

Numbers 21:1-9

(1CO 10:9) Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents.

vs. 1-3.

- A. Not only was Israel not allowed to take the shortcut through Edom to the promised land, they then were beset upon by *Arad* (SRN H6166: fugitive, a wild ass).
 - 1. Here was a Canaanite bad enough that he didn't fit among Canaanites.
 - 2. Wayward Christians may be captured by opposition that is not even acceptable among carnal unbelievers. **1CO 5:1.**
 - 3. Satan has many agents, darts and snares: some religious, some carnal, some vile. Let none think that they are immune to the worst temptations. **ROM 7:8; 1CO 10:12.**
- B. However, the wicked are not unique in dishing out trouble. **2TH 1:6.**
- C. Arad's region was renamed *Hormah*, which the marginal rendering reads, "Utter destruction."
 - 1. *Hormah* is the Hebrew *Chormah* (SRN H2767), which means "devoted," as in "dedicated as a complete forfeiture to divine justice." c/w **LEV 27:28-29.**
 - 2. Such must be our attitude towards all sin. **COL 3:5.**
 - 3. Utter destruction is the lot of all wickedness which fights God's Israel on its way to Canaan. **1TH 2:15-16; REV 20:9.**

vs. 4-9.

- A. Israel here again murmured about the provision of God. c/w **PSA 78:19.**
 - 1. Mind that they would not have been in this place if they had earlier entered Canaan by faith rather than yield to fear and family concerns and so murmured. **NUM 14:2-3.**
 - 2. Such bad choices often put saints in places that faith would have saved them from, and Satan advances many of his agendas on the platform, "But what about the children...?"
- B. This event is of particular importance because of texts like **JUDE 1:5; 1CO 10:9; 11:30.**
 - 1. They say "...there is no bread..." and yet concede that they have "...light bread..." in the same sentence (v. 5).
 - a. Heretics are condemned of themselves. **TIT 3:11.**
 - b. For self-opposers, ministers must muster up much meekness. **2TI 2:24-26.**
 - 2. Their provocation was in their dissatisfaction with what God had provided for their need.
 - a. What they called "light bread" was angels' food. **PSA 78:25.**
 - b. What God supplies for angels should be good enough for saints. **1PE 1:12.**
 - c. The working out of our own salvation on the way to Canaan is less hurtful and more successful without murmurings. **PHIL 2:12-15.**
- C. They had walked safely through serpent-infested land until now, but God in judgment let the serpents have their way. **DEU 8:15.**
 - 1. The adversary is known as a serpent. **REV 12:9.**
 - 2. God may deem it just to let the serpent have his way with disobedient saints. **2TH 2:10-12; 1CO 5:5.**
 - 3. Modern-day "snake-handling faith" would have done no more for them than it does for modern-day snake-handlers. We don't even see where Moses exercised his once-given power to turn snakes into rods (**EXO 4:1-4**), a power which had served its purpose and ended.
- D. v. 7 opens with the conjunctive adverb, "Therefore..." Why must some people need the rod in order to seek God? **PSA 78:34.**
 - 1. Curious how that church members who are disillusioned with the man of God's leadership

2. Humbled and penitent, the people wisely asked Moses to pray for their healing.
JAM 5:16.
 3. Moses, though the object of their despise, leaves us a good example in praying for them.
MAT 5:44.
 4. We make our appeal for prayers for sinners neither to Moses or Mary, but to Christ Himself. **HEB 7:25; 1TI 2:5.**
- E. God ordered Moses to fashion a serpent on a pole for the people to behold and be saved.
1. Later, Israel made it into an idol (**2KI 18:4**), a testimony to the inherent danger of icons.
 2. Christ drew from this event to speak of His crucifixion and its saving power.
JOH 3:14-15.
 - a. That which cured was shaped in the likeness of that which wounded. So Christ was made sin for us. **ROM 8:3; 2CO 5:21.**
 - b. The word *pole* in **vs. 8-9** is the Hebrew *nec* (SRN H5251), which among other things means “flagstaff or ensign.” Christ crucified stands for an “...ensign of the people...” (**ISA 11:10**).
 - c. Note the significance of the lifted serpent: In the lifting up of Christ for our sin, it was really the serpent that was dealt the crushing blow. **HEB 2:14; 1CO 2:8.**
 3. Mark that the lifting up of the serpent had no benefit for those who had already died.
 4. Only someone who was alive, though wounded, could derive salvation from looking upon the serpent. So too with Christ. **1CO 1:18.**
 5. Eternal life is not acquired by believing on Christ crucified. Such an error is the making of the sinner’s faith into an idol and a sacrament.
 - a. Rather, Christ crucified is the reason that believers have eternal life.
JOH 3:16; 5:24.
 - b. Those who are called see the power of God unto salvation in Christ crucified.
1CO 1:23-24.
 6. Saints should ever look unto Christ for salvation. **ISA 45:22; HEB 12:2.**
 7. Salvation from the power and sting of sin in our life, as with Israel of old, comes not from looking upon our own strength and righteousness, nor by fixating upon our wound. It comes from looking unto Christ.