

LESSON 42

# God Heals Israel with a Bronze Snake

NUMBERS 21



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**BIBLE TRUTH**

**GOD SAVES HIS PEOPLE INDIVIDUALLY**

LESSON SNAPSHOT

1. **OPENING REVIEW** . . . . . **5 MIN**  
Use last week’s lesson outline to review with the children what they learned.
2. **BIBLE STORY** . . . . . **10 MIN**  
Read Numbers 21:1–9 from the Scriptures or read story 42, “God Heals Israel with a Bronze Snake,” from *The Gospel Story Bible*.
3. **OBJECT LESSON 1** . . . . . **10 MIN**  
Each One Must Look  
**SUPPLIES:**  
✓ create a bronze serpent on a pole (a rubber snake and a broomstick handle work well, or draw a snake and pole on poster board)
4. **TEACHING/DISCUSSION** . . . . . **10 MIN**
5. **OBJECT LESSON 2** . . . . . **10 MIN**  
Memorize John 3:14–15  
**SUPPLIES:**  
✓ whiteboard and dry-erase marker
6. **SWORD BIBLE MEMORY** . . . . . **5 MIN**
7. **ACTIVITY TIME** . . . . . **10 MIN**  
Coloring Activity  
**SUPPLIES:**  
✓ coloring page 42—one copy for each child
8. **CLOSING PRAYER** . . . . . **5 MIN**
9. **BONUS OBJECT LESSON** . . . . . **10 MIN**  
How Fast We Complain  
**SUPPLIES:**  
✓ Three large letter S’s; one cut in the shape of a spear; the second, in the shape of a snake; and the third out of blue paper to represent water. As an alternative, print out a spear, a snake, and water and affix the cut out S to each.

**TOTAL 75 MIN**

PREPARING TO TEACH

TEACHING POINTS

**God delivers Israel in response to their faith**—While traveling through the wilderness, the Israelites are attacked by the king of Arad, a Canaanite. The Israelites call out to God for help. They make a vow to destroy the king of Arad if God will give them victory. The Lord gives them victory, so the Israelites keep their vow and name the place of their victory Hormah.

Their choice of the name Hormah is important. Israel had been defeated by the Canaanites many years earlier when they tried to attack without God’s blessing. That defeat was suffered by the generation of Israelites who refused to enter the Promised Land because they did not trust God, and it happened at a place called Hormah. By now, that generation is dying out in the wilderness. Already, Aaron and Miriam have died. So, the name Hormah, which stood for the defeat and disobedience of the older generation, now stands for the victory and obedience of the younger generation.

**Israel grumbles in unbelief again and is judged by God**—Not long after their deliverance from the king of Arad, the Israelites begin to complain about a lack of water and about food they don’t like. Because of their unbelief and ingratitude, God sends a judgment of snakes to bite the people, and many people die. Once again, Israel has quickly fallen into the sin of complaining and grumbling.

**God raises up salvation for Israel**—When the Israelites realize they have sinned, they ask Moses to pray to God to remove the snakes. But God does not take the snakes away. Instead, he instructs Moses to make a bronze snake and put it on a pole. Anyone bitten looks up at the snake on the pole and is saved from death.

This is an amazing foreshadowing of how salvation would come through Jesus. Up until now, God has mostly dealt with the Israelites not as individuals but as a group. But through the bronze snake, he deals with them as individuals. This is how it is with us and Jesus: each of us must look to Christ individually in order to be saved.

## WHERE IS JESUS? \_\_\_\_\_

How does today's Bible story fit into God's greater plan of redemption?

Read John 3:14–15.

The Old Testament is filled with stories that point to Jesus. Here we see sinners healed of the snakebites sent to them as judgment when they look to the upraised snake. It was God who told Moses to put the bronze snake up on a pole.

The snake on the pole pointed forward to Jesus who would one day be lifted up. Because of this, God healed the people and did not count their sins against them. Isn't it interesting that this Old Testament story precedes the most quoted verse of the entire New Testament? When we read of the bronze snake being lifted up, we should think of Christ.

## THE LESSON

### OPENING REVIEW . . . . . 5 MIN

Use last week's lesson outline to review with the children what they learned.

### BIBLE STORY . . . . . 10 MIN

Read Numbers 21:1–9 from the Scriptures or read story 42, "God Heals Israel with a Bronze Snake," from *The Gospel Story Bible*.

### OBJECT LESSON 1 . . . . . 10 MIN

#### Each One Must Look

**SUPPLIES:**

- ✓ create a bronze serpent on a pole (a rubber snake and a broomstick handle work well, or draw a snake and pole on poster board)

The idea behind this lesson is to help the children see that God required individual faith to be healed from the poisonous bite of the snakes.

## ■ LOWER ELEMENTARY LESSON 42

Have each child close their eyes and cover them with their hands. Retell the story while they are closing their eyes, and tell them to pretend they are the Israelites. Tell them that they have all grumbled and when they feel their leg tapped that means that a snake has bitten them. Remind the class to keep their eyes closed. Explain to them if they get bitten the only thing that will heal them is to look at the snake on the pole. If they get bitten they may open their eyes and look on the snake. As soon as they see it they should stand up and shout, “The Lord healed me.”

Slowly move through the class, tapping the children, until everyone goes through the process.

Then ask the class the following questions:

- What did you have to do to be healed after being bitten?  
*(We had to look at the snake.)*
- Did everyone who wanted to be healed need to look for themselves, or could you look at the snake for the person next to you?  
*(Everyone needs to look for themselves.)*
- Is that different from the way God forgave Israel before he commanded the serpent?  
*(Yes, often Moses spoke on behalf of all the people and they were all spared from death. Here God shows us that the salvation to come when Jesus is the one who is lifted up on the cross will require individual faith. Everyone will be required to believe for themselves. This means that even though your mom, dad, or teacher believes in Jesus, you will not be saved unless you yourself place your trust in him.)*

### TEACHING/DISCUSSION . . . . . 10 MIN

Using the teaching points, teach through the lesson for today.

### OBJECT LESSON 2 . . . . . 10 MIN

Memorize John 3:14–15

**SUPPLIES:**

- ✓ whiteboard and dry-erase marker

Many of the children may have memorized John 3:16. See if you can get them to memorize John 3:14–15 as well. Write verses 3:14–16 on the board. Have the children repeat the verse several times. Then, erase one word at a time. (Start by erasing words in the sixteenth verse). See who can recite the entire passage from memory.

**SWORD BIBLE MEMORY . . . . . 5 MIN**

Take time during the class to review the SWORD Bible Memory verses with the class. Provide the opportunity for each child to recite the verses to an adult worker.

**ACTIVITY TIME . . . . . 10 MIN**

Coloring Activity

**SUPPLIES:**

- ✓ coloring page 42—one copy for each child

While the children are coloring, engage them by asking the following questions:

- **Why did Moses make a statue of a snake on a pole?**  
*(Moses obeyed God's instructions to make a bronze snake on a pole.)*
- **Why are people coming near to look at this snake?**  
*(They are obeying God's directions to look at the snake and be healed from their snakebites.)*
- **Did the statue heal them?**  
*(No, faith and obedience in God made them well.)*
- **Have your parents ever asked you to do something that at first you thought was scary? How did God help you to obey?**  
*(Allow one or two children to explain what happened.)*

**CLOSING PRAYER . . . . . 5 MIN**

Pick several children to pray prayers based on the day's scripture passages.

**BONUS OBJECT LESSON . . . . . 10 MIN**

**How Fast We Complain**

**SUPPLIES:**

- ✓ three large letter *S*'s; one cut in the shape of a spear; the second, in the shape of a snake; and the third out of blue paper to represent water. As an alternative: print out a spear, a snake, and water, and affix the cut out *S* to each.

Tell the children that God did three things for the people of Israel, and you made a letter *S* to represent each one. First, God made Israel “Safe” when he delivered his people from the Canaanite King Arad (Numbers 21:1–3). (Display the *S* drawn like a spear.) Second, God “Saved” Israel from their sin by providing the bronze snake for them to look at (Numbers 21:5–9). (Display the *S* drawn like a snake.) Finally, God “Satisfied” the thirst of his people by providing water in the desert (Numbers 21:10–16). (Display the blue *S*.)

Then show the class the letters in random order, and see if they can tell you what they represent.

Finally, explain that God never changes and each one of the ways God cared for Israel, he also cares for us.

- God saves us from the punishment we deserve for our sin. We don't look to a snake on a pole; we look to Jesus crucified on the cross to save us from our sin.
- God makes us safe by destroying our greatest enemies—Satan and sin. Through his death on the cross, Jesus made peace for us with God the Father who was our enemy because of our sin.
- God satisfies us by providing the food and water and clothing that we need. (See Matthew 6:28–33.)

LESSON 42 - GOD HEALS ISRAEL WITH A BRONZE SNAKE

