and the people spoke against God and against Moses...*

- a. Israel became impatient. We can give them some slack here. They do have to go the long way around. The route is rough and long. And they must do this because of the unfaithfulness of their fathers. However, is their impatience excusable?
- b. They disrespectfully and irreverently speak against God and Moses. Moses is God's appointed mediator...and God is God!
- c. They call into question God's plan for their redemption. They ask why they were brought out of Egypt to die in the wilderness. They tell God this is not a good plan!
- d. They doubt God's ability to provide a properly furnished table. They are dissatisfied with God's provision.

Their sin: They do not acknowledge God's power, don't appreciate His generosity, don't recognize His mercy, don't accept His sovereignty, and they don't trust His word.

Our sin: Every time we sin...every time we decide that we will do it our way and not God's way, we are doing the same thing they did.

Judgment from God.

The people sin...(the new generation sins)...by complaining about their circumstances. In chapter 20, when they grumbled, God gave them water...no wrath then.

This time, with no warning to Moses or anyone, God judges and punishes immediately. They say they are living in adverse conditions...so God sends them more adversity. God sends poisonous snakes.

Slight aside: They sound like their fathers in their complaining. In eight passages so far, the Israelites spoke out against Moses (Ex 15:24, 16:2, 17:3, Nu 12:1, 14:2, 16:3, 14:41, 20:2). At those times, Moses knew, and the Lord knew they were really speaking against God...but they were not bold enough to do it directly. Here in 21, they are bold enough to speak out against God.

Here sits Israel in the wilderness on the long way around Edom. They are going to do what God says. They chose to do it the hard way. Ironically their complaints about adversity led them not to relief but to greater adversity when God passed judgment on them for sin.

Today: Sadly, often the lesson we should learn in petty trials...we only learn by facing greater trials.

Paraphrase from the hymn, *If Thou But Suffer God to Guide Thee*:
"What good can your anxiety and worry do? What good is your constant moaning and sighing about your trials? What help is it if you simply regret your situation, or bemoan every hard thing that comes along?" [And then the punch line.] "Our crosses and trials, the hard providences that come into our lives, our crosses and trials only get heavier if all we are is bitter about them."

III. Verse 7: The _____.

The complaining draws judgment which God uses to move the people to repentance and prayer. They acknowledge their sin: *we have spoken against God and you [Moses].*

God uses this trial to press them to where they recognize their need for God's relief and forgiveness.

Before we are too hard on them, this is the younger generation. All the junk done by their fathers, which looked much like this story, is not being held against them. God is trying to teach them as they journey through the wilderness.

They ask for an intercessor. Praise God, we have One of those!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!
Hebrews 7:25 says *"Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to (continually - present tense) make intercession for them."*

IV. Verses 8-9: God's provision of _____.

Moses prays for the people and God arranges for mercy.

- a. God gives a solution that has no human explanation for its effectiveness. It took an act of faith in God's plan.
- b. With their animal sacrifices they had to touch the representative sacrifice. Here all they had to do was look. They were to look away from themselves and to this symbol or sign God had provided. (Their life for a look.)
- c. No one could look for you. A father could not do it for a son. A mother could not do it for a child. Your friend could not do it for you. A priest could not do it for someone else. Aaron or anybody else could not do it for anyone else that individual person only had to respond.