

It Is Written

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Nehushtan

By Kent Heaton

“Now it came to pass in the third year of Hoshea the son of Elah, king of Israel, that Hezekiah the son of Ahaz, king of Judah, began to reign. He was twenty-five years old when he became king, 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 sight of the Lord, according to all that his father David had done. He removed the high places and broke the sacred pillars, cut down the wooden image and broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made; for until those days the children of Israel burned incense to it, and called it Nehushtan” (2Kings 18:1-4).

Centuries had passed since the tragic day the people spoke against God and against Moses. The people had grown weary and discouraged because things did not seem to be going the way they thought it should. They were dissatisfied with the providential care of God; they wanted better things; they wanted what they wanted; their hearts were filled with anger against God. To punish the people the Lord “sent fiery serpents among the people, they bit the people, and many of the people of Israel died” (Num. 21:6). When the people repented and asked for deliverance God instructed Moses to make a “bronze serpent, and put it on a pole; and so it was, if a serpent had bitten anyone, when he looked at the bronze serpent, he lived” (Num. 21:9).

By the time of Hezekiah the symbol of their deliverance from rebellion became once again a symbol of rebellion as the people burned incense to Nehushtan (“a piece of brass”). We find the brazen serpent had become an object of idolatry. How could something that represented the power of God and His mercy become the object of idolatry? The nature of man is not surprised by these actions of seeking physical satisfaction in worship with even those things that reflect the glory of God. The Lord forbade the use of images for worship because truth came from only one God (Psalm 115:3-8; Isa. 46:5-11; Deut. 4:11-16).

Isaiah defined the nature of God when he writes: “I will not give My glory to another” (Isa. 48:11). Yet the people of God had turned the power of God into their own idol and object of worship. Hezekiah exercised great courage to destroy the ancient artifact rich with history and truth. But it was destroyed because the servants of God had turned the purity of God's word into their own selfish design. The message of the brazen serpent was made to fit the dogmas of man's own wisdom and desire of the day.

The Bible is an ancient book that represents the power and mercy of God. Through its holy pages man is able to see his own rebellion and the only answer to death – Jesus Christ. Yet today man now worships the Bible as a book designed for his own needs. The Bible is worshiped as a book that is defined by one's own interpretation and will. Why are there so many churches and faiths today? One man looks at the Bible one way and another man looks at the Bible his way and a third man looks at the Bible his way and on it goes. I wonder if there is any way for all men to understand the Bible? Could it be the Bible has become Nehushtan? Paul said we can read it and understand it (Eph. 3:1-5). Peter said the Lord has given us everything we need pertaining to life and godliness (2Peter 1:3). If God is not the problem, who is?

“Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.” (Eph. 5:10-11) “...That you may prove what is that good and

acceptable and perfect will of God." (Rom. 12:2).

CAN YOU BE SAVED WITHOUT BAPTISM?

By Terry Wane Benton

Can a person be saved although they have not been baptized? Was this the case of the thief on the cross?

Jesus commanded baptism in His name after He was raised from the dead (Mark 16:15-16).

The thief was like David, pardoned under the terms of the Old Testament (Hebrews 9:15-17). David was not baptized in the name of Jesus simply because it was not commanded in his covenant. Likewise, the thief was pardoned under the same covenant provisions as David (Psalms 32 and 51). That covenant never commanded confession of the risen Jesus (Romans 10:9-10) nor baptism in the name of Jesus. However, we are now under the terms of the New Covenant (Mark 16:15-16). None of the 3000 on Pentecost could be saved on the same terms as David and the thief on the cross.

Peter taught the terms required under the Risen Testator (Acts 2:36-41), and those terms apply to "all nations" (Jew and Gentile) and to every creature (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16).

Can a person be saved without baptism? No! That would be like asking if a person can be saved without being in Christ. We are "baptized into Christ" (Galatians 3:27). There is no record of getting into Christ another way. Faith in Jesus means we believe His terms of pardon and His conditions for entrance into Him. If we do not have faith in Jesus enough to die to sin and unite with Him in baptism (Romans 6:3-6), we do not have faith in the right Jesus as presented to us in Jesus' authoritative covenant.

Pray at the Proper Time

By Andy Sochor

Zechariah prophesied of the future prosperity and deliverance of God's people. Much of this was tied to the coming of Christ (the Messiah). Despite the oppression from outside forces, they could look forward to peace.

Regarding His plan to bless them, God said, "Ask rain from the Lord at the time of the spring rain the Lord who makes the storm clouds; and He will give them showers of rain, vegetation in the field of each man" (Zechariah 10:1). They would enjoy the physical blessings of this life that God was able to provide. However, it is interesting to note when God said they were to offer this prayer - "at the time of the spring rain." This was not about asking for a miracle but recognizing their dependence upon God and His provisions.

We know that God has the power to do more than we can imagine. Paul said He is "able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think" (Ephesians 3:20). Yet, we should not expect God to perform a miracle every time we pray. Instead, we need to trust in God and what He has promised to provide.

So pray at the proper time. Our faith in God should not depend on Him performing the miraculous to satisfy our needs whenever we desire. Instead, we need to be thankful for the blessings He has provided and pray that His kindness to us might continue to manifest.