

2Chronicles 33:1 ¶ Manasseh was twelve years old when he began to reign, and he reigned fifty and five years in Jerusalem:

2Chronicles 33:2 But did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, like unto the abominations of the heathen, whom the LORD had cast out before the children of Israel.

In this chapter we come to one of the worst kings, if not the worst, in Judah's history. Manasseh became king at the age of 12 years old.

Every time I read about these children that become king, I can't help but think of my grandchildren and shake my head in disbelief. Too much power in the hands of one so young without benefit of a godly advisor or mentor can only result in tyranny.

Manasseh reigned for 55 years in Jerusalem, the longest reign of any king of Judah. The NIV Commentary dates his reign from 697 to 642 BC.

The Chronicler doesn't tell us his mother's name, but the writer of Kings does—Hephzibah.

2 Kings 21:1 "Manasseh was twelve years old when he began to reign, and reigned fifty and five years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Hephzibah."

Manasseh was an evil king before the LORD who followed the evil practices of the heathen nations that had occupied the land of Canaan before God gave it to Israel.

2Chronicles 33:3 For he built again the high places which Hezekiah his father had broken down, and he reared up altars for Baalim, and made groves, and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served them.

2Chronicles 33:4 Also he built altars in the house of the LORD, whereof the LORD had said, In Jerusalem shall my name be for ever.

2Chronicles 33:5 And he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the LORD.

Manasseh rebuilt the high places that his father Hezekiah had destroyed. He built altars and made groves to worship Baal, and he worshipped all the host of heaven and served them. This means that he identified the objects in heaven (the sun, moon, stars, and planets) with false gods.

He even built altars to these false gods in the temple in Jerusalem, the very place that the LORD God of Israel had said was to be the place with which His name was to be honored and His favored possession on earth forever. He erected altars for all the host of heaven in the inner and outer courts of the house of the LORD.

2Chronicles 33:6 And he caused his children to pass through the fire in the valley of the son of Hinnom: also he observed times, and used enchantments, and used witchcraft, and dealt with a familiar spirit, and with wizards: he

wrought much evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger.

Manasseh even sacrificed some of his own children to his false god in the valley of the son of Hinnom. We learn from other scripture that it was Molech to whom these sacrifices were made.

Jeremiah 32:35 "And they built the high places of Baal, which are in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to cause their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire unto Molech; which I commanded them not, neither came it into my mind, that they should do this abomination, to cause Judah to sin."

It is interesting to note that the LORD made specific laws against this, mentioning Molech by name before the people of Israel ever conquered Canaan to make it their home.

Leviticus 18:21 "And thou shalt not let any of thy seed pass through the fire to Molech, neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God: I am the LORD."

He also acted directly against God's laws by observing times, using enchantments and witchcraft and dealing with familiar spirits and wizards.

- observed times = practiced magic and sorcery
- enchantment = magic spells and fortune telling
- witchcraft = use of magic spells
- familiar spirits = necromancers, mediums (those who claim to communicate with the dead)
- wizards = those who conjure up ghosts

Leviticus 19:26 "Ye shall not eat any thing with the blood: neither shall ye use enchantment, nor observe times."

Leviticus 19:31 "Regard not them that have familiar spirits, neither seek after wizards, to be defiled by them: I am the LORD your God."

He did great evil before the LORD and made Him very angry.

2Chronicles 33:7 And he set a carved image, the idol which he had made, in the house of God, of which God had said to David and to Solomon his son, In this house, and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen before all the tribes of Israel, will I put my name for ever:

2Chronicles 33:8 Neither will I any more remove the foot of Israel from out of the land which I have appointed for your fathers; so that they will take heed to do all that I have commanded them, according to the whole law and the statutes and the ordinances by the hand of Moses.

Manasseh made an idol and placed it in the temple that God had told David and Solomon that He would set apart as a place connected to His name forever. The LORD had promised that Israel would possess this land forever *if* (from the Hebrew for "so") they obeyed His commandments as written in the law of Moses.

Deuteronomy 28:15 & 25 "But it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command thee this day; that all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee....The LORD shall cause thee to be smitten before thine enemies: thou shalt go out one way against them, and flee seven ways before them: and shalt be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth."

2Chronicles 33:9 So Manasseh made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to err, and to do worse than the heathen, whom the LORD had destroyed before the children of Israel.

2Chronicles 33:10 And the LORD spake to Manasseh, and to his people: but they would not hearken.

The writer repeats again that Manasseh acted more wickedly than the heathen that had lived in Canaan whom the LORD destroyed before giving it to Israel and caused the people of Judah and Jerusalem to do the same.

The LORD spoke through His prophets to confront Manasseh and his people with their sin, but they paid them no mind. They were too entrenched in the "pleasures of sin."

Hebrews 11:25 "Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season...."

The scriptures are full of truth from the heart of God. It clearly admits that sin can give temporary pleasure to the flesh. However, it is also clear that there are permanent consequences for those that choose to continue in their sin and do not repent of their sin and turn to Jesus in faith for their salvation.

Romans 6:23 "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

2 Thessalonians 1:7-9 "And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power...."

Revelation 20:12-15 "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire."

The writer of Kings gives us more detail about the message God delivered through His prophets. Because of the actions of Manasseh, the LORD would

judge Jerusalem and Judah. The day was coming when the land would be comparable to a dish that had been wiped clean. God would deliver His people to their enemies because they continued to anger Him with their disobedience to His laws since coming out of Egypt.

2 Kings 21:11–15 “Because Manasseh king of Judah hath done these abominations, and hath done wickedly above all that the Amorites did, which were before him, and hath made Judah also to sin with his idols: Therefore thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Behold, I am bringing such evil upon Jerusalem and Judah, that whosoever heareth of it, both his ears shall tingle. And I will stretch over Jerusalem the line of Samaria, and the plummet of the house of Ahab: and I will wipe Jerusalem as a man wipeth a dish, wiping it, and turning it upside down. And I will forsake the remnant of mine inheritance, and deliver them into the hand of their enemies; and they shall become a prey and a spoil to all their enemies; Because they have done that which was evil in my sight, and have provoked me to anger, since the day their fathers came forth out of Egypt, even unto this day.”

Before his repentance (which we will read about in coming verses), Manasseh was responsible for the death of so many that the writer pictures their blood filling Jerusalem from one end to another.

2 Kings 21:16 “Moreover Manasseh shed innocent blood very much, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another; beside his sin wherewith he made Judah to sin, in doing that which was evil in the sight of the LORD.”

Tradition states that Manasseh killed the prophet Isaiah by having him sawed in half.

The prophet Jeremiah tells us that Manasseh was primarily responsible for the eventual captivity of the Jewish people.

*Jeremiah 15:1-4 “Then said the LORD unto me, Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my mind could not be toward this people: cast them out of my sight, and let them go forth. And it shall come to pass, if they say unto thee, Whither shall we go forth? then thou shalt tell them, Thus saith the LORD; Such as are for death, to death; and such as are for the sword, to the sword; and such as are for the famine, to the famine; and such as are for the captivity, to the captivity....And I will cause them to be removed into all kingdoms of the earth, **because of Manasseh** the son of Hezekiah king of Judah, for that which he did in Jerusalem.”*

2Chronicles 33:11 ¶ Wherefore the LORD brought upon them the captains of the host of the king of Assyria, which took Manasseh among the thorns, and bound him with fetters, and carried him to Babylon.

2Chronicles 33:12 And when he was in affliction, he besought the LORD his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers,

2Chronicles 33:13 And prayed unto him: and he was intreated of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the LORD he *was* God.

Eventually, the LORD caused the king of Assyria to take Manasseh captive to Babylon. The NIV Commentary provides this information regarding the possible timeframe: "The occasion on which 'the king of Assyria . . . took Manasseh prisoner . . . to Babylon' may have arisen in the year 648, when Ashurbanipal finally overcame a revolt that had been led in that city for four years by his own brother."

Some commentators posit that "among the thorns" is a reference to Manasseh hiding among the thornbushes, hoping to escape capture.

During his time of distress and trouble in captivity, he humbled himself greatly before the LORD God of his fathers. He prayed with repentance for his sin, and it was obviously sincere since the LORD brought him back to Jerusalem in answer to that prayer. The NIV Commentary provides an interesting note about this prayer: "The king's 'prayer to his God' is no longer preserved. This text did, however, provide a basis on which someone shortly before the time of Christ composed the fifteen verses that make up the apocryphal Prayer of Manasseh, a book that appears in some manuscripts of the LXX."

JFB states that he was only held in captivity for two years: "...his conqueror not only released him, but, after two years' exile, restored him, with honor and the full exercise of royal power, to a tributary and dependent kingdom."

Then Manasseh KNEW that the LORD was God, the one and only. I liked this quote from Spurgeon: "Oh! I do not wonder at Manasseh's sin one half so much as I wonder at God's mercy."

Manasseh is yet another example of the truth that God is not willing that any should perish. A man that had shed so much innocent blood and blasphemed God through the worship of false gods turned to God in repentance for his sin and his prayer was answered.

2Chronicles 33:14 Now after this he built a wall without the city of David, on the west side of Gihon, in the valley, even to the entering in at the fish gate, and compassed about Ophel, and raised it up a very great height, and put captains of war in all the fenced cities of Judah.

2Chronicles 33:15 And he took away the strange gods, and the idol out of the house of the LORD, and all the altars that he had built in the mount of the house of the LORD, and in Jerusalem, and cast *them* out of the city.

2Chronicles 33:16 And he repaired the altar of the LORD, and sacrificed thereon peace offerings and thank offerings, and commanded Judah to serve the LORD God of Israel.

2Chronicles 33:17 Nevertheless the people did sacrifice still in the high places, *yet* unto the LORD their God only.

Manasseh gave evidence to his repentance through his actions. I think that is a principle that holds true today. Sincere repentance will result in a transformed life.

First the king rebuilt a section of the wall that protected the city of David, making it very high. He also established military posts in all the walled cities of Judah. Then he took away all the strange gods and idols from the house of the LORD as well as those on the temple mount and put them out of the city. He repaired the altar of the LORD and offered peace and thank offerings to Him. He commanded the people of Judah to serve the LORD God of Israel—in other words, to start living in obedience to His commands.

Sad to note, the people still utilized the high places, but only to make sacrifices to the LORD God.

2Chronicles 33:18 Now the rest of the acts of Manasseh, and his prayer unto his God, and the words of the seers that spake to him in the name of the LORD God of Israel, behold, they *are written* in the book of the kings of Israel.

2Chronicles 33:19 His prayer also, and *how God* was intreated of him, and all his sin, and his trespass, and the places wherein he built high places, and set up groves and graven images, before he was humbled: behold, they *are written* among the sayings of the seers.

The Chronicler notes that we can read more about Manasseh—his prayer to God and the message delivered by the prophets of the LORD—in the book of the kings of Israel (as noted in the commentary above). It seems even more was written about his prayer of repentance as well as about his actions before he was humbled was written among the sayings of the seers.

2Chronicles 33:20 So Manasseh slept with his fathers, and they buried him in his own house: and Amon his son reigned in his stead.

2Chronicles 33:21 ¶ *Amon was* two and twenty years old when he began to reign, and reigned two years in Jerusalem.

When Manasseh died, they buried him in his own house, and his son Amon became king. Ammon was 22 years old at the time and he reigned for two years in Jerusalem. Again, we have to go to Kings to learn who is mother was.

2 Kings 21:19 “Amon was twenty and two years old when he began to reign, and he reigned two years in Jerusalem. And his mother’s name was Meshullemeth, the daughter of Haruz of Jotbah.”

2Chronicles 33:22 But he did *that which was* evil in the sight of the LORD, as did Manasseh his father: for Amon sacrificed unto all the carved images which Manasseh his father had made, and served them;

2Chronicles 33:23 And humbled not himself before the LORD, as Manasseh his father had humbled himself; but Amon trespassed more and more.

2Chronicles 33:24 And his servants conspired against him, and slew him in his own house.

2Chronicles 33:25 But the people of the land slew all them that had conspired against king Amon; and the people of the land made Josiah his son king in his stead.

Amon was a wicked king before the LORD. He followed in the footsteps of his father by sacrificing to and serving the idols that his father had made. He never humbled himself before the LORD; instead, he chose to sin more and more. Manasseh's example before his son in those important formative years had a much greater influence upon his son than the last few years of his reformed lifestyle before the LORD.

Amon's servants plotted against him and murdered him inside the palace. The people of the land avenged his death by killing those that had plotted against him.

As I have studied these books of history chronicling the reigns of the kings of Judah, I am struck by how quickly the people can be influenced for good or evil due to the leadership of their king. Though not as distinct throughout our history, it has certainly become evident during the last decade in America that our leader was able to influence the culture of our nation away from the truth of scripture more rapidly than I ever thought possible.

Amon's son Josiah became the next king.