

## Lifted Up

Joe Slater

By itself, the account of the bronze serpent in Numbers 21 demonstrates the sinfulness of people, the judgment of God, and the mercy of God. But the record takes on additional significance when we see that the bronze serpent foreshadowed the lifting up of Jesus on the cross. Jesus said, *“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life”* (John 3:14-15).

The Israelites in Numbers 21 complained bitterly against God and His servant, Moses. The Lord had delivered them from slavery in Egypt, had saved them at the Red Sea, had given them His Law, and was providing food daily. To be sure, Israel experienced hardships along the way; nevertheless, their unbelief was all too typical. *“So the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and many of the people of Israel died”* (v. 6).

Exact justice would have let all the Israelites bitten by the serpents die. God was under no obligation to aid them. But He did! At His command, Moses made a bronze serpent on a pole. When the afflicted people looked upon it, God mercifully healed them. The mere presence of the bronze serpent brought no cure. Only when the people trusted and obeyed the Lord by looking upon it were their lives spared.

Strict justice would let all of us die in our sins and be lost eternally. But, in His mercy, God sent Jesus to die on the cross at Calvary to atone for our sins. As Moses lifted up the bronze serpent, so Jesus was lifted up on the cross. But the mere fact of His sacrificial death does not save us. We, like Israel, must trust and obey.

## Looking For Loopholes

W.C. Fields (1880-1946) was one of the most popular entertainers of the Vaudeville era. While Fields could make audiences roar with laughter, he certainly was not a Christian and made no pretense of his disdain for the Bible. Thus, it came as a great shock when one of Fields' friends, visiting him in the hospital near the end of his life, found him reading the Bible. When the friend asked what he was doing, Fields, ever the comedian, replied: “Just looking for loopholes!”

Friends, one day we will all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. *“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad”* (2 Corinthians 5:10). On that great day, we will be judged by the word of God. Jesus Christ said, *“He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him – the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day”* (John 12:48).

God's law, unlike man's has no loopholes. No lawyer will be able to fool the Judge of all men, or be able to negotiate a plea bargain. Hebrews 9:27 reminds us, *“. . . It is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment . . .”*

If Judgment Day were today, where would you dwell eternally – in Heaven, or Hell?

--Travis L. Quetermous (Thayer, MO)

*If you need an excuse, ask your preacher – he has heard hundreds of them!*

## Instrumental Music: Too Late

Many religious scholars believe that mechanical instruments of music were first introduced into the public worship of the church in 510 A.D. Others contend that Pope Vitalian introduced them in 660. Still others considered expert in the field point to 951, 1250, or even 1290 as possible dates.

But what does it matter when instruments were first introduced. If they were brought in after the days of the New Testament, and thus without sanction, authority, or even consideration from inspired penmen, they came to late and with no justification.

The early church was taught and encouraged to sing (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16); not a word of New Testament Scripture authorizes any other form of music in Christian worship.

We should have little interest in what worshipers were or were not doing in the sixth, seventh, tenth, or thirteenth centuries. But we should care, and we can be certain, what faithful brethren were doing in the days of the apostles.

New Testament Christians were heeding the words of heaven, words which still read today as they have read for centuries: “Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord” (Ephesians 5:19).

The early Christians simply sang, as should we!

Dalton Key (Tulsa, OK) via *Voice of Truth International*

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You will never have joy if your joy depends on what others think of you. Let your joy come from God who thinks of you.

--Bill Boyd (via Facebook)