

GRACE GAZETTE

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Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.

Hebrews 12:12-13

NEHUSHTAN

And he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that David his father did. He removed the high places, and broke the images, and cut down the groves, and broke in pieces the brazen serpent that Moses had made: for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it: and he called it Nehushtan.

II Kings 18:3-4

People who are plainspoken are often said to “call a spade a spade” or to “tell it like it is”. Most people like someone who is plainspoken and tells it like it is as long as “it” is what they think it is. The same people who want those that agree with them to call a spade a spade are often aghast to hear someone describe a spade in terms they never heard of which is contrary to their cherished vision of a spade. When Hezekiah became King of Judah, he began a series of reforms that had to anger the religious crowd of his day.

The scripture says that he removed the high places. Many kings before him had been good rulers but failed to destroy these “high places”. The “high places” appear to originally have been places of pagan worship. In time some of the stigma of them wore off and sadly they became acceptable places (in the sight of men) to worship GOD, even though GOD never approved them as such. Even Solomon was guilty of worshipping in these high places. (see I Kings 3:3). As is usually the case, when something does not originate from the instruction which the LORD gives HIS people, in time they will not simply worship HIM in these abominations but they will ultimately turn from HIM to worship other gods. We see this clearly demonstrated by Solomon, “*For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. And Solomon did evil in the sight of the LORD, and went not fully after the LORD, as did David his father. Then did Solomon build a high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, in the hill that is before Jerusalem, and for Molech, the abomination of the children of Ammon.*” (1Kgs. 11:5-7)

Error and its tentacles weave their way very subtly among the sons of GOD. In the same fashion in which one truth is built upon another over time, so error establishes itself as well among those whose hearts grow cold and in love with the religion of the flesh. (see Isa. 28:10-13). Those religious ideas that men toy with which are from their imaginations and not taught them by the LORD, will ultimately destroy them unless HE is pleased to deliver them from it.

Not only did Hezekiah remove the high places but he destroyed the idols which even some of the true people of GOD had been seduced into worshipping. May our prayer be as William Cowper of old wrote, “The dearest idol I have known whate’er that idol be, help me to tear it from THY throne and worship only THEE.” (#958, Gadsby’s Hymns)

Then we are informed that Hezekiah cut down the groves, (see Jud. 3:7) These groves appear to be those places where the followers of Baal (and his female counterpart, Ashtoreth), gathered to worship in wickedness. Their worship is akin to the preoccupation with sexuality and immorality which have come to describe our society and very sadly many among those who gather with GOD’s people. Probably never before in history has it been harder to see a marked difference in the behavior of those who profess to be followers of

CHRIST and the ungodly. Many who profess to be Christians seem to be just as enamored with the entertainments of the flesh and the lives of ungodly celebrities as the world around them. How can this be? *“And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you. And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.”* (2Cor.6:15-18) We are not friends of this world and it is surely not friends with us.

These reforms that Hezekiah made were quite sweeping and obviously needed among the sons of Judah, but the main thing that Hezekiah did might even be considered sacrilegious to some. Not only did he destroy those idols and places of heathen worship which were obviously not from the LORD, but he destroyed a symbol that the LORD himself had instructed Moses to make. (see Num.21:8,9) In fact Hezekiah showed no reverence for it at all, calling it exactly what it was when he labeled it “nehushtan” which is the Hebrew word meaning “thing of brass”.

Just because the LORD ordains something to be used for a certain purpose in one age or time period does not mean that HE has ordained that it be used forever in that fashion. Neither is something which HE has ordained for one purpose supposed to be turned into an idol by subsequent generations. Many of the children of Israel had been healed of the serpent’s bites in the day in which the LORD instructed Moses to make it as an “ensign” for the people to look to. No doubt there was, in it, a type and foreshadowing of JESUS CHRIST the REDEEMER who saves those that look for HIM (see Heb.9:28) But as time went on men lost sight of the meaning hidden in the creation of the Brass Serpent and turned it into a religious relic. Their eyes were turned away from CHRIST to the brass from which it was made.

Most churches (and denominations) begin with devotion and rejoicing in CHRIST alone. As time goes on the working of the flesh causes men to begin to value the outward forms of their religion and eventually they lose sight that the object of their worship is JESUS CHRIST alone. They begin to take pride in that which they think sets them apart from others and they begin to worship and value the forms and traditions that were perhaps at one time useful to them, turning these forms into idols which ultimately must be destroyed in order that JESUS CHRIST alone might be exalted.

There is nothing wrong with the materials from which this serpent was made, it was simply brass. But as the sons of Judah forgot that fact they *“worshipped and served the creature more than the CREATOR.”* (Rom.1:25) Local churches exist for the purpose of manifesting the glory of CHRIST’s redemption in the earth. (see Eph.3:21) They don’t exist to perpetuate any sort of agenda but HIS glory. They are not avenues whereby one can parade their own ideas before the world or pick and choose the manner, form and degree wherein they will serve the LORD.

Any church on earth which is primarily set apart from the world by anything other than the unmasked and simple worship of JESUS CHRIST as the LORD of all has either outlived its usefulness or was never a church of the LORD JESUS CHRIST in the first place. The true church has no other message but CHRIST. It seeks the exaltation of none but CHRIST. It will not be satisfied in any endeavor whose primary goal is not the magnification of HIS name in the proclamation of the gospel of JESUS CHRIST who has forever purchased eternal redemption for all of those for whom HE entered into the HOLY PLACE with HIS own blood and has risen from the dead and is seated at the right hand of HIS FATHER in the heavens, from which HE will come in flaming fire taking vengeance on all who know not GOD. *“And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”* (Rev 22:17)