

(Num. 21:4-5) - Again we see the people discouraged and complaining. Again, we see their unbelief and animosity towards the Lord God and His prophet, Moses. We need to understand that every time this happened, they were breaking the covenant God made with them from Mount Sinai. It is the same when the next generation goes into and occupies the promised land. Their prosperity in that land was conditioned on their obedience, but they broke that covenant (*cf. Jer. 31:32*). That is why our eternal salvation and glory cannot be on terms of a covenant conditioned on our obedience. We are all sinners, and the words and attitudes of the people here are reflective of our state by nature and our weakness even as sinners saved by grace in Christ. We need a covenant conditioned on one who is perfect (impeccable) and who cannot and will not break the terms and conditions of that covenant - the everlasting covenant of grace conditioned on our Surety, Substitute, Redeemer, and Preserver, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord our Righteousness (*1 John 2:1-2*).

Notice they said, *“and our soul loatheth this light bread.”* This was the manna that the Lord God gave them to eat. They were not satisfied with the food that God provided. This is just like all of us by nature as to salvation. Man by nature cannot be satisfied with Christ and His righteousness alone. He has to add his own works of righteousness, his own self-willed goodness. Christ is not enough for him. And it is because he is ignorant of his condition in sin and death. The greatest evidence of spiritual death is that people by nature do not know, desire, and believe in the true Christ of the Bible and are not satisfied with God’s way of salvation conditioned on Christ as the one and only righteousness that God will accept. This is why we must be born again by the Spirit Who gives us a hunger for Christ. This hunger can only be filled with Christ and His Word (*Matt. 5:6*). If this is our case, we will never get tired of this manna. We will be filled and satisfied, and, in fact, we will desire no other food (*Col. 2:9-10*).

(Num. 21:6) - The LORD brought judgment in the way of *“fiery serpents”* (poisonous snakes) that *“bit the people; and much people of Israel died.”* This shows us the truth of God’s judgment that had been established from the beginning and never changes - THE WAGES OF SIN IS DEATH; SIN, WHEN IT IS FINISHED, BRINGS DEATH. Just as a deadly poison ran through the bodies of the people, SIN is a deadly poison that we received in our fall in Adam (*Rom. 5:12*), and unless a remedy is found, it will kill us. God told Adam that in the day he ate from the forbidden tree he would surely die, and we all fell in Adam. The result of our fall is that we are all born in a state of sin and death - SPIRITUALLY DEAD!

(Num. 21:7) - The people realized that they had sinned and God’s just judgment was upon them. And they realized that their sin was not just against Moses but *“against the Lord.”* They asked Moses, *“pray unto the LORD, that He take away the serpents from us.”* They recognized that they needed him to be a mediator between them and God. *“And Moses prayed for the people.”* This illustrates what happens when God the Holy Spirit brings us to see our sinfulness and our need of a savior. He shows us that God would be just to condemn us to eternal damnation and death. God would be well within His rights to do so - *“If Thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?”* (*Psalms 130:3*). Abraham asked, *“Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?”* (*Gen. 18:25*). The answer is an emphatic *“YES”!* He will deal righteously with all people. If He damns any, He will do so righteously. If He saves any, He will do so righteously. Is there any hope for sinners like us? *“And Moses prayed for the people.”* Moses here is a picture of Christ, the one Mediator between God and men, the one Who intercedes with God for His people, a people who were given to Him before the foundation of the world. If there is to be salvation from our sins, if there is to be

righteousness established, we must have a Surety, a Substitute, a Redeemer, a Mediator. And he must be one appointed of God and who is able and willing to do what is required. In Israel's case under the Old Covenant for their temporal salvation from the poison of the serpents, Moses met all three qualifications. But for our eternal salvation from sin, the only one Who meets all three qualifications is God's Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

(Num. 21:8-9) - Is there any hope that these people could be spared and cured from the poison of these serpents? There is, but it is only by GOD'S WAY - *"And the LORD said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live. And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived."* This fiery serpent made of brass is a type of the Lord Jesus Christ going under the fiery wrath of God for the sins of His people imputed to Him. Here, the picture of Christ changes from Moses to the brazen serpent showing that the only way of salvation from the condemnation and the poison of sin is Christ lifted up on that pole, which is the cross of Calvary. As Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer of God's chosen people all over this world, Christ was lifted up to die for their sins and provide a perfect righteousness whereby God is just to justify them. They are sinners saved from their sins by God's grace (*Rom. 5:21*).

The serpent was made of brass like the brazen altar where God's wrath fell upon the sacrifice. Why did God choose they symbol of a serpent? When we think of a serpent, we usually think of Satan, of evil, of sin. The reason God chose a serpent here is because we all, even God's elect, were aligned with Satan in our natural state (*Eph. 2:1-3*). Christ had to be identified with us in our sins. He did this NOT in becoming a sinner or being made a sinner, NOT by being corrupted or contaminated with our sin, but by being *"numbered with the transgressors"* and bearing *"the sin of many,"* and making *"intercession for the transgressors"* (*Isa. 53:12*). This shows that Christ took our place under God's wrath for our sins imputed to Him (*Heb. 2:14ff.*).

Notice that the brazen serpent had the form of a serpent; BUT THERE WAS NO POISON IN IT. Our Lord Jesus Christ was man in the likeness of sinful flesh, and was found in fashion as a man, yet, He is without sin - holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. HE WAS MADE SIN AND MADE A CURSE FOR US, BUT ONLY BY IMPUTATION OF OUR SINS TO HIS ACCOUNT THAT WE MIGHT BE MADE THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD IN HIM (*2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 3:13*). And there was but ONE brazen serpent by which the Israelites could be cured. Even so, there is but one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus. There is one name given under heaven among men whereby we must be saved - Jesus Christ the Lord.

The Apostle John was inspired by the Holy Spirit to use this event in Israel's history to show it typifies the salvation of God's elect by the death of Christ. *John 3:14-15* tells us that just as *"Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life."* Just as the brazen serpent was provided for the Israelites because of God's pity, Jesus Christ was provided for the healing of perishing sinners because of God's love (*John 3:16*). The people were commanded to LOOK and live. God's spiritual people are commanded to look to Christ for all salvation, forgiveness, eternal life, and glory. This is the look of faith which the Holy Spirit brings us to in the new birth as He convicts of sin, righteousness, and judgment. When He does this great work within us, we will look nowhere else and to no one else but Jesus Christ crucified and risen from the dead.