

King Manasseh: You Can't Undo the Past

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake from multiple sources)

Introduction:

- A. 2Kings 21:1-9
- B. Do people really change? Can they really be forgiven?
 - 1. Ez. 18:20-24
 - 2. "Oh, you don't understand; I've done such terrible things that God would never forgive me of them."
 - 3. The truth is, when one truly repents, God not only forgives the sins, He chooses to forget them, too - Isa. 38:17; Heb. 8:12
- C. However, the temporal, earthly consequences often remain.
 - 1. While God forgets forgiven sins, we carry the record of them in our memory and their scars in our lives.
- D. Manasseh understood this well.
 - 1. Three aspects of Manasseh's religious policy condemned in Kings:
 - a. Abandoned his father's reforms to be popular,
 - b. Restored pagan shrines for economic reasons,
 - c. Persecuted the prophets who criticized his sins.

I. MANASSEH HAD A GOOD BEGINNING

- A. Hezekiah, his father, was praised by God - 2Kings 18:3
 - 1. He was born in the later years of his father's reign, three years after Hezekiah nearly died from illness - 2Kings 20:5-6
 - 2. Manasseh was a king of the Kingdom of Judah. He was the only son of Hezekiah with Hephzibah. He became king at an age of 12 and reigned for 55 years (2Kings 21:1; 2Chron. 33:1). He commenced his reign as co-regent with his father Hezekiah in 697 BC, with his sole reign beginning in 687 BC and continuing until his death in 643 BC.
 - 3. It was in Hezekiah's later years that we see a flaw in his character; he was more focused on himself than those who came after.
 - a. 2Kings 20:16-19; 2Chron. 23:25
 - 4. Hezekiah died just before Manasseh's adolescence - 2Kings 21:1
 - a. Like many fatherless teenagers, Manasseh turned rebellious, but as king his rebellion took on dangerous levels of violence.

II. MANASSEH TURNED TO EVIL

- A. He restored the idolatrous religions of Baal and Asherah and other religions his father worked hard to remove.
 - 1. He restored worship of Baal and Asherah in the Temple - 2Kings 21:3
 - 2. There were actually multiple Baals, and the word here is in the plural. Manasseh sought out many types of Baals. Since these were fertility gods, worshiped with sex, one can see the appeal to a teenage king.
 - 3. He also did it in imitation of Ahab.
- B. He introduced astrology, worshiping the host of heaven and sponsored the Assyrian astral cult throughout Judah - 2Kings 21:3
 - 1. He brought idolatry into God's temple - 2Kings 21:4-5

2. As often happens, once one starts down the slippery slope of sin, there is little to stop him - 2Kings 21:6
- C. As he got older, he sacrificed his own children, probably following the worship of Molech - 2Chron. 33:6
 1. Such sacrifices come from the idea that greater something costs one, the more likely a god will listen. Manasseh was trying hard to stop something looming on the horizon.
 2. The valley where he committed these atrocities was the valley of Hinnom, later called Gehenna. The place Jesus used to illustrate hell came from Manasseh's valley of worship.
 3. He sought fortune tellers, omens, consulted mediums and wizards. He was troubled about the future and wanted to know what was ahead.
- D. Manasseh, like most people, spread his beliefs - 2Kings 21:9
 1. Ironically, in seeking a way out of his troubles, he hastened their arrival and severity - 2Kings 21:10-15
- E. His was a reign of terror - 2Kings 21:16
 1. Jewish tradition holds that Manasseh killed Isaiah by sawing him in half.
 - a. He executed supporters of Hezekiah's reforms.
 - b. The prophets were put to the sword; innocent blood reddened the streets of Jerusalem - Jer. 2:27-31, 34

III. THE TURNING OF MANASSEH

- A. He was brought in chains before Esarhaddon the Assyrian king for suspected disloyalty. The severity of his punishment moved him to repent. He was later restored to the throne and made restitution for his sins - 2Chron. 33:11-13, 15
 1. What Manasseh feared came to pass with Assyria's commanders.
 - a. 2Chron. 33:11
 - b. This is the nation that took Israel into captivity during his father's day and threatened to do the same to Judah.
 2. Assyrian records state that Manasseh was a vassal of Esarhaddon, Sennacherib's son and successor. He supplied building materials for Esarhaddon's projects. He also helped with Ashurbanipal, Esarhaddon's son, in his campaign against Egypt.
- B. Assyrians didn't treat their captives well - 2Kings 19:28
 1. Imprisoned and with proof of the uselessness of his idolatry, Manasseh returned to the one true God - 2Chron. 33:12
 2. God heard his prayers - 2Chron. 33:13
 3. Unlike his powerless idols, God brought him out of prison. Manasseh realized that only God was real.
 4. In spite of how evil Manasseh was and regardless of all the crimes he committed, yet God accepted his repentance and change.
 5. There is no sin one commits and repents of that God refused to forgive.

VI. MANASSEH'S EFFORTS TO REFORM

- A. On his return, Manasseh changed completely - 2Chron. 33:15-16
- B. But he could not completely erase the consequences of his sins.

1. 2Chron. 33:17 - They still practiced idolatry, they just changed the name of the god they claimed to be worshiping.
2. His son, raised in his father's idolatry didn't change - 2Chron. 33:22-23
- C. Often people say, "I'll serve God later on." Manasseh faced the hard truth that he couldn't do it successfully.
 1. Sin creates wounds not easily healed and scars that won't go away
 2. Better to have never caused the wound - Ecc. 11:9 - 12:1
- D. Despite his great repentance, Manasseh's legacy was evil - 2Chron. 33:2
- E. His repentance wasn't enough to stop the evil he set in motion - Jer. 15:4-6
 1. Which is sadder, the evil that one does or realizing he is helpless to stop his evil from spreading out of control?
 2. But at least he tried.

VII. EVEN WHILE WE WERE SINNERS

- A. Rom. 5:6-8 - While it is wonderful that we can be forgiven, our forgiveness will not erase the scars on Jesus's hands and feet and back and side and head.
 1. So do we remain in our sins, allowing the harm to increase, or do we change and start battling the evil of which we were once a part?
- B. Acts 2:38-41 - Join with those who have left sin and take up arms against it.