

## **Title: SEND IN THE SNAKES**

### **Text: Numbers 21:1-9**

**Intro:** The story of God's dealings with the children of Israel is one of a sad repetition of events. Israelites were constant rebels and complainers. Whenever they fall into the sin of unfaithfulness and idolatry, God first warns and pleads with them through His prophet; then they disregard the warning; get chastised and repent; thereafter forgiven and restored, only to backslide again and the whole cycle is repeated once more. Let us look at a chapter in Israel's wilderness journey and learn from their experience and dealings with God.

#### **I. A Vow in Time of Trouble (21:1-3)**

**A.** The Israelites got into trouble when the Canaanites fought and prevailed against them. They needed God's help so they made Him a promise. Like Dial-911 such is men's attitude towards God. They only remember Him in crises.

**B.** Have you, under same situation, ever promised God something in return for His help? (see **Eccl. 5:4-5**).

#### **II. Discouragement Along the Way (21:4)**

**A.** It was an extraordinary privilege to be called to walk in the way God showed them. Yet Israel hated and despised it because it was not what they expected (**Isa. 55:8-9**).

**B.** The fact is God's way is not always pleasant but often wearisome to the flesh. Part of our spiritual training is to travel the narrow way (**Matt. 7:14; Prov. 10:29**).

#### **III. Unbelief Led to Murmuring (21:5)**

**A.** The people spoke against God and Moses. They even despised bread made in heaven (**Psa. 78:24-25**). How easy it is for unrestrained appetites to make men scorn at holy and heavenly things. The majority was wrong!

**B.** We should do less talking and less murmuring but add more working and more waiting for God (**Phil. 2:14**).

**C.** Even God's special privileges and blessings would seem ordinary and profane when one's heart isn't right with God. Be warned that God does not tolerate such attitude!

#### **IV. Fiery Serpents Were Sent in (21:6)**

**A.** It all begins with unbelief, then secret murmuring; finally, open and bold rebellion – which things God hates.

**B.** The serpent has always been a symbol of the devil and his wickedness. Application: God has a serpent for you if you don't stop habitual murmuring against His ways. He can permit Satan to mess your life until you learn your lesson and repent. Such is the way of the God of the Bible.

#### **V. Chastisement Led to Repentance (21:7ab)**

**A.** We often don't realize how good and pleasant our situation is until tragedies strike. We fail to value our present state until something bad happens sooner. Is your life now in the midst of trouble? Perhaps God is calling your attention to sin in your life and wants you to weigh up your priorities.

**B.** God's chastisement has a way of opening our eyes to know and accept things in life that are more important.

#### **VI. A Demonstration of Meekness (21:7c)**

**A.** Meekness is strength under control. It comes from God as a fruit of the Spirit (**Gal. 5:22**).

**B.** Moses showed his meekness and gentleness here. Those who mocked and fought with him now seek his help. Perhaps Moses struggled like Jonah. Israel deserved the judgment they were now experiencing. Still, he helped them!

**C.** The greatness of a man is often seen in the way he treats his critics and enemies (**Luke 6:28; Rom. 12:14**).

#### **VII. An Unexpected Answer (21:8-9)**

**A.** Note that God did not remove the serpents even though He can. Instead He provided a unique way to survive them. God in His wisdom really works in mysterious ways.

**B.** Perhaps you are seeking for answers to your questions and prayers. God's answer to you may be in ways you have least expected (**Eph. 3:20-21**).

**Conclusion**: This chapter in Israel's history is a beautiful typology: Serpent on the pole = Christ on the cross (**John 3:14-15**). All who look to the Lord are saved (**Isa. 45:22**).