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.
      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.
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.
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.
      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.
   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).