

(2 Kings 18:1-3) - There were a succession of kings in the northern kingdom of Israel and in the southern kingdom of Judah. It was said of all the kings of the northern kingdom that they *“did evil in the sight of the LORD.”* The same was said of most of the kings of the southern kingdom, but there were a few of whom it was said that they, *“did that which was right in the sight of the LORD according to all that David his father did”* (2 Kings 18:3). King Hezekiah, whose name means *“God is my strength,”* was twenty-five years old when he began to reign over the southern kingdom of Judah. He was of the line of David and of Judah. He reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem. His father, Ahaz, was one of the evil kings of Judah (2 Kings 16:1-4), but Hezekiah did right in the sight of the Lord. It is important that we understand the difference between those who did right in the sight of the Lord and those who did evil in God’s sight. Those who did right were not perfect men. They were sinners saved by God’s grace in Christ. They did right in that they led the nation in following the law of Moses and in setting an example of godliness and true worship. When it says of King Hezekiah that he did right *“according to all that David his father did,”* we know that King David was far from being a perfect man (Psa. 32:1-2; 51; Rom. 4:6-8). He sinned greatly against the Lord, but the tenor of his rule in Israel was that of godliness as a king who typified Christ, the King of kings. The kings who did evil were those who allowed idolatry to prevail and who neglected and even forgot the worship of God according to the law.

(2 Kings 18:4) - Hezekiah’s father, Ahaz, walked in the ways of the kings of the north in idolatry. Hezekiah purged the land of idolatry. The high places were shrines built on mountains for idol worship. The statues were, like the golden calf, idol gods. The groves were wooded areas dedicated to idolatry, where altars were erected to false gods. Hezekiah destroyed all of these high places, groves, and statues, something his father and other kings of Judah had not dared to do. One of Hezekiah’s most significant acts was that he *“brake in pieces the brasen serpent that Moses had made: for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it: and he called it Nehushtan.”* This was the brazen serpent that Moses had made for the people to look to and be healed of the poison of serpents who bit them (Num. 25:5-8). This brazen serpent was such a beautiful picture of Christ and His power to heal us from the poison of sin (John 3:14-15). But, like all of us by nature, if left in our sin, spiritual death, and depravity, they took that which God had made for His glory and turned into *“an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things”* (Rom. 1:18-25). *“Nehushtan”* simply means *“piece of brass,”* and by this Hezekiah emphasized that this serpent of brass had no power to heal or to save. It was only a worthless piece of brass. Hezekiah saw something in this piece of brass that those who burnt incense to it did not see. He saw it as a picture of Christ Who was his salvation and strength. He saw that there was no power in the brazen serpent but only in the One to Whom that serpent pointed - Christ, the power of God to save, preserve, and to bring His people to glory.

Salvation by grace with all the blessings and benefits of God’s grace, the power of the Holy Spirit and eternal life, are ALL IN AND BY THE LORD JESUS CHRIST and ALL BASED ON HIS BLOOD, HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS ALONE. All salvation, all healing and spiritual power, all blessings and inspiration come from looking to and resting in the Lord Jesus Christ. True believers do not have any confidence in religious relics, statues, or so-called *“holy”* places. In the worship and service of God, Christ is all (John 14:6; 1 Cor. 1:30; Col. 1:12-20; 2:9-10). Believers believe, love, and worship God in spirit, not in form, rituals, nor with visual aids. They rejoice only in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh (Php. 3:3). True believers have no superstitions regarding days, hallowed places, religious relics, symbols and signs, nor ancestors (Php. 3:4-10). Christ is our sabbath, our sin offering, our High Priest, our altar, our

mediator, our prophet, priest, and king. By His blood we ourselves are made kings and priests to our God. We bow before no man, make pilgrimages to no place on earth (our God is everywhere), carry no religious symbols, and place no merit whatsoever in religious holidays such as Christmas and Easter.

The Lord gave His church two ordinances to observe until He returns - believer's baptism and the Lord's table. In baptism believers confess faith in Christ alone and identify publicly with Him in His death, burial, and resurrection. There is no saving or forgiving power in the waters of baptism. In observing the Lord's table with the simple elements of unleavened bread and wine, we show forth His death until he comes. But there is no saving power in the bread or the wine. Roman Catholicism teaches falsely that there is saving power in the bread and the wine. They and other false religions have made millions selling religious relics, even what some call pieces of the cross on which Christ died. But if we could find the actual cross on which our Savior died, it would serve no purpose and must be called a "worthless piece of wood." Paul wrote, "*But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ*" (Gal. 6:14), but he had no piece of wood to remind or inspire him religiously or even spiritually. He had the Holy Spirit who had written the Gospel of God's grace in Christ on his heart and in his mind. He had God-given faith in the crucified and risen Lord of Glory, and he had the Word of God to keep him looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of his faith (Heb. 12:2).

People flock to "the holy land" to find the Lord's tomb. He is not there. He is risen! The grave in which Christ laid for three days is an empty tomb, and the shroud in which he was wrapped is no more than a worthless piece of cloth. As sinners, we do not need the shroud in which our Lord was wrapped. We need His righteousness imputed to us for our complete justification before God, and we need His resurrection life imparted by the Spirit so that we can believe and rest in Him. God is a jealous God and will not share His glory. He will not share the worship and affection of His people. We trust, rest in, and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and abhor any effort to rob Him of His preeminence in the glory of His Person (God manifest in the flesh) and the power of His finished work of redeeming us from our sins. Let us be done with crucifixes, religious pictures of our Lord, shrines, and uniforms of religion; and let us worship God in spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and put no confidence in this flesh. The Lord God, by Christ's perfect obedience unto death, has imputed unto us His perfect righteousness. We are accepted in the Beloved. Nothing needs to be added to His Person and work to bring us to God!

(2 Kings 18:5-8) - These verses speak of Hezekiah as a sinner saved by grace who ruled by the grace and power of God Who preserved and prospered him in the kingdom. He "*trusted in the LORD God of Israel; so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any that were before him.*" He depended upon the Lord and His Word, "*Nehushtan*" or idols. As stated, to Hezekiah the brazen serpent was a type of his Savior Who was promised to come and redeem all His people from their sins. "*For he clave to the LORD, and departed not from following Him, but kept His commandments, which the LORD commanded Moses*" - He clung to the Lord in worship, obedience, and service, following God's commandments in the law of Moses. "*And the LORD was with him; and he prospered whithersoever he went forth*" - Hezekiah and his kingdom prospered because the Lord was with him. He would not bow to the heathen Assyrian king, and he fought the Philistines in and by the power of God. This was all because of God's grace and power to preserve His people unto the coming of the Messiah. Hezekiah knew that there was no strength or goodness in himself and no power in religious artifacts to which people cling. He knew that Christ was (and is) his strength.