

# The Christian Arsenal

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## NUMBERS 20:14-21:35

The wanderings of the children of Israel are winding down. They don't have a lot farther to go before God brings them into the Land of Promise...the land of milk and honey.

Last week we saw how God told Moses and Aaron to speak to the rock and out of it would come water for the people to drink.

But, we saw how Moses and Aaron acted in anger and frustration and struck the rock.

We also saw that the rock represented the Lord Jesus Christ and God was not pleased with the fact that they had marred the type or picture of His precious Son. We saw that God told Moses and Aaron that because they had not believed Him and because they had not treated Him as holy in the sight of the people, then He would not allow them to enter the Promised Land.

***In today's lesson, we see Moses still in his leadership position, even though he knows that he will be able to go with the people to a certain point and no farther.***

Well, Moses decided he would seek to enter the land of Canaan from the North. This meant he would need to go through Edom. So, Moses sent messengers to the king of Edom requesting permission to pass through their land.

Verses 14-17...

Notice "your brother Israel"...**v. 14** and "our fathers"...**v.15** – two times!

Why? Well, the Israelites and the Edomites were kinfolks.

Esau was the father of the Edomites and Jacob was the father of the Israelites.

We all know what Jacob did to Esau...how he connived and got Esau's birthright and then how he deceived his own father and stole Esau's blessing. All that happened some 400+ years before, but the Edomites still carried a grudge against the Israelites.

***Moses had requested permission to pass through their land.***

Moses had promised they would not pass through their fields or their vineyards.

Moses had promised they would not drink any water from their wells and on down in **verse 19**, he said that if they did he would pay them for it.

Moses had promised they would stay on the king's highway.

Moses asked twice and twice the answer came back "NO!" And not only did they say "no" but **verse 20** says the Edomites came against Moses with a heavy force.

Verse 21...

Now, God could have allowed the Israelites to wipe out the Edomites, couldn't He? But, He didn't do this. In fact, later in the Book of Deuteronomy He tells the Israelites not to hate the Edomites because they are their brothers.

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However, years later the Edomites were still holding a grudge against the children of God. Years later when Jerusalem was attacked, **the Edomites assisted the enemy of God's children; they encouraged Babylon to destroy Jerusalem and even stopped the Jewish refugees from escaping.**

**God had told Moses not to hate the Edomites because God Himself would judge them!! God said in the book of Obadiah that Edom would be ransacked and destroyed because they had done violence to their brother Jacob! "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," saith the Lord.**

**Go home and read the book of Obadiah this afternoon, it's only one chapter long...and see how God took vengeance upon the Edomites.**

**Way back in Genesis when God made His covenant with Abraham God said... "I will bless those who bless you and I will curse those who curse you."**

**Beloved, God keeps His promises...God keeps His covenants!!**

**And this covenant did not end back in the Old Testament, nor in the New Testament. Think of any country that has oppressed Israel and you'll think of a country that God has judged...**

**Think of Rome...the Roman Empire was once vast and mighty, and the Roman Empire doesn't exist anymore!**

**Think of the Assyrians...they've been judged by God.**

**Think of the Babylonians...they've been judged by God.**

**And we could keep on naming... Egypt was once a powerful nation...the Midianites, the Amalekites, the Amorites, the Hittites, the Philistines and the Canaanites... these folks aren't even on the map!**

**Think of Germany, a once strong nation that conquered much of Europe during World War 2...but defeated by the allies and divided up by the allies at the end of the war. Even though the Berlin Wall is down...if you have paid attention to the news this week, you have seen that Germany is still a divided country in many respects.**

**Think of the Arab countries of today. These countries that surround Israel and would like nothing better than to drive Israel into the Mediterranean Sea...some of them may be wealthy in oil...but all of them live in darkness...they follow a dark and violent religion and they quarrel and fight among themselves and when they do unite enough to mount an attack against Israel, God's hand of protection and victory is on Israel.**

**Think of England. Remember the saying... "the sun never sets on the British Empire." This was because the British Empire was so vast and wide and reached around the globe...but that's not so anymore!**

**England forcibly kept European Jewish refugees from the harbors in Israel at the end of World War 2. They wouldn't allow these poor people, most of whom had just been released from concentration camps, entry nor would they allow them water or food or medical supplies.**

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Dr. John Phillips, the British preacher I love to read and hear and quote says this...  
"It took the Lord about 10 years to do it,  
but now England is a bankrupt island off the  
coast of Europe."

(By the way, Dr. Phillips was in the Royal Navy and was stationed in Haifeh during this time.)

See, God won't allow nations to be blessed if they don't bless Israel!

Psalm 122:6:

"Pray for the peace of Jerusalem, for they shall prosper that love thee."

We should pray for our country's leaders...we should pray for our Secretary of State...we should pray for this administration and the next administration.

I truly believe that God has favored America for three main reasons:

- 1) America was founded by Godly men on Godly principles.
- 2) America has channeled more dollars and missionaries all over the world for the cause of Christ than any other nation.
- 3) America has been a friend to Israel!

And we don't need any president or secretary of state to run around encouraging and arranging for Israel to give back any land to anybody, anytime!!

Well, let's look at a very sad several verses:  
Verses 22-29...

When you think of Aaron, you can't help but feel sorry that this dear man of God didn't live to see the Promised Land.

He knew 40 years of living in the wilderness, but he never knew what it was to enjoy the fruits of the Promised Land, did he?

Aaron's life is so typical of so many Christians...They're saved, and they're going to spend eternity in heaven, but because of unbelief and disobedience and a failure to allow the Lord Jesus Christ to have complete control of their lives, they never see victory. Because they walk in unbelief and disobedience, many Christians rob themselves of the sweet fruits of salvation and the peace of the Holy Spirit and the life of victory that God wants for us in Christ Jesus!

We also see in these verses that Moses took Aaron's high priestly garments and placed them on Aaron's son, Eleazar.

The last time we went to the Holy Land, we went to Petra. We had never been to Petra before and our guide took some of our group on a high hill and we were able to see from there the area where Aaron's garments were placed on Eleazar and where Aaron died.

Verse 29...

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This must have been a sad time for the people. Ever since the Law was given some 40 years before, Aaron was the only high priest these folks had ever known. Can't you imagine that they would come to Aaron bringing their sacrifices, and they would say to Aaron... "Oh, Aaron, I've sinned...do you think my sacrifice is good enough...do you believe God will forgive me?"

And now, they have a new high priest. Eleazar doesn't know them as well as Aaron knew them and they don't know Eleazar as well as they knew Aaron.

You know, I was talking with a Catholic lady this week and she was telling me that she went to a Catholic school growing up and the kids knew to which priest they would rather confess their sins and to which they would rather not. They knew which ones would be hard on them and which ones would "softies." (It's really hard to witness to a Catholic!)

Aren't you glad we have a High Priest who is the same yesterday, today and forever! Our Lord Jesus Christ is not high priest after the order of Aaron. Our High Priest is after the order of Melchizedek. He has neither beginning of days nor end of life! He'll never die!

He did die once, but He lives forever at the right hand of God and He ever lives to intercede for you and me! He will always be there for us! We can always depend on Him! He knows us all individually, and we can all know Him intimately! Thank God for our great High Priest!

Chapter 21:1-4 tell us of a battle. The Canaanites heard the Israelites were coming and they went out to do battle with them. But the Israelites called upon God and God gave them victory, a victory they soon forget...

Before we get into the next passage, let's just understand where these folks are again... They are almost at the end of their 40 years in the wilderness. They've been denied access through Edom and so they're having to go around Edom.

The way is hard. If you've ever been over to Jordan and Israel, you know what rugged land it is. It's rocky and dry and mountainous and rugged.

These people were tired and discouraged. They've forgotten the victories God has given them and they are focusing on their hardships. So, they do what many of us do when life is hard...they whined and murmured and complained.

In the next passage of Scripture, we'll see the sin of the people, the punishment of the people, and the deliverance of the people.

1) The Sin of the People

Verses 4-5...

The people accuse Moses of bringing them to a place where there is no water...but we know this is not true...for 40 years God has provided the water they have needed, hasn't He? They also say there is no food. But that's not exactly what they mean...what they mean is "Moses, we hate the food God has given us."

In the midst of all their self pity, they had begun to despise (loathe, NAS) the very provision God had given! For 40

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years God had sent them a bountiful supply of manna each morning. For 40 years they had been fed with the nourishment they needed. The psalmist called manna "angel's food."

The Book of Deuteronomy tells us their feet didn't even swell during their 40 year trek through the wilderness.

I read this week that the foot will swell and beriberi results from a diet deficiency...but they had no diet deficiency. God was supplying all their dietary needs in the form of manna.

So, manna was a wonderfully nutritious food...Manna could be prepared a number of ways...and manna was also a type of the Lord Jesus Christ and the Word of God....but manna was loathed by the children of God!!

So their sin was loathing God's provision for them. Let's look at

## 2) The Punishment of the People

Verses 6-8...

**God sent fiery serpents. Now, we need to understand that the fiery serpents were already in the wilderness...**Deuteronomy 8:15...

See, God had preserved and protected them from these serpents and here...we see His righteous judgment as He sent the serpents to the people to bite and sting them to death.

God is in control!! God who created water can bring it forth from the rock He also created!  
God who created quail can rain quail down in abundance!  
God who made manna can send manna every morning to feed His people...and when all this is not enough...when men and women are not grateful for His wonderful provision, then the God who is in control can send the serpent He created to bite and sting the children He created!

## 3) The Deliverance of the People

Verse 9...

**Here we see confession of sin by the people...**

**Here we see intercession by Moses for the people...**

**Here we see healing provided by God to the people...**

**And what a type...what a picture this healing is!! This points us so plainly to the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus Christ.**

The folks were healed by looking at the bronze serpent that was lifted up on a pole!

I want us to spend a few minutes looking at some similarities between their disease problem and our disease problem...their remedy and our remedy...

## THE SIMILARITY BETWEEN THEIR DISEASE AND OUR DISEASE

These folks had serpents that bit them and caused death and we do too. The serpent that bites us is sin. I want to ask you...how does that old serpent bite you? Is his bite in the area of lust? Or greed? Or covetousness? Or immorality? Unforgiveness? Bitterness? Resentment? Maybe it's not any of these areas...maybe it's in the same area as these

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folks...whining and murmuring and complaining!! **We all have serpents that bite us, don't we? The devil makes sure of that!**

## THE SIMILARITY BETWEEN THEIR REMEDY AND OUR REMEDY

There are a couple of similarities here...

1) God Himself devised and prescribed this remedy...and it was **God who planned and brought forth the remedy for our sin! Calvary began in the heart of God before the foundation of the world!!**

2) That which cured was shaped in the likeness of that which wounded. **What was lifted up on the pole? A serpent! And Jesus who knew no sin was made sin on our behalf that we might become the righteousness of God in Him! The bronze serpent was lifted up on a pole and our dear Lord Jesus was lifted upon a Cross!**

Jesus told Nicodemus in John 3..

**"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; that whosoever believes may in Him have eternal life."**

## THE SIMILARITY BETWEEN THE APPLICATION OF THEIR REMEDY AND OURS

**The serpent on the pole could not heal unless they by faith looked at it! And it is by faith that we look unto Jesus for our salvation! If you're going to look at something or someone, you must be turned toward that something or some, don't you?**

Isaiah 45:22..."Turn to Me, and be saved, all the ends of the Earth..."

**First, these folks had to know they had been bitten and needed healing before they knew they needed to be healed, didn't they? By the same token, we must realize and acknowledge we are sinners and need salvation before we'll ever look to Calvary!**

And, may I say to you that I believe this remains one of the greatest obstacles in witnessing to folks, especially "religious folks"...**It's just really hard for folks to confess that they're sinners.** I have found this to be true in trying to talk with the Catholic friend I mentioned awhile ago.

**See, just the fact that the bronze serpent was put on a pole and lifted up did not automatically bring healing. I mean...if anyone was bitten and they didn't look at the serpent but instead tried some other kind of salve or ointment or remedy and they trusted in these things to heal them...what happened? They perished!!**

**And if sinners reject the finished work of Jesus Christ at Calvary....**

**If they look to the tradition of the church to save them,  
or if they look to their good works to save them,  
or if they look to their denomination to save them,  
or if they look to their mother and daddy's salvation to save them...**

**what will happen? They will perish!!**

**It doesn't matter how many times you've been baptized, how many ceremonies you've been through, how many confessions you've made to the priest, how many aisles you've walked, how many churches you've joined, or who your father and mother happened to be, you're lost if you haven't ever realized that you're a sinner in need of a Savior,**

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and, then looked to the Cross and called upon the blood of the Lord Jesus to cleanse you from all your sin!

**How I pray that not a lady in this room has failed to do just that. We know and it has been brought home to us so vividly this week just how fleeting life and just how quickly death can come to any one of us...**

I've said this before...the horror of my heart is

- 1) that I would teach error...
- 2) that I would teach truth and not live it...
- 3) that I would teach you the way to heaven and you don't go there...

so, my prayer is that there was a time in your own life when you looked at yourself and saw that you were a sinner and you knew you needed to be saved and you looked at the Cross and you saw how much the Lord Jesus Christ loved you and you confessed and repented of your sins and gave your heart to Jesus!!

And you've never done that...what in the world is keeping you from it? Please, please do it today?

Well, we could spend so much more time on this today.

Let me just close with this...I believe God allowed this incident of the bronze serpent to put these folks on notice. See, as we've said before, they're just before entering the Promised Land. All the older generation is gone...and I believe God needed to teach a tremendous truth to the younger generation. I believe God knew that if the younger generation wasn't made aware of their own tendency to distrust Him, they would not be equipped and prepared to take on all the enemies of the Land of Canaan.

Have you ever gone to a mall, looking for a particular store? Have you ever stopped at the directory near the entrance of the mall? I went to a big mall in Dallas in October, when Bill and I visited his mom...

I looked at the directory and I saw the arrow pointing to a spot and underneath the arrow it says, "you are here."

I wondered "how did they know that?" I mean, I didn't tell anyone I was coming to the mall. And then to top it off, I realize someone is really tracking me because I went down to the other end of the mall and there was another directory and another arrow and another "you are here..."

I wondered "how did they know I've walked down to the other end of the mall?"

But, you know it's good to know where you are, isn't it? I believe God wanted these folks to know where they were before they made their entrance into the land of Canaan.

See, God knew where they were...but He wanted them to see where they were...and they were still in the state of distrust and discontentment that their fathers had been in and that's a dangerous state to be in!

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Let me just briefly tell you what the rest of this chapter tells us and we'll be through...the people journeyed on and God continued to provide for them and they were victorious over the Amorites and also the folks of Bashan.

These folks are almost there...but they still have obstacles to face before they get there and one of these obstacles is a king named Balak and a man named Balaam.