

THE GOSPEL AND THE SERPENT  
Num. 21:5-9

Intro: The Gospel is present<sup>ed</sup> in many different ways, both in the OT and the NT.

See our sanction from the Lord Himself for looking for the Gospel in our text. The NT passage is John 3:14, 15.

*Sometimes for a theologian it has to*

I. THE JUDGMENT IMPOSED UPON THE PEOPLE. *be very simple.*

A. For their rebellion -- against God's way and God's food.

*As in the Garden of Eden.*

B. By the Lord. "God gave them over" (Rom. 1).

*He put them out of the Garden - Gen. 2:1-3. "He hath appointed a day..." (Acts 17:31)*

C. Was painful. One writer says, "It heated and enflamed the blood so that every vein became a boiling river, swollen with anguish" (Spurgeon, Vol. 25, p. 592).

Cf. Ex. 2:23.

D. Brought death. Cf. Rom. 6:23.

E. Was the same for all. Cf. Rom. 3:23; Isa. 53:6.

II. THE INTERCESSOR: MOSES -- ALSO A TYPE OF CHRIST.

Cf. Isa. 53:12; 1 Tim. 2:5.

III. THE REMEDY: THE BRAZEN SERPENT, A TYPE OF CHRIST.

*What a shocking picture of Christ.*

This must be related to Gen. 3 and Satan.

Cf. Gal. 3:13; 2 Cor. 5:21; Isa. 53:10.

Note the specific details.

A. Given by God. The Israelites had no solution for their own problem.

B. Given through grace. It was completely undeserved. Cf. Eph. 2:8, 9.

C. Only one remedy. If they rejected this, there was no other hope. Cf. John 14:6; Acts 4:12.

D. Had to be personal. When the people realized their condition, and their need, then they were open to the remedy. The Lord did not save them as a nation, but one by one.

E. By faith. Not for any work, but by a look. Cf. Tit.

3:5; Eph. 2:4-9.

F. Instantaneous. Cf. 1 John 5:12; John 5:24.

G. Permanent. Cf. John 5:24. Of course, there was nothing to keep a man from being bitten again and again, but the record has to do with one bite!

Cf. John 10:27, 28; Rom. 8:35-39.

*John 3:16 gives all seven of the preceding points.*

Concl: Note how this ties together salvation in the OT and salvation in the NT.

Twofold application:

- 1) Praise and worship from those of us who are saved.
- 2) Hope for those who are saved -- but the need is urgent. No time can be lost. " . . . behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. 6:2b).

Read Spurgeon's story of the man who died from the cobra bite.  
(Typed on the following page.)

"What an awful thing it is to be bitten by a serpent! I dare say some of you recollect the case of Gurling, one of the keepers of the reptiles in the Zoological Gardens. It happened in October, 1852, and therefore some of you will remember it. This unhappy man was about to part with a friend who was going to Australia, and according to the wont of many he must needs drink with him. He drank considerable quantities of gin, and though he would probably have been in a great passion if any one had called him drunk, yet reason and common-sense had evidently become overpowered. He went back to his post at the gardens in an excited state. He had some months before seen an exhibition of snake-charming, and this was on his poor muddled brain. He must emulate the Egyptians, and play with serpents. First he took out of its cage a Morocco venom-snake, put it round his neck, twisted it about, and whirled it round about him. Happily for him it did not arouse itself so as to bite. The assistant-keeper cried out, 'For God's sake put back the snake,' but the foolish man replied, 'I am inspired.' Putting back the venom-snake, he exclaimed, 'Now for the cobra.' This deadly serpent was somewhat torpid with the cold of the previous night, and therefore the rash man placed it in his bosom till it revived, and gilded downward till its head appeared below the back of his waistcoat. He took it by the body, about a foot from the head, and then seized it lower down by the other hand, intending to hold it by the tail and swing it round his head. He held it for an instant opposite to his face, and like a flash of lightning the serpent struck him between the eyes. The blood streamed down his face, and he called for help, but his companion fled in horror; and, as he told the jury, he did not know how long he was gone, for he was 'in a maze.' When assistance arrived Gurling was sitting on a chair, having restored the cobra to its place. He said, 'I am a dead man.' They put him in a cab, and took him to the hospital. First his speech went, he could only point to his poor throat and mean; then his vision failed him, and lastly his hearing. His pulse gradually sank, and in one hour from the time at which he had been struck he was a corpse. There was only a little mark upon the bridge of his nose, but the poison spread over the body, and he was a dead man. I tell you that story that you may use it as a parable and learn never to play with sin, and also in order to bring vividly before you what it is to be bitten by a serpent."