

MODERN-DAY FIERY SERPENTS

By David R. Smith

At one point during the 40-year wanderings of the children of Israel in the wilderness, the people spoke against God and Moses, so “the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people” (Numbers 21:6). Many were bitten and died. Repentant of their sins, the people went to Moses. He prayed for them, and the Lord provided a way for the people to be protected. He instructed Moses to make “a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole” (verse 8). Those who had been bitten would live if they simply looked at the brass serpent.

In Alma 33:19–20, Alma said that many looked and lived but many did not believe they would be healed, so they would not look and perished.

Then Alma asked, “If ye could be healed by merely casting about your eyes . . . would ye not behold quickly?” (verse 21).

When I read this story, I would say to myself, “How could the people not do something so simple when their lives depended on it?” I couldn’t understand. All that changed when the Spirit showed me how

similar I was to the Israelites.

One morning, as I thought about the Savior, I recalled the sacrament prayer, which says that we may have His Spirit to be with us if we always remember Him (see D&C 20:79).

It seemed so easy. Then I realized how often I get caught up in my daily life and give little thought to the Savior. I remembered that the brass serpent symbolized Jesus Christ being lifted up on the cross. Suddenly I realized that the “remember Him” in the sacrament prayer could be considered the latter-day version of looking to Him in the story of Moses and the brass serpent.

The Israelites had fiery serpents that could poison them. Today we have modern-day “serpents” that can poison us. Bad music, movies, books, drugs, immorality, pornography, and alcohol are only a few of the things Satan uses to tempt us. Even though these modern-day serpents



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may not seem as dangerous as a venomous snake, they are just as deadly—if not more so. Fiery serpents can kill the temporal body, but sin can destroy our immortal souls.

Jesus Christ, the Son of God the Father, can purge out the poison, sanctify our souls, and lead us to eternal life. With my newfound understanding of the similarities between ancient Israel and my own life, I am trying to lift my thoughts to Jesus Christ, knowing that if I will always remember Him, particularly His sacrifice and Atonement for me, and keep His commandments, I may have His Spirit to be with me. ■

