

Elder Vernon Johnson

Numbers

Thirteen

Thirteen Serpents

The plural form of the word, "serpents," appears exactly thirteen times in the scriptures. In the first chapter of the book of Genesis God placed a curse upon the serpent: Gen. 3:14 "And the LORD God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life: 15 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." The serpent in this passage is usually thought of as being Satan, yet the proclamation that he was cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; and upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shall thou eat all the days of thy life, certainly holds to the natural creatures we call serpents.

While, that Old Serpent refers to Satan, serpents are sometimes used to represent sin. Because of the sins of the children of Israel in talking against God, God sent serpents among them: Num. 21:5 "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." The bite of the serpents brought death to the people. Likewise, the wages of sin is death.

The people cried unto Moses and Moses prayed to the Lord: Num. 21:7 "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 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."

The serpent of brass was a symbol of Jesus Christ on the cross: John 3:14 "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: 15 That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal

life." Usually we do not think of the Lord as being symbolized by a serpent. However, the serpent was cursed in the Garden of Eden and because the serpents sent forth in the wilderness were a symbol of sins. The serpent symbolized Jesus as he hang upon the cross having been made to be sin for us: 2 Cor. 5:21, "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

The children of Israel, after they were bitten of a serpent, looked upon the brazen serpent hanging on a pole and realized they were delivered from the poison of the serpent's bite. Likewise, we, having become convicted of our sins, look upon Jesus hanging on the tree of the cross and realize that he has delivered us from the condemnation of sin and as a result of his deliverance we have eternal life.