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”*** (**2 Kings 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, and they bit the people; and many of the people of Israel died”*** (**Numbers 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”*** (**Numbers 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**; **Isaiah 46:5-11**; **Deuteronomy 4:11-16**).

Isaiah defined the nature of God when he writes: ***“I will not give My glory to another”*** (**Isaiah 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 worshipped 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 (**Ephesians 3:1-5**). Peter said the Lord has given us everything we need pertaining to life and godliness (**2 Peter 1:3**). If God is not the problem, who is?

Modern Day Romans

(selected)

In the days of Roman greatness so many people wanted their likeness in sculpture that Greek artists, working in Rome, had apprentices turning out stock bodies of gods and goddesses, while the artists made the heads to fit into sockets. In our day, the situation is reversed. Thousands of people are wearing the heads of others. They will not think for themselves, carried away by fads in science and religion. Many carry around the “Hollywood” version of life. It takes individual courage and faith to come out from the world.

Paul wrote, ***“And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: ‘I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people.’ Therefore ‘come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you’"*** (**2 Corinthians 6:16-17**).