

Sabbath School Lessons.

June 7th., 1863.

THE BRAZEN SERPENT,—Numb.
xxi. 4-9.

I.—THE PLAGUE.

Much discouraged. This was the second time they were turned back from the very borders of the promised land. Their disappointment must have been very bitter, as they had now been wandering for thirty-eight years. *They spake against God and Moses.* Notwithstanding of all the goodness they had experienced, all the trials they had undergone, they had not yet learned submission. Nothing but God's Spirit can change the heart. They had just been favoured with a victory over some Canaanites; but this success was soon forgotten. Aaron who was wont to share his brother's burden was now in heaven. They complain of want of bread and water, though they had the manna from heaven, and were probably followed by the water from the rock. *Fiery serpents.* Flying serpents, called fiery from their colour, or from the burning sensation caused by their bite, which was fatal.

II.—THE CURE.

We have sinned. Pain and death convinced them; but like Pharaoh, they dreaded the punishment of sin, but not sin itself. *Moses prayed for the people.* The Lord gave them a cure, but still left the plague among them, to humble them and bring them to repentance. *Serpent of brass.* This serpent was a beautiful and lively image of the Saviour. The cure was devised by God himself, in like manner as he only originated the plan of man's salvation through a Redeemer. As the serpent was lifted up, so was the Saviour lifted up on the cross, *Jno. iii. 14.* Christ is also held up to the gaze of sinners in his preached gospel. Whoever looked at the serpent was healed; there was no distinction of age, rank, or sex. So also the gospel invitation is universal. All are invited to look to Jesus and live. And how expressive is the bodily act of looking of that mental act of faith which unites the sinner to Christ.

Learn 1. Never to murmur against God. How ungrateful and unreasonable do the complaints of the Israelites appear to us, acquainted as we are, with the history of their wanderings! And no less absurd do our murmurings against our heavenly Father, appear to the holy angels, and they shall ultimately do so to ourselves, when the Lord has accomplished all the good pleasure of his goodness concerning us.

2. The sin and danger of backsliding.—

The murmurers obtained not the pleasures for which they repined, and forfeited their present and promised blessings, "much people of Israel died." So it is with those who forsake Christ for the world; they enjoy neither the pleasures of sin nor of holiness.

3. The sinfulness of the natural heart.— The Israelites doubted God's goodness, "wherefore," &c. They forgot past, despised present, and rejected future mercies, preferring the bread and bondage of Egypt. Your heart was, or is, like this.

4. Our need of an Intercessor. Guilty Israel felt that they were unfit to approach God themselves. They entreated Moses to pray for them. We too require a Mediator. Have you an interest in Christ's intercession?

5. How simple the way of salvation! The wounded had but to look and they were healed. And it is simply by looking to Jesus that the sinner is saved, *Isa. xlv. 22.*

June, 14th, 1863.

A BLIND MAN HEALED.

MARK VIII. 22-26.

1—THE BLIND MAN BROUGHT TO CHRIST.

*They bring a blind man unto him—*No anxiety seems to have been manifested by the blind man himself. He did not even pray for himself. His friends, however, evidently believed that Christ had power to restore his sight. O, that believers were equally earnest in laying the case of their friends, who are in spiritual darkness, before the gracious Saviour!

2. HIS SIGHT IS RESTORED.

He took the blind man by the hand.—Never had the poor, blind man so kind a leader.—The means employed were probably in pity for the weakness of the man, to strengthen his faith. *Men as trees*—from this expression, it is probable, that the man was not born blind, but had lost his sight. Mark the similarity between his cure and that of the spiritually blind; both are gradual.

Learn 1. That we should pray for our friends, though they may not pray for themselves. This man did not seem so earnest in his application to Christ as others were. His silence would almost lead us to suppose that he had no great expectation of being cured. But his friends prayed for him and their prayer was granted.

2. The condescension of Christ. "He took the blind man by the hand." Though Lord of all he did not think this work beneath him. In spiritual matters we are all naturally blind. Seek Christ's guidance. Unless he