

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**  
Jesus Was Lifted Up  
**SUPPLIES:**
  - ✓ a long broomstick
  - ✓ twelve-inch long (one-inch diameter) stick
  - ✓ twine
  - ✓ two sheets of 8½ × 11-inch card stock
4. **TEACHING/DISCUSSION** . . . . . **10 MIN**
5. **OBJECT LESSON 2** . . . . . **10 MIN**  
We, Like Israel
6. **SWORD BIBLE MEMORY** . . . . . **5 MIN**
7. **ACTIVITY TIME** . . . . . **15 MIN**  
The Bronze Serpent  
**SUPPLIES:**
  - ✓ colored pencils, crayons, and paper
8. **CLOSING PRAYER** . . . . . **5 MIN**
9. **BONUS OBJECT LESSON** . . . . . **15 MIN**  
Create Your Own Bronze Serpent  
**SUPPLIES:**
  - ✓ 8½ × 11-inch card stock (one sheet for each child)
  - ✓ colored pencils, crayons, or markers
  - ✓ scissors

**TOTAL 85 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.

## A LITTLE BIT MORE

*Serpent*

The serpent is often depicted as evil. It can be Satan himself (Genesis 3:1–4; Revelation 12:9) or it can be an evil person or people (Jeremiah 46:22; Jeremiah 51:34 NIV).

Jesus used the word “vipers” (a group of poisonous snakes) to describe the Pharisees (Matthew 3:7). Jesus is compared to the serpent lifted up because he became sin for us (2 Corinthians 5:21). What a sobering picture, that Jesus would take upon himself our evil so that we could be forgiven.

**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**

**Jesus Was Lifted Up**

**SUPPLIES:**

- ✓ a long broomstick
- ✓ twelve-inch long (one-inch diameter) stick
- ✓ twine
- ✓ two sheets of 8½ × 11-inch card stock

Before class, affix the twelve-inch long stick to the top of the broomstick to form a cross. Use twine to tie the two together. Draw a large serpent on card stock; write “JESUS” in bold capital letters on card stock. Glue or tape the serpent to one side of the cross and “JESUS” to the other side. Try to make the serpent big enough to hide the letters on the back.

In class, use the staff to illustrate the story of Numbers 21:6–9. Have one of the children read the story aloud.

Have another child read John 3:14–15, and ask the class to tell you how the two passages are related. As soon as one of the children shares the connection, turn the staff around to show the word JESUS. Then use the “Where Is Jesus?” section of this lesson to help teach that the serpent Moses lifted up was meant to point to Jesus. You can use the staff multiple times throughout the lesson to keep reminding the children of the connection between Jesus lifted up on the cross and the serpent lifted up on the pole.

**TEACHING/DISCUSSION . . . . . 10 MIN**

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

**OBJECT LESSON 2 . . . . . 10 MIN**

**We, Like Israel**

Divide the class into groups of six. Ask them to come up with a skit that illustrates how we sin just like the Israelites did when they threatened Moses because of their desire for water. Some examples might be:

- a child who is upset and impatient with their mother or father, or
- a student who thinks his class is boring and starts fooling around and grumbling against his teacher, or

- a soccer player who is tired of practicing drills and just wants to take a break and get a drink of water, so she starts grumbling against the coach to the other players.

Have each group pick one of these three or come up with another on their own that you approve of. After fifteen minutes of planning and rehearsing, have them perform their skits.

Ask the children the following questions:

- What do we learn from watching these skits about our lives?  
*(We are just like the Israelites.)*
- If the Israelites needed to look to the bronze serpent for salvation, who do we need to look toward?  
*(We need to look to Jesus who was lifted up on the cross [John 3:14–15].)*

**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 . . . . . 15 MIN**

**The Bronze Serpent**

**SUPPLIES:**

- ✓ colored pencils, crayons, and paper

Have the children draw a picture of the bronze serpent in the middle of their paper with snakes on the ground along with people. On the other side have them draw a cross and the letter S multiple times on the ground with people. Use the “Where Is Jesus?” section of this lesson to help explain to the children how the two stories are related.

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

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

**BONUS OBJECT LESSON . . . . . 15 MIN**

**Create Your Own Bronze Serpent**

**SUPPLIES:**

- ✓ 8½ × 11-inch card stock (one sheet for each child)
- ✓ colored pencils, crayons, or markers
- ✓ scissors

Have the children draw a snake in the shape of the letter *S* on their paper. On the front they should draw and color their snake. Then have them cut out their finished serpents and write along the snake on the back, “Look upon the Son and be saved.” (See John 3:14–15.)

Then ask the class the following questions:

- **When we read the story of the people of Israel looking at the serpent on the pole, who should we be reminded of?**  
*(John 3:14–15 tells us that the serpent on the pole points to Jesus. Looking back on that story, we are reminded of Jesus being lifted up on the cross. It is by his death on the cross that we are saved from eternal death.)*
  
- **What happened to the people who did not look at the serpent?**  
*(The Bible only tells us that when someone got bit by a snake and looked at the serpent, they did not die. We can assume that anyone who refused to look at the serpent on the pole died. It is much easier to look toward God’s salvation when you realize that if you do not, you face eternal death. Apart from looking to Jesus there is no other way that we can be saved [Acts 4:12].)*