



**A Message
From God
To You**

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A MESSAGE FROM GOD TO YOU

The Bible is a most wonderful book. It touches every aspect of life, giving fundamental guidance and indispensable counsel to the human race. It also contains fascinating narratives and historical records, all of which have spiritual significance and vital lessons, for men and women of every generation, in all parts of the world. The incident set out in this booklet will show this to be so; indeed, it could well be as you read it, it will prove to be 'a message from God to you'.

This story revolves around the children of Israel, who were the descendants of the patriarch, Jacob. For several generations they had been in slavery under the pharaohs (kings) of Egypt. In their cruel bondage, these Israelites cried unto the God of heaven. Their cries were heard and in a miraculous manner, with great power, God brought them out of that tragic situation. He gave unto them a firm and definite promise to deliver them from the land

of Egypt and lead them to the land of Canaan, which would be their own country.

To reach this land entailed trekking through barren wilderness territory, known today as the Sinai Peninsula. On this journey they faced numerous problems and difficulties, many of which were of their own making, being the result of disobedience to God, who was ordering all things for them. Their frequent transgressions brought Divine chastisement upon them. This was the case in the incident before us, the details of which are set out in the Old Testament of the Bible, in the Book of Numbers chapter 21, verses 4 to 9.

At this point of their exodus journey they had encountered difficulties and hardships; as a consequence, discouragement had set in, to the point that they blamed God and their Divinely-appointed leader Moses, saying that they would much rather have continued as slaves in Egypt and died there. Almighty God, who was working so

wondrously on their behalf, was displeased with this rebellious and ungrateful conduct and He brought severe punishment upon them. This punishment took the form of a plague of fiery serpents; the whole area becoming literally infested with little snakes which had a fiery, lethal sting. This terrible scourge resulted in great numbers of Israelites dying.

Such punitive action really shook the people, as they realized the hand of God was against them and therefore this was a very serious matter. In a very agitated state of mind they approached Moses, saying, “*We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord and against thee; pray unto the Lord, that He take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed unto the Lord* ” (Numbers 21:7). Two very important points must be registered here. Firstly, the people recognized and confessed that they had sinned; and secondly, they acknowledged God and turned to Him for help.

Following the prayer of Moses, the narrative continues, *“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 ”* (Numbers 21:8-9).

In this Old Testament happening, wonderful spiritual truth is set forth. It is a most graphic picture of the gospel, depicting the good news of God’s salvation for dying sinners. It is important to note that this is the very incident to which Christ Jesus referred when He was approached by a Jewish leader concerning spiritual matters, fifteen hundred years later. This record is found in the New Testament of the Bible, in the Gospel of John, chapter 3, verses 1 to 21. Today, three and a half millennia later, the account of the fiery serpents in the wilderness is as spiritually applicable as it ever

was; nor will it ever change, or cease to be relevant to any human being.

Those serpents were described as ‘fiery’; this word conveys the thought of being extremely active, eager, untamed and relentless. The people could not escape them; go where they would, they could not evade the wretched creatures and, once bitten, they died, for the sting was fatal. This is vividly descriptive of Satan and of sin. In the Garden of Eden at the very beginning of creation, that old serpent the Devil, ‘bit’ our first parents. Adam, the father of the human race, had the deadly venom of sin injected into his veins, and from him that deadly poison has been passed to us all. “*As by one man (Adam) sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned*” (Romans 5:12). The wrath of God abideth upon every man, woman, boy and girl, because all are born in sin. Throughout the Bible there are records of men who realized this; “*Behold, I am vile*”, Job said (Job 40:4); “*Woe is me for I am undone*”

cried Isaiah (Isaiah 6:5); “*O wretched man that I am*” said the apostle Paul (Romans 7:24). In our natural state we are all doomed. Death, not just physical but eternal, looms ahead and there is no escaping the wrath to come. Just as the Israelites could not remedy their condition when bitten, neither can the sinner.

However, the Israelites came to Moses. They acknowledged their sin and cried to God for mercy. This poses a question to all who read this booklet. Have you acknowledged your sin, dear reader? Are you burdened before God over this issue? Are you under such conviction that you know that you are subject to the sure and certain sentence of death on account of your sin? If this is so, it is a sure sign that God is at work in your life; you should therefore be gravely exercised over the matter.

As soon as the Israelites realised their sin and showed concern, God gave commandment to Moses to make a serpent of brass and put it on a

pole. In Scripture, brass speaks of judgment. This brazen serpent, signifying judgment, was to be uplifted in Israel's midst and every bitten Israelite who looked upon that serpent lived; the deadly venom was cured. The spiritual meaning and application of this is fully explained in the Gospel of John, previously mentioned: "*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*" (John 3:14,15). The One referred to in these verses as "*the Son of Man*" is the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God. He came to earth from heaven, born as a babe in Bethlehem, lived as a man in Judea and, as a man, died at a place outside Jerusalem called Calvary.

Strange as it may appear that a serpent upon a pole should have been God's remedy for dying Israelites, equally strange does it appear that the Lord Jesus Christ, being lifted up in crucifixion on a Roman cross, should give salvation to sinners. In the

physical realm there is a theory that ‘like cures like’; in the spiritual sense, there is some truth in this also.

Augustine, who was a noted Christian of the early centuries A.D. said, “The serpent was lifted up, that the bite of serpents might not avail; Death was lifted up that death might not triumph”. In this last clause, Augustine was referring to the death of Jesus Christ. In His death we see death being conquered, and by virtue of His death, every repentant and believing sinner lives, and lives forever. In the death of the Saviour, Jesus Christ, we see the great principle of salvation. The curse of sin brought upon the human race by the serpent in Eden, was put upon Christ, that all spiritually dying people who look to, and believe in Him, should live. He was uplifted on a cross, being made a curse for us (cf Galatians 3:13). There, the sinner’s guilt was imputed (charged) to Him; there He took the sinner’s place in death and judgment, as portrayed by the serpent of brass.

There is further spiritual truth to be learned from this Old Testament incident. That serpent of brass was to be erected high upon a pole. It was to be clearly visible to all bitten Israelites; but the fact that the serpent of brass was in their midst, of itself did not cure them. Each bitten Israelite must personally look to that brazen serpent. The Scripture in Numbers chapter 21 is very explicit upon this point; “*Everyone that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live*” (v.8); “*When he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived*” (v.9). ‘When he looketh’ – not before! Every bitten Israelite had to look for himself; that serpent on the pole was of no practical value to any who had been bitten in the camp of Israel but did not look for themselves. So was the Lord Jesus Christ lifted up on the cross for sinners (cf John 3:14,15), but it is only those who personally believe in Him, who will not perish and have eternal life.

It was only a look, and the cure was effected; everyone who looked, lived. The simplicity of this

seems incredible, yet this is exactly as the Word of God states it; a fact which is further emphasized by the prophet Isaiah, “*Look unto Me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God and there is none else*” (Isaiah 45:22), or put into slightly different language, yet the same truth: “*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved*” (Acts 16:31).

Whilst salvation is of the Lord and all of His sovereign grace, there has to be the response of the human heart. No bitten, dying Israelite would have been so foolish as to say, ‘I know that in mercy and grace, God has provided a remedy for my fatal trouble, therefore if I am to be healed, I shall be healed’. Those Israelites knew that they must look unto the serpent of brass; they must personally act in response to the provision God had made.

Whoever you may be, reading this booklet now, have you responded to the provision God has made in the gospel? This is the urgent message for you.

There are some people who are fully aware of the ‘sting of sin’ in them; they know that they are dying, doomed sinners. But how, and in what way they can know the salvation of God personally, is a great problem to them. They would love to really be assured of the forgiveness of their sins, to have peace with God and the certainty of eternal life, but despite the clear statements of Almighty God in His Word, they cannot grasp it. This is nothing other than a smokescreen created by that same old serpent, the Devil. Come back to the narrative again; God said to the Israelites, ‘if you look, you will live’. All they had to do was to believe what God had said and act upon it. The scripture then adds that everyone who did look, lived (cf Numbers 21:9).

Is the title of this booklet proving to be an apt word to the reader right now, ‘A Message from God to You’? Then the Lord Jesus says to you, “*Look unto Me and be ye saved*” (Isaiah 45:22). Believe this: that on the cross, He died for sinners; “*Whosoever shall*

call on the name of the Lord, shall be saved” (Acts 2:21). It must be said that there is no merit in the act of looking, the merit is in the Saviour, but the sinner must respond to the call of the gospel. “*Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this Man (Jesus Christ) is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by Him all that believe are justified from all things*” (Acts 13:38). ‘All that believe’, none else.

W. H. Molland (1920 – 2012)

“There is life for a look at the crucified One,
There is life at this moment for thee;
Then look sinner, look unto Him and be saved,
Unto Him who was nailed to the tree.

Then take with rejoicing from Jesus at once
The life everlasting He gives;
And know with assurance thou never canst die,
Since Jesus, thy righteousness lives.”

A. M. Hull (*ca.* 1825 – 1884)

