

SIMILAR BUT DIFFERENT **(Numbers 21:4-9)**

I. The similarities.

- A. Both were given as means of salvation by God.
 - 1. God directed Moses to build the serpent (vs. 8.)
 - a. This was not from the mind of Moses or Joshua.
 - b. The direction for this means of salvation was from God Himself.
 - 2. John 3:16 tells us that Jesus was given by God for man.
 - a. God sent Jesus into the world (John 12:44; 17:3).
 - b. He did so to provide a means of salvation from sin (Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21).
- B. Both were the only means of salvation.
 - 1. There was no other way for the Israelites to be saved but by looking at the brass serpent.
 - a. They couldn't live by trying to find some way of removing the poison.
 - b. They couldn't cry out to God for salvation.
 - c. They couldn't be saved by finding some god of the land through which they were traveling.
 - 2. Today, there is no other means of salvation than Jesus.
 - a. Acts 4:12; John 14:6.
 - b. It is only through the blood of Jesus that one may have his/her sins washed away (Revelation 1:5).
 - c. It is only in Christ that we can be spiritually blessed (Ephesians 1:3).
- C. People told about serpent, we must tell about Jesus.
 - 1. The people had to be told the purpose of the serpent or they would have never known to look at it.
 - 2. You and I must tell people about Jesus so they will know to look to Him (Matthew 28:18-20).
 - 3. Faith in Jesus comes through hearing about Him (Romans 10:17).
- D. The design of both was to save life.
 - 1. The brass serpent saved physical life - if they looked they lived.
 - 2. Jesus saves spiritual life.
 - a. Matthew 11:28-30.
 - b. John 14:1-3.
- E. Both were to be lifted up.
 - 1. Moses had to lift the serpent up high so people all over the camp could see it and live.
 - 2. Jesus was to be lifted up for all to see.
 - a. Notice the word Jesus used in John 3:14 - must.
 - b. John 12:32.
- F. Both required more than simple belief.
 - 1. No one was saved by God who didn't look at the serpent.

- a. They couldn't sit there and say they believed in God's power through the snake and live.
- b. No looking, no life.
- 2. Faith in Jesus as the Son of God requires works (James 2:17, 20, 26).
 - a. Just saying we believe in Jesus won't save.
 - b. No obedience, no life (Matthew 7:21).

II. The differences.

- A. There is a material difference.
 - 1. The snake was made from brass not from a live snake.
 - 2. Jesus came in flesh like us.
 - a. John 1:14; Philippians 2:7-8.
 - b. Notice how the Hebrews writer described it...(2:17).
 - c. Jesus was just as human as you and I are, but without sin (Hebrews 4:15).
- B. God commanded Israel to not worship the serpent but we are to worship Jesus.
 - 1. This was not to become an idol for Israel.
 - 2. You and I are to worship Jesus (Philippians 2:10).
 - a. If we don't give our allegiance and worship to Him now, we will one day.
 - b. He is worthy of our worship for His holiness and position.
- C. Eventually, Israel defiled the serpent and Jesus can never be defiled.
 - 1. 1 Kings 18:1-4 tells us that Hezekiah had to destroy the serpent because the people burned incense to it and had named it.
 - a. That which God had created for good, man turned to evil.
 - b. This happens with many things God has given us.
 - 2. Jesus can never be defiled in any way.
 - a. He couldn't be while here on earth.
 - b. He can't be in heaven.
- D. More than looking at Jesus is involved in being saved by Him.
 - 1. The Israelites, though more than simple faith, had to simply look at the serpent to be healed.
 - 2. The Jews of Jesus day that were present at His crucifixion were not saved by looking at Him.
 - a. Peter said the very ones to whom he was speaking had killed Jesus.
 - b. Acts 2:23, 36.
 - 3. To be saved, one must be obedient to the entire will of God and His plan of salvation.
 - 4. For those who say that "looking upon" Jesus today means faith only, just look at the verses preceding the comparison Jesus made between Himself and the serpent.
 - a. He was having a conversation with Nicodemus.
 - b. In that conversation, Jesus revealed that nothing short of being born again would result in salvation (John 3:3, 5).