

"Watchman, what of the night?"



"The hour has come, the hour is striking, and striking at you, the hour and the end!" Ezekiel 7:6 (Moffatt)

**"DIVINE SALVATION PURVIEW:
FURTHER INSIGHTS
INTO THE 'HEART'"**

**THE FOUNDATION'S NEWEST
PUBLICATION: *Halloween &
All Saints' Day - Spiritualism's
Connection With These
Two Holidays* Pg. 6**

Editor's Preface

With this issue of WWN, we will continue examining the condition of the human heart, soteriologically, as presented in the previous bimonthly edition of the thought paper (# 54).¹ The main article will be devoted to a couple of additional biblical examples which testify to fallen humanity's depraved 'heart' condition - King Hezekiah and a Pharisee named Nicodemus.

"Righteousness: More Examples Revealing The Depravity Of The 'Heart'"

Lessons Regarding Good King Hezekiah's "Perfect Heart" –

The ascension of King Hezekiah to the throne of Judah was the beginning of an upward trend in the life of the Southern Kingdom. For sixteen years, under the prior reign of his wicked father Ahaz, the realm sunk to its vilest depths:

"[Ahaz] did not that which was right in the sight of the LORD ... he burnt incense in the valley of the son of Hinnom, and burnt his children in the fire, after the abominations of the heathen ... He sacrificed also and burnt incense in the high places, and on the hills, and under every green tree.



Wherefore the LORD his God delivered him into the hand of the king of Syria; and they smote him, and carried away a great multitude of them captives ...

"For the LORD brought Judah low because of Ahaz king of Israel; for he made Judah naked, and transgressed sore against the LORD." (2 Chronicles 28: 1, 3-5, 19).

In contrast, King Hezekiah stands among the kings of Judah from David onward as the most religious and devout of them all. The record reads:

"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 brake the images, and cut down the groves, and brake in pieces the brazen serpent that Moses had made: for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it ... 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. For he clave to the LORD, and departed not from following Him, but kept His commandments, which the LORD commanded Moses. And the LORD was with him; and he prospered whithersoever he went forth: and he rebelled against the king of Assyria, and served him not." (2 Kings 18: 3-7).

The favor with both God and the subjects of the kingdom achieved by the success of Hezekiah's reforms also brought about the ire of the Assyrians. By severing the political and financial support (tribute) that Judah began giving to the Assyrian kings under King Ahaz (see 2 Kings 16: 7-8), the anticipated and threatened crisis against Jerusalem eventually arrived:

"After this did Sennacherib king of Assyria send his servants to Jerusalem, ... unto Hezekiah king of Judah, and unto all Judah that were at Jerusalem, saying, Thus saith Sen-

nacherib king of Assyria, Whereon do ye trust, that ye abide in the [stronghold, (marginal reading)] in Jerusalem? ...

"Who was there among all the gods of those nations that my fathers utterly destroyed, that could deliver his people out of mine hand, that your God should be able to deliver you out of mine hand? ...

"And for this cause Hezekiah the king, and the prophet Isaiah the son of Amoz, prayed and cried to heaven. And the LORD sent an angel, which cut off all the mighty men of valour, and the leaders and captains in the camp of the king of Assyria. So he returned with shame of face to his own land. And when he was come into the house of his god, they that came forth of his own bowels slew him there with the sword. Thus the LORD saved Hezekiah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem from the hand of Sennacherib the king of Assyria, and from the hand of all other, and guided them on every side. And many brought gifts unto the LORD to Jerusalem, and presents to Hezekiah king of Judah: *so that he was magnified in the sight of all nations from thenceforth.*" (2 Chronicles 32: 9-10, 14, 20-23, *emph. added*).

Surely, the king's zeal, devotion, courage, steadfastness, trust, and faith in the true God is set forth as an inspirational example for all to contemplate. However the record does not end here. Soon after the decimation of the 185,000 warriors in the Assyrian army (see 2 Kings 19: 35), the text continues:

"In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. And the prophet Isaiah ... said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Set thine house in order; for thou shalt die, and not live." (2 Kings 20: 1).

Upon hearing this, he prayed and cried unto the Lord to be healed. Pay close attention to his supplication:

"I beseech thee, O LORD, remember now how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in Thy sight." (Ibid. 20: 3, emph. added).

God heard his prayer, and Isaiah returned with a message that his life would be lengthened fifteen years. (Ibid 20: 5-6). The king asked for a sign and Isaiah's response gave him a choice between two ways an astronomical sign could occur. He chose, and the "sign" happened in the manner in which he had chosen. (Ibid. 20: 8-11). The prophet had also instructed Hezekiah to lay "a lump of figs ... on the boil, and he recovered." (see Ibid. 20: 7). "At that time Merodach-baladan, the son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent letters and a present to Hezekiah: for he had heard that he had been sick, and was recovered." (Isaiah 39: 1). The miraculous sign and its effects was duly noted by the Babylonians; whereupon their king dispatched "ambassadors of the princes of Babylon, who (were) sent unto [Hezekiah] to inquire of the wonder that was done in the land" (2 Chronicles 32: 31a, emph. added).

Not since the days of the united kingdom under the reigns of David and Solomon were conditions, in the providence of God, aligning for the Lord to bring the covenant blessings upon His people and, through them, to the rest of the world. (see Genesis 12: 3 and compare with Isaiah 27: 6). The time was ripe for king Hezekiah, through word, deed, and example, to honor and magnify the only true God by imparting a knowledge of His character not just to the people of Judah, but also to the inhabitants of all nations.

Sadly, the Bible records Hezekiah's response to God's healing, saving, and extension of his life and also reveals the reason why he responded the way he did:

"Hezekiah rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him; for his heart was lifted up" (2 Chronicles 32: 25, emph. added).

Instead of thankfully and appreciatively glorifying the Lord for "the benefit done unto him," upon the arrival and receipt of the Babylonian ambassadors:

"Hezekiah hearkened unto them ("welcomed them," GNB ²), and shewed them ... all that was found in his treasures: there was nothing in his house, nor in all his dominion, that Hezekiah shewed them not." (2 Kings 20: 13).

Tragically, the pride of his heart led to a boastful display of self exaltation. What testimony was given these foreign princes? - the power of God to heal and deliver from death, or a vain exhibition of "his treasures" accumulated with no mention of God's favor toward His people in "[giving them] power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he sware unto [them]" (see Deuteronomy 8: 18)? During the visit of these ambassadors:

"God left [Hezekiah], to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart." (2 Chronicles 32: 31b, emph. added).

When God stepped aside, and Hezekiah was on his own with his "perfect heart" (as he had prayed), God revealed to him "all that was in his heart" - pride. (see 1 John 2: 16). This revelation of man's "heart" is the key to the controversy which involves justification, sanctification, and perfection.

Lessons Regarding Nicodemus, A Proud Pharisee With A Conflicted Heart –

Early toward the beginning of Christ's public ministry when "the Jews' passover was at hand, ... Jesus went up to Jerusalem. And found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money

sitting: And ... drove them all out of the temple ...

"Now when [Jesus] was in Jerusalem at the passover, in the feast day, many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did." (John 2: 13-15, 23).

Subsequently, a short time thereafter:

"There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him." (Ibid. 3: 1-2).

Nicodemus, being a Pharisee and ruler of the Jews, would have had familiarity with events surrounding the ministry of John the Baptist. About 6 months earlier prior to this night meeting with Jesus, "the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask [John], Who art thou? ... And they which were sent were of the Pharisees." (Ibid. 1: 19, 24). The inquiry of this deputation was clearly Messianic regarding the Baptist's identity. After denying that he was the Christ (Messiah), Elijah, or "that prophet" (a reference to Deuteronomy 18: 15-19), John declared that "there standeth one among you, whom ye know not; He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose." (John 1: 26-27). This, along with ongoing further testimony by John which identified Jesus of Nazareth as the promised Messiah (Ibid. 1: 29-37), had aroused the attention of the Jewish leadership. From that time forward they, along with Nicodemus - who was himself "a ruler of the Jews" ("a member of the Jewish Council" - NEB)³ i.e., the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem and therefore "one of them" (Ibid. 3: 1; 7: 50) - took note of the movements and ministry of Jesus. Through eyewitness

reports and personal observation by some of the Council members themselves, Jesus was coming more into public focus, not just by the common populace, but also by the Jewish leaders.

It seems apparent that Nicodemus was one of those members of the Sanhedrin that had personally seen and heard Jesus. Undoubtedly he sought an audience with Jesus under the cover of nighttime due to Pharisaical pride, e.g., his prestige, position, and power as an honored "ruler" ("teacher / master of Israel" - John 3: 10) in meeting openly with this still largely unknown and obscure Galilean "Rabbi" could bring upon himself and his reputation the ire of many in the Sanhedrin. While they could not (easily) dismiss the miracles performed by Jesus "for no man can do these miracles that [Jesus did], except God be with him" (Ibid. 3: 2), the recent incident of Christ's cleansing of the temple from its desecration by those traffickers "of merchandise" and "the changers of money" at the passover had excited the indignation and hatred of the rulers and priests, most of whom were Council members and, for greed of worldly gain, were largely responsible for the deplorable state of disrepute the sacred sanctuary services had fallen into as a result of these actions.

While at this point Nicodemus was outwardly cautious in his deportment toward Jesus, the record indicates that inwardly he had been conscientiously 'moved' by the teachings and genuine spirituality of this man. It is evident that he had been present at the foregone passover feast to witness the testimony and conduct of Christ, along with the effect that it had on all who were in attendance. He, along with others, had been drawn to the Savior. Nicodemus began the interview with a salutation acknowledging

Him to be "a teacher come from God," but just "a teacher," not the Messiah." Nevertheless, truth was bearing down upon him creating a conflict between the pride of this 'good' self righteous Pharisee and the growing conviction that he was indeed conversing with the Anointed One!

In his own assessment of himself, the assessment of his colleagues, and the assessment of society around him, the life of Nicodemus had been just, honorable and upright. Like any devout Pharisee he could "[pray] thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as [the publicans]. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all I possess." (see Luke 18: 11-12; compare with the apostle Paul's testimony in Philippians 3: 4-6). However, in the presence of Jesus, Nicodemus felt that his heart was unclean, and his life unholy – no better than any other 'sinner'. Christ knew this and before getting into any further discussion came right to the issue that was weighing upon Nicodemus:

"Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again (or 'from above,' marginal reading), he cannot see the kingdom of God." (John 3: 3).

It wasn't a mere intellectual explanation concerning Christ's mission and method that Nicodemus needed most to satisfy his conviction. He needed a new heart; a reception of a new life "from above" in order to truly receive, comprehend, and value heavenly things. His greatest need, like all of fallen humanity, was a new moral birth, a cleansing from sin, and a renewing of knowledge and holiness. No amount of good works, pious actions, or outward conformity to the strict letter of the Law that an unregenerate person can render to God can, of itself, produce in us this change in our sin corrupted natures

because:

"... we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away ...

"Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one ...

"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." (Isaiah 64: 6; Job 14: 4; Romans 3: 23, all emphases added).

The only remedy for humanity's hopeless 'heart' condition, one in which we are totally helpless to solve ourselves no matter what our own efforts entail, is to look in faith to God only for salvation:

"For thy Maker is thine husband; the LORD of hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; The God of the whole earth shall he be called ...

"And all thy children shall be taught of the LORD; and great shall be the peace of thy children. In righteousness shalt thou be established: thou shalt be far from oppression; for thou shalt not fear: and from terror; for it shall not come near thee ...

"No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness is of me, saith the LORD." (Isaiah 54: 5, 13-14, 17).

Though the figure of the new birth had deepened the conviction of Nicodemus's need of spiritual regeneration; his lingering pride prompted an incongruous response:

"How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?" (John 3: 4).

This literalistic understanding of Christ's words is indicative of the struggle that occurs when heavenly truth penetrates into the carnal conscience. Even if a man could be

"born ... the second time" in the manner stated, it would make no difference, as Jesus reiterated:

"Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is *born of the flesh is flesh*; and that which is *born of the Spirit is spirit*. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again ('from above'). The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." (Ibid. 3: 5-8, emph. added).

Astounded, still not fully comprehending the Savior's words:

"Nicodemus answered ... How can these things be? Jesus answered ... him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things? ...

"If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall you believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?" (Ibid. 3: 9-10, 12).

As Nicodemus listened to Christ disclose the spiritual nature of the new birth, he earnestly desired this change effected in himself. Accordingly, Jesus proceeded to explain the only means how this unspoken yearning of his could be accomplished:

"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved." (Ibid. 3: 14-17).

This incident and the lesson it taught was

thoroughly familiar to the learned Pharisee. In that life and death situation that all of God's ancient people faced, the only thing they could do to survive death by being bitten by the poisonous serpents was to obey, solely by faith in God, the instruction He had given to Moses; which essentially was 'look and live' at the brass serpent that Moses had made and uplifted on a pole. (see Numbers 21: 4-9). This revelation, which Jesus pointed to as a symbolic type of His ministry and mission, was not lost on Nicodemus. A transformation of his heart, wrought in him by the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit, was already beginning to take place. Subsequently for three years, though he kept his outward endorsement of Jesus low-key, he at times opposed the plotting of the priests to ruin Jesus (see John 7: 45-53).

When Christ was uplifted on the cross, he beheld in Jesus the promised Messiah, the world's Redeemer and Savior. It was he that, along with Joseph of Arimathaea, stepped forward to employ their influence, wealth, and effort to secure, prepare, and provide a tomb for the burial of Jesus (see Ibid. 19: 38-42). These actions indicate that Nicodemus the Pharisee became a believer and disciple of the Savior, the fruit of a new heart in a man that had been "born from above." ❖
GLP

A New Evangelistic Hand-Out By The Foundation On Halloween

Retail stores are putting out Halloween items in July. The growing popularity of this "trick-or-treat" night in the United States is astounding. Once largely a celebration associated with children, its appeal to adults over the past decade has grown exponentially. Commercially, in 2021, sales topped \$10 bil-

lion, making it the second highest grossing holiday behind Christmas. What had seemed earlier like innocent children's fun, has now thanks to increasing adult involvement, brought the pagan origins and customs of this ancient festival to the forefront. But underlying this dark side of Halloween is a professed 'Christian' history that many are not familiar with. To help in sounding the alarm, the Iowa Foundation has written a new publication concerning the origin of Halloween, its progressive history, and all that it entails.

Satan's first lie is heavily endorsed all throughout. Beginning in the Garden of Eden, when Adam and Eve believed the very first deception by the serpent (Satan) regarding death - "Ye shall not surely die" - for sinning against God's expressed will; the devil has continued to palm off the falsehood that death is not the end of conscious existence but rather an entrance into a higher state of life - "Ye shall be as be gods, knowing good and evil." (Genesis 3: 4-5). This error stands at the very foundation of all spiritualism. This forms the basis of all pagan/false religions and this includes (tragically) practically all professed Christianity.

Through traditions, customs, superstitions, and 'holiday' commemorations, this fallacy has deluded innumerable multitudes into believing this unbiblical fabrication. That alone should be a loud warning to steer away from being caught up in the festivities of Halloween. Riding on its "broom stick" are two 'Christian' religious observances which also promote the unscriptural (pagan) teaching of the immortal souls of the dead. God and His truths are to take center stage in our everyday lives. Contact us by your preferred method, requesting a free paper copy or PDF version to be sent. Thank you for having an interest in this ministry.

1. Gary L. Patrick, *"Watchman, what of the night?"* (Nora Springs, IA: Adventist Laymen's Foundation of Iowa, Inc., Issue # 54 - Aug. / Sept. 2022, "Divine Salvation Purview: The 'Heart' Of The Matter"), 2-7. https://www.alfiowa.com/IOWA-BACK-ISSUES/WWN_Issue_54.pdf
2. *Good News Bible* (Philadelphia, PA: American Bible Society, January 1976).
3. *The New English Bible* (Cambridge University Press, 1972), 103-104.

*All Scripture quotations are from the King James Version unless otherwise indicated.

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