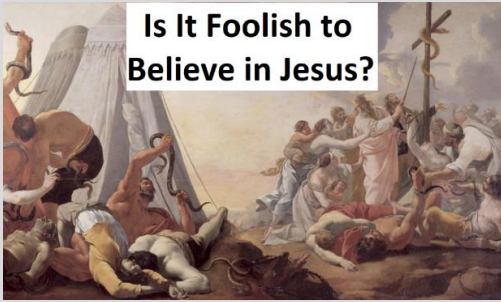


Text: Numbers 21:4-9 NAU (New American Standard, 1995 Version)



**Is It Foolish to
Believe in Jesus?**

Saturday, 3/13 at 4:00 & Sunday, 3/14 at 9:00

Fourth Sunday in Lent – 2021

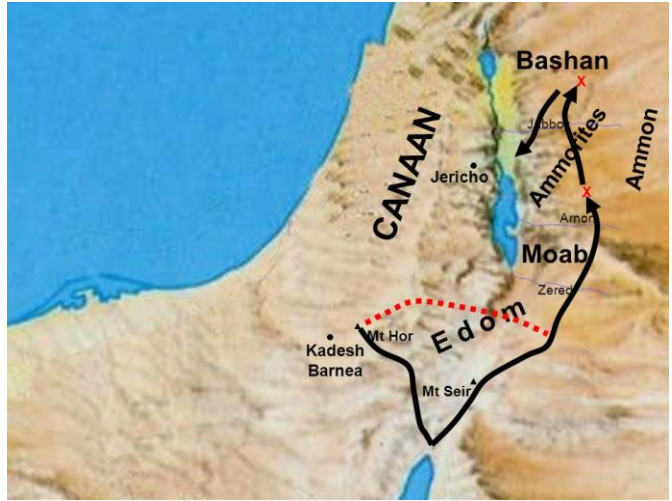
Lenten Wednesdays: Service at 11 & 7

Introduction: Dear friends in Christ: The OT Scriptures are filled with life lessons for us. These are some of the events that precede today's OT reading:

- ➔ The descendants of Israel left the wilderness of Sinai – *heading for the Promised Land.*
- ➔ The people complained about not having meat to eat, *so the LORD sent them quail.*
- ➔ Miriam and Aaron, the sister and brother of Moses, *opposed the God-ordained leadership of Moses.*
- ➔ Most of the spies sent into Canaan gave a bad report – *because they did not trust the LORD and were afraid.*
- ➔ The LORD decreed that all the men would die in the wilderness – *because they sided with the unbelievers.*
- ➔ Korah, Dathan, and Abiram rebelled against Moses – *so the LORD opened the earth and swallowed them alive.*
- ➔ Even Moses disobeyed the LORD in front of the people – *and was not permitted to enter the Promised Land.*
- ➔ Edom, the descendants of Esau, the brother of Jacob – *said their relatives could not pass through their land.*

Let us discover what the people did; *then what God did!*

1. **The People Complained:** ⁴ Then they set out from Mount Hor by the way of the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom; and the people became impatient because of the journey. ⁵ The people spoke against God and Moses, “Why have you brought



us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we loathe this miserable food [manna].” // See the map; the red dotted line indicates the preferred route. However, since Edom would not permit the Israelites to cross their land, they had to follow the black solid line which is much longer. Even though the LORD had already worked mighty miracles in their presence through the 10 plagues, the parting the Red Sea, bringing water from a rock, and giving them manna and quail to eat, *they still complained!*

a. Do we complain sometimes? “Yes!” We have sinned in many and various ways; we have earned and deserved death (Rom. 6:23), yet we are still alive, loved by God, and saved through Jesus! Let us understand that **complaining does not fit into the proper life of a child of God**. The Bible says, “Do all things without grumbling or disputing [complaining or questioning]; ¹⁵ that you may prove yourselves to be blameless and

innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world” (Phil. 2:14 NAS). Sure, everybody else complains, **but we should not!**

b. What should we do in every circumstance? Be **content**, be **satisfied**; God knows our needs and is providing our needs. The Bible says, “**Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus**” (1 Thess. 5:16-18 NAS). If God wills for us to suffer **or** our lives to be difficult, *we may struggle and wonder why*. Yet God is calling us to **trust Him and look forward to the joys of heaven!**

2. **The LORD Sent Poisonous Snakes:** **⁶ The LORD sent fiery serpents among the people and they bit the people, so that many people of Israel died.** // When people grumble against God, *they are pushing Him away*. Think about a loving father: he disciplines his child *to turn him from his sins*. What about God to us? He **shows us our sins and draws us back to Him**. The “**fiery serpents**” were very unpleasant, *yet highly effective!*

3. **The People Were Sorry:** **⁷ So the people came to Moses and said, “We have sinned, because we have spoken against the LORD and you; intercede with the LORD, that He may remove the serpents from us.” And Moses interceded for the people.** // That must have been difficult for the people to ask for help; think about this: they had just spoken against the LORD and Moses, *yet their only hope was to ask Moses to talk to the LORD on their behalf*. What happened? Moses, *being a humble man of God*, “**interceded for the people.**” Whenever we sin, *let us admit it and seek God’s forgiveness!*

4. **An Apparently Foolish Solution:** ⁸ Then the LORD said to Moses, “**Make a fiery serpent** [something similar to what I sent to bite the people], **and set it on a standard** [something higher than the people]; **and it shall come about, that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, he will live.**” // The LORD’s command to Moses is easy to understand, but doesn’t it seem foolish? Nevertheless, *Moses did not question the LORD.* Let us also *take Him at His word!*
5. **Believers Believe God – Even When It Seems Foolish:** ⁹ **And Moses made a bronze serpent and set it on the standard; and it came about, that if a serpent bit any man, when he looked to the bronze serpent, he lived.** // Imagine you had been bitten and were dying; then Moses said, “You don’t have to die, *just look with faith at this fake snake and you will live!*” That sounds so foolish, **nevertheless**, *for those who looked with faith, they lived!*

Conclusion:

- **Truth** – God is NOT happy with complainers!
- **Relevance** – As a loving father disciplines his son, *so our heavenly Father disciplines us when we complain!*
- **Inspiration** – As those who looked at the serpent with sorrow and faith **lived**, *so those who look at Jesus as their Savior with sorrow and faith **will live forever** (John 3:14-15)!*

Let Us Pray: Father in heaven, though we are mocked by the world, by Your grace we believe Jesus is **Your Son** and **our ticket into heaven**. Now, **✦** curb our complaining, **✦** fill us with gratitude, and **✦** make us lights in this dark world!

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