

Read: Numbers 21:4-9

A Promise of Life in Death

Numbers 21:5-9

They spoke against God and against Moses, and said, “Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? There is no bread! There is no water! And we detest this miserable food!”

Then the LORD sent venomous snakes among them; they bit the people and many Israelites died. The people came to Moses and said, “We sinned when we spoke against the LORD and against you. Pray that the LORD will take the snakes away from us.” So Moses prayed for the people.

The LORD said to Moses, “Make a snake and put it up on a pole; anyone who is bitten can look at it and live.” So Moses made a bronze snake and put it up on a pole. Then when anyone was bitten by a snake and looked at the bronze snake, they lived.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

“Are we really having *this* for supper?”

And just like that. BOOM. Snakes. Cobras, rattle snakes, the dreaded Black Mamba—crawling under the tables, slithering up the chair legs... what a nightmare!

And all because... they didn't like the food?!

Well, there's a bit more going on in today's Bible story. The Israelites weren't just complaining about the food—they were openly saying that God messed up, God made a mistake, and God was being *unfair*.

That was their attitude. That's what they were saying: “God, you aren't fair. You are wrong. You are not worth our worship.”

But that's where everything changed. God didn't destroy them. God didn't send more and more snakes, until everyone died.

God said, “Make a snake, and put it on a pole.” Whoever looked at it in faith was healed.

Do you see the connection?

God rescued his people from death—by attaching his promise of life to death.

God brought life to his people by giving an image of death. When God promised life, he gave life through an image of death—the snake.

When God promised life to you, he gave life through the image of death—Christ on the cross, lifted up for you.

The questions below are to help families discuss this devotion. The questions are divided by age group as suggestions, but anyone could reflect on any of the questions as they desire.

Questions for the Younger Children

- What did God send when the Israelites complained?
- How did God rescue his people?

Questions for Elementary Age Children

- Why did God send the snakes?
- At some point, the snakes had served their purpose. In today's Bible verses, when did the snakes finish their task?

Questions for Middle School and Above

- What's the main lesson we should learn from this account?
- Was God fair in sending the snakes? Why or why not?

Closing Prayer:

My faith looks up to thee, thou Lamb of Calvary, Savior divine!
Now hear me while I pray; take all my guilt away;
O let me from this day be wholly thine! Amen.
(*Christian Worship* 811:1)