

Beyond the Signs

by Richard E. Bieber

The sermon emphasizes the importance of looking to Jesus alone for salvation and spiritual life, and letting go of our reliance on signs, experiences, and other things that distract us from Him.

Scripture: Numbers 21:6, 2 Kings 18:4, Isaiah 45:22, Luke 17:15, John 3:14

Topics: "Idolatry", "Revival"

Description

Richard E. Bieber preaches on the significance of the bronze serpent in the Bible, emphasizing that God's holiness accompanies His miraculous works, bringing judgment on those who take His love lightly. The bronze serpent, set on a pole by Moses, served as a symbol of healing and forgiveness for the repentant Israelites. However, over time, the people turned it into an idol, seeking healing and solutions from it rather than from God. Hezekiah's act of destroying the bronze serpent led to revival in Jerusalem, highlighting the importance of removing all 'serpents of bronze' in our lives to truly focus on Jesus for healing and salvation.

Transcript

Then the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people, so that many people of Israel died. And the people came to Moses and said, "We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord and against you; pray to the Lord, that he take away the serpents from us." So Moses prayed for the people. And the Lord said to Moses, "Make a fiery serpent, and set it on a pole; and every one who is bitten, when he sees it, shall live." So Moses made a bronze serpent and set it on a pole; and if a serpent bit any man, he would look at the bronze serpent and live.

Numbers 21and you say, "What kind of God is this? Sending fiery serpents to bite the children of Israel!" Whenever the people of God are taken through a time of supernatural deliverance, whenever the love of God breaks forth with miracle after miracle, the holiness of God is there too, and comes down as burning judgment on those who start playing games with His love. If you're going to eat manna from heaven and drink water from the Rock, you'd better understand that you're living in a land where they also have fiery serpents.

If you're in a fellowship where John heals the sick and Peter raises the dead and Barnabas prophesies, it's also a fellowship where Ananias and Sapphira die for lying to the Holy Spirit. So the Israelites murmured against God and against Moses and the fiery serpents came. And after people started dying, the children of Israel repented. "We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord and against you. Pray the Lord

that He take away the serpents from us." Then the Lord instructed Moses to make a serpent and put it on a pole.

And when the people looked at that serpent of bronze on the pole, they were healed. We know that this serpent of bronze on the pole didn't have any power in itself. In fact, the same God who told Moses to make the serpent of bronze had already commanded the people not to make any likeness of anything that is in the heavens above or the earth beneath. Yet, when they looked at this serpent on a pole, they were healed. The serpent on the pole was a sign pointing to something much higher and much holier than a piece of bronze on a stick.

It was a sign pointing the children of Israel to God Himself. The healing power that rushed into their bodies as they fixed their eyes on that bronze serpent actually flowed back through time from an event centuries later when the pole was two crossed beams of wood, and the serpent a man without sin who bore our sins away through his death. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up and whoever believes in Him may have eternal life."

John 3:14-15 The virtue that touched the people as they looked at the serpent came from the same place that gave virtue to the blood of the Pascal Lamb which caused the angel of death to pass over every door that was sprinkled with that blood. These things were signs. And through these signs came; holy, divine, burning, glorious quickening power. But the source of the power was not in the sign. It was God who was speaking through that sign. It's not the sign that's important, but the God who is behind the sign, - blessing His people, - healing, - forgiving their sins, through the sign.

When God moves away from the sign, the sign is nothing. Mt. Sinai was the Holy Mount when God's Spirit was there. When God moved on, it was just another hill. The temple was the House of God when God's Spirit was there. When God withdrew His presence, it was just another museum. That serpent of bronze was a sign of the Christ when the Spirit of Christ was present. When Christ moved on, it was just another worthless relic. So what do we do? We take the sign, wrap it in linen and tuck it away for future use.

"Hey, this bronze serpent will come in handy next time a plague breaks out. We won't have to go through all that repentance. We won't have to humiliate ourselves by confessing our sins. We'll just unwrap the serpent, pull it out, lift it up on the pole, and presto! The plague will be gone." That's exactly what the Israelites did. They preserved that worthless bronze serpent for nearly a thousand years. They preserved it not as a reminder of those blessed days when God led His people like a flock through the wilderness, but as something that had virtue, in itself. - People came to that thing to get healed. - They burned incense to it. - They brought their problems to it. - Worshiped it as if it were a god.

You can hear the testimonies. "I took my child to the serpent and from that day his appetite improved." "I went to the serpent after no doctor in Jerusalem could cure my boils. I haven't had a boil since." What a far cry from the day when that serpent was beheld by penitent sinners as a sign of God's forgiveness. What a sad departure from the time when the people of Israel looked beyond the serpent to the God who walked with them through the wilderness; (in fact, the Messiah whose future death was already ministering life to their sin-sick souls.)

All through the time of the judges down through the reign of king after king, the serpent on a pole remained a rallying point for people who wanted healing, fertility, good luck, and who were too proud or stubborn or lazy to draw near and humble themselves before the true and living God. Until Hezekiah, one of the last and best kings of Judah, finally destroyed that thing - and the day he destroyed it revival broke

out in Jerusalem. In the year of Hoshea son of Elah, king of Israel, Hezekiah the son of Ahaz, king of Judah, began to reign.

He was twenty-five years old when he began to reign, and he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Abi, the daughter of Zechariah. And he did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, according to all that David his father had done. He removed the high places, and broke the pillars and cut down the Asherah. And he broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made, for until those days the people of Israel had burned incense to it; it was called Nehushtan.

He trusted in the Lord, the God of Israel. II Kings 18 Until the end of this age God continues to confirm His word to us with signs. Just as He healed the Israelites in the wilderness so God has reached down and touched each of us with some kind of healing - some kind of life. - Your mind was healed, - or your body, - or that prison of hopelessness broke open, - or that shattered home was brought back together, - or that twist in your life was straightened out. There are those reading this who are at this moment in desperate need of help from God.

You know that no one else can help you. Only God can. God will answer the cry of your heart with a sign of His love today. Where are you hurting? Tell Him. The same Christ who died on that cross to atone for your sins will touch you with His forgiveness. And where Jesus touches you there will be; healing, life, peace, liberty. There will be a sign of His grace that you just can't miss. You will know that Jesus came to you, this day, and laid His hand on your life and healed it.

But, if you let that sign become an end in itself, if you get taken up with the sign instead of the Lord who spoke to you through the sign, if you cling to that spot of ground where it happened, - or to that man or woman through whom it happened, - or to that book, - or that idea that opened the way for it to happen, if you cling to anything other than the Lord Himself, you have taken hold of a serpent of bronze, not God. How many of us are walking around clinging to serpents of bronze!

Clinging to signs that were once windows through which we saw the face of Jesus and heard His voice. But because our hearts went out to the sign instead of to Jesus, His Spirit withdrew and the life went out of that sign and all we have is a dirty old piece of bronze through which Satan the serpent holds us in bondage. Hezekiah knew that if there was ever to be revival in Jerusalem that serpent of bronze and all that it stood for would have to go. So Hezekiah did a housecleaning job in Jerusalem which kings before him were afraid to do.

They were afraid to knock down the sacred poles and idols and altars on hills. It might bring them bad luck - there might be some power in those things. They were especially afraid to tamper with that serpent of bronze, something terrible might happen. But Hezekiah trusted the Lord, the God of Israel, not poles, and altars, and serpents and idols, but God alone, and removed these things. There are many of us who need just that kind of housecleaning job in our lives. If the Spirit of Christ is to have His way in us, these serpents of bronze that we've been carrying around in our hearts will have to go. - These trophies of yesterday's glories, - these relics of last year's blessings, - these doctrines, ideas, people, places, that we cling to for security instead of to Jesus Himself ---have to go.

Get out of your religious rut! Let go of your religious crutches! Stop trying to relive yesterday's religious experiences and trust Jesus today! - Jesus is, not in yesterday's sign. - Jesus is, not in that fragment of last year's miracle you keep carrying around in your pocket. Jesus is speaking to you today, but you won't hear Him until you let go of that bronze serpent. Before the ten lepers were cleansed, their eyes were all

fixed on Jesus. But as soon as the healing came, nine of them took their eyes off Jesus and looked only at their healing.

Instead of allowing the healing to speak to them of the Messiah, they went on clinging to their serpents of bronze. Only one, a Samaritan at that, turned and fell at Jesus' feet giving Him thanks, followed the sign to glory. And that's the message of the Spirit of Christ to us today. "Look unto Me and be ye saved all the ends of the earth. For I am God and there is none else." Isaiah 45:22 "Look not to serpents of bronze, not to signs and wonders, not to feelings and experiences, but to Me as I hang on that Cross, the atonement for your sins.

Trust Me and I will be your life this day." It's not just sinners out there in the world who need Jesus. It's especially saints in the Church who have cluttered their lives with serpents of bronze. - God help us to smash those serpents and look to Jesus alone. - God help us to do some housecleaning today that His glory may return to the Temple.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/richard-e-bieber/beyond-the-signs/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net