



LESSON IX.—AUGUST 31.

The Brazen Serpent.

Numbers xxi., 1-9. Commit to memory verses 6-8.

Home Readings.

Monday, Aug. 25.—Num. xxi., 1-9.

Tuesday, Aug. 26.—2 Kings xviii., 1-7.

Wednesday, Aug. 27.—Isa. xlv. 20-25.

Thursday, Aug. 28.—1 Sam. xii., 18-25.

Friday, Aug. 29.—1 Cor. x., 1-12.

Saturday, Aug. 30.—John iii., 5-17.

Sunday, Aug. 31.—John i., 29-36.

Golden Text.

'And 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.

Lesson Text.

(1) And when King Arad the Canaanite, which dwelt in the south, heard tell that Israel came by the way of the spies; then he fought against Israel, and took some of them prisoners. (2) And Israel vowed a vow unto the Lord, and said, if thou wilt indeed deliver this people into my hand, then I will utterly destroy their cities. (3) And the Lord hearkened to the voice of Israel, and delivered up the Canaanites; and they utterly destroyed them and their cities: and he called the name of the place Hormah. (4) And they journeyed from mount Hor by the way of the Red sea, to compass the land of Edom: and the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way. (5) And the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth this light bread. (6) And the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died. (7) Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord, and against thee; pray unto the Lord, that he take away the fiery serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people. (8) 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. (9) 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.

Opening Remarks.

Moses represents the righteousness of God, or the Law trying to subjugate a race of men to God and to make God King, to lead them triumphantly into peace and safe possession of God's blessings. Trial and temptation overcame this people and made the inability of law to save, clear to all who read this history in the light of the Gospel. The righteousness of man without an indwelling Holy Spirit only waits a suitable series of temptations to fail. These temptations may be unfelt while self-interest and parents' prayers shield us, but our Saviour succeeded in giving man righteousness from within and providing an environment of his own loving care and presence which can stand when flesh and heart fail. He that hath the Son hath life. This remarkable lesson in which sin is held up on a standard as a conquered foe, should deeply sink into the heart of each one who hears this story. He bore our sin in his own body on the tree, 1 Pet. ii., 24. He was made a curse for us, 2 Cor. v., 21. There, with his loving heart flowing out to sinful men and

his arms stretched wide upon the cross-bar of his own standard, He took upon him as representative of a rebellious and evil race all the sin and offered himself once for all a sacrifice for the sin of the world. Behold the Lamb of God, John i., 29. The look of faith brings peace, sense of pardon and the indwelling of God's spirit, not by works of righteousness which we had done (as if any work could make us fit to dwell with an absolutely holy, loving and lowly one like Jesus) but according to his mercy, he saved us, and now saves by imparting his own spirit to make his sons fit for glory, Heb. ii., 1-10. When clearer light or times of discouragement, trial or failure make clear to the soul the real tendencies and incapacity of man to be free from pride, selfishness or distrust, the rock of Christ's ability and willingness to save is firm footing. This lesson should lead to definite acts of faith on the part of the class. To look and see their sin conquered and the record against us of its outgoings nailed to the cross (Gal. ii., 14). 'I have overcome,' 'It is finished,' were the words of our Saviour. He tasted death for every man. He died for us that whether we wake or sleep we should live together with him. 1 Thess. v., 10. That is accepted in his presence because he took our sin on himself and us to be his own.

What a pity it would be if any class should miss this glorious truth. Some soul may never have it taught a second time. Be sure to get the truth clear whatever else is passed over in this lesson. Aim to draw a scholar out of the miry clay of self-esteem or self-confidence, and place his feet on the rock of Christ's work and power to forgive and energize them, giving a secondary place to the details of the doubtful geography and points which cannot serve any important interest to those who pass from the class into the maze of human existence.

Thirty-eight years having passed, the actors in this lesson are the children of those to whom God had said that on account of unbelief and disobedience they should die in the wilderness. Six interesting events had occurred since the last lesson left the people at Kadesh Bornea.

(1) The revolt of Korah, who perished with Dathan and Abiram. (Chap. xvi.) (2) The budding of Aaron's rod. (Chap. xvii.) (3) The death of Miriam. (4) The striking of the rock by Moses, when provoked, which prevented his going into the promised land. Even Moses was guilty of sin, spiritual rashness has awful results. Moses may have been in the mind of the Apostle James, when he said, 'Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, is guilty of all' (Jas. ii., 10.) A ring is spoiled by one break. A chain is no stronger than its weakest point. The treasures of God, the promised land, the Kingdom of Heaven can be obtained by trust in Jesus, who came not to destroy but to fulfil the law. He is the Way. 'Speak to the Rock,' seems to show that the Rock once smitten to give the water to God's people now would just need to be trustfully asked. Jesus, once smitten, now can be trustfully asked for living water. Moses represents works. Joshua represents victory by faith. Joshua succeeds where Moses fails. The law reveals sin and failure and so leads us to Christ as a Saviour. (Rom. iv., 5.) In the repulse at Kadesh from the Edomites who refused to let them cross their land, God was chastening Israel and teaching humility, obedience and faith, but Edom 'helped forward the affliction' for which they were punished by God. No person should assist God to punish his people by being unkind to them. (6) The death of Aaron, who was buried at Mount Hor and mourned for thirty days, preceded the defeat. Arad took some of them captives. (Num. xxi., 1.) This caused a general turning to God. It is better not to vow than to vow and not pay. Only God can enable any one to fulfil a vow. God will forgive and bless us for his own name's sake, but in a case of disobedience no answer to prayer can be expected until a right purpose to please God is in the heart. If I regard iniquity in my heart the Lord will not hear me. (Ps. lxvi., 18.) The discouragement in verse 4 was the cause of sin. The spirit of God is a spirit of trust, hope and patience. To prevent at-

tacks of discouragement, unbelief, fear and resulting disobedience the Christian must be renewed every day by waiting before God to receive his own spirit. God has not given us the spirit of fear, but the spirit of Love and power and of a sound mind. Uphold me with thy free spirit. Faith is a sense of reality in things hoped for when founded upon the nature and promises of God who can not lie.

They spoke against God, and against Moses, very foolish, rash words. The manna which sustained them so wonderfully for forty years and the greatest wonder of God's grace in delivering from slavery they despised.

God teaches the appearance of spiritual evils to his people through things which will affect them more. When many were dying, Moses in verse 7 is asked to intercede, and the people confess their sin. Moses now sees it is time to pray for deliverance. A contrite heart will always have the Saviour's intercession and love. The serpent upon the pole, or standard, required faith to be efficacious. Those that looked were the ones who were healed. Individual faith for individual sinners will be needed to give that look to the cross which brings peace to a sinner. All men have not faith. It is the gift of God. A mottled red snake with fiery red spots upon its head, abounds in this desert. So inflammable is its bite that it is likened to fire coursing through the veins. Those bitten would suffer with unquenchable thirst. God had wonderfully preserved them from these serpents, but, as a chastisement to save them from the more terrible death of sin, he now permitted the serpents to come. All who trusted God enough to look at the brazen serpent were healed.

A missionary from India said that the children were sometimes bitten by scorpions in the place where they played, but they would gather round the sufferer and ask the Lord Jesus to heal her. The teachers supposed these bites were not bad until one of themselves was bitten, when the healing of the children through prayers seemed very wonderful, because the teacher suffered terrible illness and pain, until she thought of calling in these small disciples to pray that she might be healed.

C. E. Topic.

Sunday, Aug. 31.—Topic—Communion and transformation. Ex. xxxiv., 29-35; Luke ix., 28, 29.

Junior C. E. Topic.

Monday, Aug. 25.—Foolish speech. Job xxxviii., 2.

Tuesday, Aug. 26.—Bitter speech. Ps. cxi., 3.

Wednesday, Aug. 27.—Bold speech. Prov. iv., 24.

Thursday, Aug. 28.—Gentle speech. Prov. xv., 1.

Friday, Aug. 29.—Slandering speech. Prov. xxvi., 20.

Saturday, Aug. 30.—Impure speech. Eph. v., 4.

Sunday, Aug. 31.—Topic—Taming the tongue. Jas. iii., 2-13.

**The Cigarette Boy.**

(By Ida B. Cole, in 'Presbyterian Banner'.)

The well-known humorist, Robert Burdette, says 'the boy who smokes cigarettes is like a cipher with the rim knocked off.' Many other people share this opinion. The educators do not put a high value on the cigarette boy. Dr. David Starr Jordan makes the statement: 'The boy who begins cigarette smoking before he is fifteen never enters the life of the world. When other boys are taking hold of the world's work he is concerned with the sexton and the undertaker.' The government of the United States has prohibited cigarette smoking at West Point and Annapolis on sanitary and moral