



LESSON,—SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 8, 1907.

The Brazen Serpent

Num. xxi., 1-9. Memory verse, 9. Read Numbers xx., xxi.

Golden Text.

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 iii., 14-15.

Home Readings.

- Monday, September 2.—Num. xx., 14-20.
- Tuesday, September 3.—Num. xxi., 1-16.
- Wednesday, September 4.—Num. xxi., 17-25.
- Thursday, September 5.—II. Kings xviii., 1-16.
- Friday, September 6.—John iii., 1-21.
- Saturday, September 7.—John viii., 12-30.
- Sunday, September 8.—John xii., 23-36.

FOR THE JUNIORS.

Did you ever stand on a very high place and have some one say to you, 'Now, don't look down'? You know when we do get up to a great height like that we are apt to get dizzy and forget what a firm, safe place we are standing on by looking down and seeing what an awful distance it would be to fall. You all remember what a great many wonderful things God had done for the Israelites, and how he had brought them safely to the promised land. They did not go in, however, because when they got there they forgot to look up to God, and began to look around at all the dangers there were. That was in last Sunday's lesson, and to-day's lesson, although there are thirty-eight years between, finds the people doing just the very same thing. They had been all these years wandering around somewhere near the place where they had stopped in last Sunday's lesson, and at last God said it was time for them to go on again. It is true there were a great many dangers; there were fierce tribes to pass, great mountains to cross over or go around, sandy deserts to walk over, and many hot dry days to suffer. But God had taken care of them all this time, and they should have trusted him still.

The story itself is short and easy to tell. The golden text ought to make the application rather easy. It is true that with young children it is hard to awaken a real sense of sin, but the love of the Saviour is always very real to them, and they are easily attracted to him through this love.

FOR THE SENIORS.

A short account of the more important events occurring between this and last Sunday's lesson, Korah's rebellion, the budding of Aaron's rod, the death of Miriam, and the sin of Moses at Meribah, would lead naturally into the events of to-day's lesson. The people had been wandering about here and there considering Kadesh Barnea, a sort of centre now for some thirty-eight years. Nearly all of those men who had arrived here at the first had now paid the penalty of their sin; Aaron himself had but lately died; Moses had reached the great age of 119 years, and the military command had already fallen to Joshua. The word came from God for the forward march. There were two ways to enter Canaan, but Edom refused their request to cross his country, and the Canaanite king of Arad, as the revised version more properly gives it, had shown instant hostility at the very sup-

position that they wished to travel in his direction. They were forced to skirt the kingdom of Edom, and in so doing came to the dry and dreary region which again awoke their complainings. Moses was directed by the Lord, however to furnish a way out of their sufferings at the first sign of repentance on the part of the people. The application of the lesson is left in no doubt by the choice of the golden text.

(SELECTIONS FROM TARBELL'S 'GUIDE.')

'As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up.' The uplifting, the healing, are symbolic. The serpent-image fades out of sight. Christ is seen giving Himself in generous love, showing us the way of life when He dies, the Just for the unjust. He is the power of God unto salvation. Israel's past and the grace of God to the stricken tribes are connected by our Lord's words with the redemption provided through His own sacrifice. The divine Healer is there and here; but here in spiritual life, in quickening grace, not in an empirical symbol. Christ on the cross is no mere sign of a higher energy; the very energy is with Him, most potent when He dies.—Robert A. Watson.

Repentance and Faith. Repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ are each an act; as much so as repentance for a wrong done to an earthly friend and trust in his forgiveness. What is repentance? To cease to do evil and to begin to do well; to cease to live to ourselves and to begin to live to God. And what is faith? It is an act of confidence by which we commit ourselves to Another to be saved by Him.—George Park Fisher.

Faith, Genuine, though Feeble. If God made no response except to perfect faith, who could hope for help? But God has regard for beginnings, and His eye perceives greatness in the germ. The hand of the woman in the crowd trembled as it was stretched toward Jesus, and the faith back of it was surreptitiously reverent, trusting in the virtue of the robe, rather than in the One who wore it; yet the genuineness of that faith, feeble though it was, triumphed in God's loving sight. Real trust is real power, though the heart and hand both tremble.—Maltbie D. Babcock.

'Just as the sun photographs itself on the sensitive plate exposed to its light, so Christ is formed in the soul that keeps looking unto Him in love, obedience, and imitation.—D. Sutherland.

BIBLE REFERENCES.

Fiery serpents. 'Hebrews, "the serpents, seraphim" (the burning ones).—Elliott. See Deut. vii., 15; Isa. xiv., 29; xxx., 6. (1) They may have been called 'fiery' because of bright red coloring upon their heads, the glistening of the sun on their scales, and the fiery appearance of their eyes. 'To this day a mottled snake, with fiery red spots upon its head, abounds at certain seasons in the Arabia.' (2) Or more probably the 'fiery' refers to the burning, stinging sensation caused by their bites and the accompanying inflammation. 'So inflammable is its bite that it is likened to fire coming through the veins; so intense its venom, and so rapid its action, that the bite is fatal in a few hours. The body swells with a fiery eruption; the tongue is consumed with thirst; and the poor wretch writhes in agony till death brings relief.'—Biblical Illustrator.

Tristram enumerates thirty-three species of serpents in Palestine. The desert regions abound with them. No one kind may be designated as attacking the Israelites, but any or all of the poisonous kinds, especially two: the cobra, one of the most common and fiercest of poison-bearing snakes, seldom running from an adversary. Its length is about five or six feet.—J. G. Wood. 'In India it is estimated that several thousand people annually die from the bite of the cobra.'—Packard's Zoology.' The other is the horned cerastes, which is 'the only species which habitu-

ally darts without provocation on the passer-by.'

It is exceptionally poisonous, says the 'Biblical Encyclopedia'; 'it frequents the sandy deserts of South Palestine, and hides in the sand or in the hollow caused by a horse's or camel's foot (Gen. xlix., 17). It is an object of great terror to horses, and is thought by some to be the asp of Cleopatra.'

The Fiery Serpents of Sin. No better emblem of the results of sin could have been given to the Israelites, or to us. 'The true, peculiar, pernicious, fiery serpents were their murmuring disposition and complaints against Jehovah.'—Lange. Sin is like a fiery serpent, often beautiful in appearance, and secret in its approach. But the effects are pains that only fire can express. It infects the whole system. It inflames every evil passion. It is incurable by man alone. If permitted to go on, it is death. The world is full to-day of the sorrows, the burning remorse, the agonies of the body and of the spirit which come from the fiery serpents of sin. Compare the old serpent, the devil, the tempter, and destroyer of men.

Deut. xxiii., 21; Heb. xii., 1, 2; John xii., 32; Isa. xlv., 22; Rom. iii., 23; vi., 23.

C. E. Topic.

Sunday, Sept. 8.—Topic—God's omnipresence. Ps. cxxxix., 1-12.

Junior C. E. Topic.

TRIED AND TRUE.

- Monday, Sept. 2.—The golden image. Dan. iii., 1-3.
- Tuesday, Sept. 3.—The king's command. Dan. iii., 4-7.
- Wednesday, Sept. 4.—The men who disobeyed. Dan. iii., 8-12.
- Thursday, Sept. 5.—God's care for His own. Dan. iii., 19-29.
- Friday, Sept. 6.—The angel of the Lord. Ps. xxxiv., 5-8.
- Saturday, Sept. 7.—The Lord gives strength. Ps. xxxi., 1-4.
- Sunday, Sept. 8.—Topic—Lessons from the fiery furnace. Dan. iii., 13-18.

A Suggested Outline Programme for a Teachers' Meeting.

1. Prayer and praise. (Five minutes.)
2. Reports. (Ten minutes.) 1. By the Superintendent: 'What I have done this week to help the school.' 2. By the secretary: The same. 3. By the teachers. (1) What I have done to help myself. (2) What I have done to help my whole class? (3) What I have done to help my scholar.
3. Discussion. (Ten minutes.) 1. Our school's greatest need. 2. How best to meet it. (This resolves the teachers' meeting into a regular 'school board,' to plan the work of the school, and to work the plan.)
4. The lesson. (Thirty-five minutes). Not so much what it teaches, as how to teach its teachings. 1. Lesson text read over by some one person. 2. Lesson story told by some one person who shall state facts, persons, etc., in own language. 3. Ask anybody and everybody what was added, or omitted, by the person who told the story, in his or her own language. 4. Fix dates, persons and places mentioned. 5. What one thought in the lesson will most help the converted members of my class. 6. What one thought will most likely touch the unconverted members of my class? 7. Good stories for illustrations that will help impress these important truths. 8. Closing prayer for help and blessing on the teaching of this lesson.—Texas 'Star.'