

What ever happened the brazen serpent & why? 1
Preached by Dr. Rickey Honea, Th.D.,CH. CHBC 1/20/05
2 Kings 18:1-4 Today's Brazen Serpents

(2 Ki 18:4 KJV) He removed the high places, and brake the images, and cut down the groves, and brake in pieces the brazen serpent that Moses had made: for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it: and he called it Nehushtan.

Out in the desert, thousands of years ago, the Israelites had been wandering looking for their new home. There they were, soon after the death of Aaron, and had just utterly destroyed a bunch of Canaanite cities after a consultation with their God. But life was not easy. And they were not really helping themselves much, either.

After all they had seen, they still doubted God's promises and desire to care for them. (Sounds familiar, eh?). They still grumbled about his provision for them - which was not quite to their taste. God wasn't about to put up with that sort of thing: (Num 21:6 KJV) And the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died.

The Israelites understood, and knew who to turn to, and were provided with a remedy, of sorts: NUMBERS 21:7-9

The way the story is told today often suggests that all was then well, that the remedy was complete. Please notice that the scripture does not, in fact, say that. What it says is that those who looked at the brass serpent lived.

It does not say that those who did look were freed from pain and suffering. Neither does it say that those who didn't, died. And, in passing, notice that the people did not get exactly what they asked for (the removal of the serpents).

The brass serpent mounted on a pole is an archetype of Christ on the cross. This is not only obvious, but explained in

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the New Testament.

(John 3:14 KJV) And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up:

(John 3:15 KJV) That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

The earlier comment about the apparent incompleteness of the remedy equally applies here. Life is offered. Ease and absence of pain are not. Just as the Israelites had much to learn, about themselves as well as God, so do those who turn to Christ.

The symbolism can be expanded with the serpent and its bite representing Satan and the effects of sin. This is entirely in keeping with the work Christ did on the cross.

It is notable that the brass serpent was provided for one purpose, to deal with one ailment. There is no indication that it was used to effect in any subsequent situation.

Likewise Christ's death on the cross as the remedy for sin is a specific solution, targeted at the consequences of sin and effective only for that.

What it teaches in so doing is another matter. But to seek to re-employ the cross of Christ to any other purpose is foolish. Some would seek to use it as a talisman, to ward off evil. Useless. Some would use it as an instrument of self-torture to validate their piety. Worthless. The most insidious use though is probably as a simple idol.

While many would argue that a replica of the cross is a useful tool to help focus the mind in prayer and meditation, the replica so often becomes a replacement for God, and is revered for itself. Kissing a crucifix? Burning candles in front of one?

QUESTION: Are those acts focusing the mind, or are they idolatry? Making an idol of a life-giving instrument was

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3

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wrong then and it is now. Look again at what happened to
the brass serpent: 2 Kings 18: 1-5

III. Give details to why brass was used in the tabernacle – Brazen alter -judgment of God, Brazen Laver- judgment of Man, etc..

Let's Compare Number 21:4-9 with John 3:14-15

I. THE BRAZEN SERPANT WAS NEEDED SO CHRIST WAS NEEDED.

(1 Christ was needed to defeat the Serpent.

(Gen 3:15 KJV) And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

(2 Christ was needed to deliver from the Serpents snare – Adam and Eve were caught in Satan's snare.

II. THE BRAZEN SERPENT WAS ORDAINED BY GOD.

(1 Christ was ordained before the foundations of the World (1 Pet 1:20 KJV) Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you,

(2 Christ was sent by God the Father

III. THE BRAZEN SERPENT WAS PLACED ON A POLE FOR ALL TO SEE.

(1 Christ was placed on a cross for all to see -- as an offering for sin

(2 Christ was placed on a cross for all to see -- to abolish death

(3 Christ was placed on a cross for all to see -- to bring man to God

IV. THE BRAZEN SERPENT WAS LIFTED UP

(1 Chris was lifted up between two thieves

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(2 Christ knew He was to be lifted up. Words spoke by Jesus Christ himself.

(John 3:14 KJV) And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up:

V. THE BRAZEN SERPENT WAS AVAILABLE TO ALL WHO WOULD LOOK AND BELIEVE

(1 Christ is available to young people, adults, Old people, Good people, Bad people etc....

(2 Available to all facing death

VI THE BRAZEN SERPENT HAD TO BE RECEIVED BY FAITH

(1 Christ must be received by faith.

(Acts 2:21 KJV) And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

(Rom 10:13 KJV) For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

VII THE BRAZEN SERPENT BROUGHT THE ONLY CURE

(1 Christ is the ONLY cure for the sting of sin

(2 Christ is the ONLY cure for the sting of death.

(1 Cor 15:56 KJV) The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law.

What are you trusting today?

(2 Ki 18:4 KJV) He removed the high places, and brake the images, and cut down the groves, and brake in pieces the brazen serpent that Moses had made: for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it: and he called it Nehushtan.

INV: In our text a young man does as his father did- good

In 2 Kings 24:8 a young man does as his father did- bad

Fathers – it does matter how you live your life!

Fathers do influence their children's lives.

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5

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The word Nehushtan probably is a play on words in the Hebrew, the word for bronze being very similar. **Nehushtan probably was a serpentine nature god worshiped in connection with the Canaanite cults.** King Jehoiachin's mother was Nehushta (2 Kings 24:8) probably in honor of this foreign deity. See Bronze Serpent.