

The Life of Manasseh: A Study in Departure and Discipline

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References: 2 Kings 21, Genesis 41:51; Philippians 3:13-14; 1 Corinthians 11:4-5; Revelation 19:10; Daniel 12:3; Job 38:7; 2 Kings 20:6; 2 Samuel 7:12-13; Isaiah 62:4; Ecclesiastes 8:11; Genesis 15:16; 1 Samuel 28:7; Esther 3:7; Psalms 31:15; Hebrews 11:35-37

Introduction to Manasseh

Eric Well, last week I believe we finished off the life of that wonderful man Hezekiah, that good king. There hadn't been a king like him since the time of David. But unfortunately, things do not continue on. So tonight, I believe, unless there's anything else regarding the life of Hezekiah, Harold, you may have something to say. If not, just carry on. I believe you're going to introduce to us the life of his son Manasseh. Amen.

Harold Well, let's take a look then at chapter 21 of 2 Kings. And it reads,

[2 Kings 21:1-2 NKJV]

¹ Manasseh was twelve years old when he became king, and he reigned fifty-five years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Hephzibah. ² And he did evil in the sight of the LORD, according to the abominations of the nations whom the LORD had cast out before the children of Israel.

We've gone from a **very good** king to this man Manasseh. We're going to find out that he was a **very, very bad** king. From very good to very bad. That's very difficult. And so I feel sorry for the children of Israel whose leaders went from good to bad to good to bad. And it was very difficult for them. I guess one of the lessons from that is that we are not responsible to follow the leadership of man. We're responsible to follow the leadership of the Lord. Make sure that you're reading your Bible and praying every day and following the Lord regardless of what the politicians do. Regardless of what the other leaders might do, including those in the assembly. We may be leading in a direction that is **wrong**. You have a responsibility to make sure you're going in spite of what might be wrong in leadership.

So that's just a general introduction to this man. His name is Manasseh. And we're going to find out that he did very much that was wrong. The word Manasseh simply means forgetting. You'll remember that Joseph called his son Manasseh because he said,

[Genesis 41:51 NKJV]

Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh: "For God has made me forget all my toil and all my father's house."

And now this is Manasseh. And he forgot God. It's important to forget. But it's most important to forget the **right** things and to remember the right things. You'll remember Paul said,

[Philippians 3:13-14 NKJV]

¹³ Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, ¹⁴ I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Paul could look back on his life, like very much like Manasseh could, and he could see that he did lots of things that are wrong. And he could very well have said, the apostle Paul, "God could never use me.

I was such an extremely bad man." But Paul said, "No, I'm going to forget those things that are behind. I'm going to press on to the prize for the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Our concern about Manasseh is he forgot the good things of his father. But mostly he **forgot the God of his father**. Pride was a key element in his life. He said, "12 years old, I can pretty much do anything I want." I don't think he knew he would reign for 55 years. He was 67 years old when he died. But he had a problem. And it was Manasseh. He was full of Manasseh. He forgot the things of God.

His mother's name was Hephzibah. And we're told that the name Hephzibah means my delight is in her. I just wonder whether that was maybe a name that Hezekiah gave her. He may have delighted in her rather than in the Lord in that relationship. One way or another, Manasseh did not follow his Lord. It might have been that Hezekiah delighted more in the woman than in the Lord. I don't know. All we know is Hezekiah was a bad man. In verse 2, he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord after the abominations of the heathen, whom the Lord had cast out before the children of Israel.

The issue in our day is, are we following the culture of the day? Or are we following God? God's plan is that the culture follows the Lord. The world's plan is that the church follow the culture. And I'm amazed how often the issue is, will we do it God's way? Or will we do it the way of the culture of the land? And many people say, "Well, the culture says, do it this way, we do it this way." I keep on thinking back of the fact that the Queen came to Vancouver several years ago. And the Queen, as you know, used to wear a hat on most occasions. It became a big deal in the city of Vancouver. We walked out of the chapel one morning between meetings, and there was a TV crew outside. And we said, "What are you doing outside our chapel?" And they said, "Well, the Queen wears hats. Somebody told us that the women in your chapel wear head coverings. We thought we'd better come and investigate."

So I thought, well, that's very interesting. Are there no other churches in Vancouver where people wear hats? A hundred years ago, all the women wore head coverings. They wore head coverings when they went shopping. But the church, by and large, has followed

the culture and abandoned the head covering. And we at 16 say, we're going to follow the Lord. And the Lord says,

[1 Corinthians 11:4-5 NKJV]

⁴ Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonors his head. ⁵ But every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head, for that is one and the same as if her head were shaved.

Not very popular. So the question is, Manasseh, are you going to follow the Lord? Are you going to follow the culture? And they said, Manasseh said, "We will follow the culture of the people that were destroyed when our forefathers came into this land." That is a **terrible mistake**. Would it be possible for us in our day to follow the culture of the aboriginal Americans, the natives who lived here before the white man came? It really would, wouldn't it? And one of the reasons that they were so easily overthrown is because of the evil in their lifestyle. That evil prevailing today in many, many ways. And we've got to be very careful. We're not here to follow aboriginal culture. We're here to follow the Lord. And we've got to keep that conviction paramount in our mind or we could fall as this man, Manasseh, fell.

The List of Wickedness

Harold Well, the next paragraph, paragraph that begins in verse 3 and ends in verse, I know, I don't know, either verse 6 or verse 9, depending on how you count. But there's a list of the things that he did that were wrong. Let's read them.

[2 Kings 21:3-6 NKJV]

³ For he rebuilt the high places which Hezekiah his father had destroyed; he raised up altars for Baal, and made a wooden image, as Ahab king of Israel had done; and he worshiped all the host of heaven and served them. ⁴ He also built altars in the house of the LORD, of which the LORD had said,

"In Jerusalem I will put My name."

⁵ And he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the LORD. ⁶ Also he made his son pass through the fire, practiced soothsaying, used witchcraft, and consulted spiritists and mediums. He did much evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke Him to anger.

That's what he did. He provoked the Lord and provoked the Lord. And the Lord got angry with him. So I listed 10 things that he did there that were very wrong. I'm not sure that that's an accurate number or not. But there were quite a few of them.

First of all, he built the high places which Hezekiah, his father, had destroyed. We've talked lots about these high places in our studies in Kings. I'm not sure that I understand them even yet. They were there. They were alternative places to serve the Lord. Some people would go there to worship God when he told them, no, go to Jerusalem. Other people went there and worshiped other gods. It was a terrible thing. Interestingly, these high places in the history of the former kings were the last to be set right by the good kings. Here, Manasseh is a bad king, and it's the **first** to be set wrong. I think that's not insignificant. It continued as a primary problem. And it was the last thing to be set right, the first thing to be set wrong when things were going to go in the wrong direction.

Number two, he reared up altars for Baal. There had been a big Baal removal in the days of Hezekiah and before him. He can't remember the name of the king, but he had removed Baal, and it was a wonderful thing. But he goes back and reestablishes the follies of the children of Israel before him. He turned against the reforms that his forefather and his forefathers had brought about. He made a grove, as did Ahab, king of Israel. So he didn't just follow the nations that had been in the land before him. He followed Israel, which had gone into captivity for the deeds of Ahab. He followed them. He was provoking the Lord at every point. And he just turned, he turned again against all that was wise.

It says later, he worshipped all the hosts of heaven and served them. We would call that astrology, wouldn't we? Worshipping the hosts of heaven. If you go to a newspaper, I don't know if anybody reads newspapers anymore, but when we were younger, we had newspapers. There was always a column in the newspaper for the astrological significance of the day. Here we are, thousands of years later, after Manasseh, still publishing in our newspapers the astrological signs. Some people say, "So what sign of the zodiac are you under?" And each is born in a particular way. The Chinese say that you get to be born in the year of the, and there's all kinds of animals. The, those of us in Canada, we say, no, we're born under the zodiac. And that's simply an astrological, idolatrous behavior. Canada, in many respects, given today to the same sins to which Manasseh led his people to return. How foolish.

He built altars in the house of the Lord, of which the Lord had said, "In Jerusalem, will I put my name." So, among other things he did, it wasn't just outward. He went into the house of the Lord. And he built altars there in the house of the Lord for his heathen gods. A lot of people start out by saying, "I'm just not going to follow the Lord the way he wants." And then they say, "Well, I follow the Lord in some ways, and I follow others as well." And so, he started out by following other gods and the God of Israel. But soon he got in, or the God of Judah, soon he got into the house of the Lord. And he put altars to the heathen gods in the house of the Lord. The Lord said, "In Jerusalem, I'll put my name." That is a key line. It is for the Lord. And he took that which was devoted to the Lord and turned it around and devoted it to his heathen gods.

I marvel when people turn away from the Lord, how **bold** they get against the Lord. They think the Lord isn't listening. But the Lord is listening. What is happening to the Lord in all this? We read the verse. He provoked the Lord. Have you learned in life? Don't provoke the boss. A child says, "I'd better not provoke my father." And sometimes the child is smart enough to take one look at his father and say, "I'd better behave this evening. If I step out of line, I'm in real trouble." Manasseh provoked the Lord and went into his house.

And took his name off his house. Put the name of his gods in his house.

And then verse five says, he built altars for all the hosts of heaven in the two courts of the house of the Lord. What's that mean? Well, there were. In the house of the Lord, there was the outer court. And then there was the holy place. And then there was the most holy place. And he went into the holy place. And then he went into the most holy place. And in those two courts, he built altars for his false gods. How do you think God felt? He was provoking the Lord. **Don't provoke the Lord.**

Verse six. He made his son pass through the fire. That was the way they served their God, Malak. They didn't want the children. So Malak was a good God for them. He made it possible. "He didn't get rid of your children and worship me at the same time." What a wonderful idea that is. We call it abortion. They call it other things. **God hates it.** The culture says it's right. Canada said it's part of our nationality. **God hates it.**

He made his son pass through the fire. And then he observed times. Used enchantments. Dealt with familiar spirits and wizards. And all of that is demon worship, isn't it? He observed times. Remember anybody else in scripture who observed times? Haman was his name. And he went out of his way to make sure that his plan to destroy Mordecai and the Jews was according to the times that he had got through his enchantments. And the Lord turned the whole thing upside down. And that very time was the time when Haman was defeated and the Jews were delivered.

The Lord is in charge of the calendar. It is not for you to know the times and the seasons. He told the children of Israel in his last discussion with them or the disciples in his last discussion when he went to heaven. He's in charge of the times. Now the psalmist said,

[Psalms 31:15 NKJV]

My times are in Your hand; Deliver me from the hand of my enemies, And from those who persecute me.

And we say, "Hallelujah, Lord." And we want to leave them there. You are in charge of the times. You decide when we're going to do what we're going to do. There's nothing superstitious about times. There's not a good day and a bad day, though the heathen will tell you that. Our times are in God's hands. He used enchantments. I'm not sure what they are, how it worked. Maybe the witch of Endor used them. We don't understand them all. All we know is that they're diabolical. He dealt with familiar spirits as Saul did with the witch of Endor.

And the summary is, He wrought much wickedness in the sight of the Lord to provoke him to anger. How much do you have to do that's wrong to provoke the Lord to anger? And sometimes we say it would have been better if he'd been provoked to anger earlier, because I got into real trouble. Don't provoke the Lord to anger. Manasseh, you're going the wrong way. You're in deep, deep trouble. So, Eric, that's maybe a place to stop. We'll pick up seven to nine later. But maybe you've got some comments on those. As well, I'm wondering if there's others that might have a few comments. First, regarding these first few verses. Yes, go ahead, Pete.

Discussion: The Hosts of Heaven

Pete Just a connection of what Harold was saying of all the list of the things that he did in the end of verse 3. It says, "And he worshipped all the hosts of heaven and served them." It just connected my mind to Revelation 19. John and the angel. Revelation 19? Yeah. Verse? And verse 10. The angel had been talking, and then verse 10 says,

[Revelation 19:10 NKJV]

And I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, "See that you do not do that! I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren who have the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."

So even the angels, the hosts, know that you don't worship them. So I don't know. That's the connection. Amen.

Eric Yes. The, worshipping the host of heaven. There is a thought connected to that, that connects the stars with the angels. You've made that connection, not directly, but you infer that. Is that not correct?

Pete Well, I was thinking more of angels.

Eric But, yeah. But there is a connection, I believe. And the connection is this, that Daniel talks about,

[Daniel 12:3 NKJV]

Those who are wise shall shine Like the brightness of the firmament, And those who turn many to righteousness Like the stars forever and ever.

Difference. Also, there, the description of angels is of morning stars in the scripture.

[Job 38:7 NKJV]

When the morning stars sang together,
And all the sons of God shouted for joy?

Now, those, every star we know, is different. There are groups of stars, classifications of stars, which astronomers group certain stars, but each of those in that certain classification or grouping, they're all individually different. Size, and composition, and so on. Now, God is the God of the living. He has infused life into the entire universe. What is then the stars' home for? I believe, indeed, that angels do, are connected with every star. There's an angel, perhaps, there. There's connections, inferred through scripture for that.

So, worshipping, though, that, those hosts of heaven, as he calls it here, worshipping the host of heaven. It's an interesting thing. It doesn't say the stars of the sky, but the host of heaven. And so, we know that behind every idol, there is a demon that is connected to that worship. Satan is getting his adoration from those that would

worship idols. So, I'm just making that connection there, the host of the heavens. Unimportant, I think, in many ways, but just suggestive of what the universe is made up of, and who inhabits the universe. Is it all empty space? Where was the realm of the angels? Well, the morning stars. They rejoiced. Did they not? The whole universe broke out in praise when he laid the foundations of the earth, where man, who would be created in the image of God, would be placed on the earth. So, those are, I don't know if that's of any importance. You may disagree with me, but at least my mind takes me to that place, and I just share it with you tonight.

The Extension of Hezekiah's Life

Eric Anything else? Any other thought concerning this Manasseh? I think, first of all, if there's not any, I think of Hezekiah. You recall that Manasseh comes to the throne at 12 years of age. Now, when Hezekiah got sick, he had no sons. He had no children. There were no heirs. His heirs were not on the throne. He did not have an heir for the throne. So, the Lord added 15 years to Hezekiah's life.

[2 Kings 20:6 NKJV]

And I will add to your days fifteen years. I will deliver you and this city from the hand of the king of Assyria; and I will defend this city for My own sake, and for the sake of My servant David.'

So, Manasseh would have been born during that time when God restored health to Hezekiah, and three years after that, his health was restored. Then Manasseh was born. Now, if Hezekiah, let's, if he had been able to foresee the wickedness of his son, and what would happen to his beloved nation that he had spent his lifetime restoring, I wonder if he would have prayed so earnestly for God to extend his life.

Now, we know that he didn't have an heir, but that wasn't Hezekiah's problem. That was God's problem. Just because Hezekiah did not have a successor for the throne, he could have left that up to the Lord. There were other ways that the Lord could have done that.

Through some, another of Ahaz's sons, for example, been raised up, if Hezekiah didn't have one, and so on. There must have been other ways that God, that was God's problem, not Hezekiah's. Amen.

So, he could have left it up to the Lord to provide the successor, because he knew the covenant that God had made with David, that he would raise up from David's seed, a kingdom that would last forever.

[2 Samuel 7:12-13 NKJV]

¹² "When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. ¹³ He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.

So, he could have said, "Lord, you're taking my life now. I think I will just let you take me home to my rest. I've labored for 15 years." The other thing about Hezekiah's last 15 years, nothing really good comes out of it that we know about. The first 15 years were spent in reform of the nation. The complete turning around of that nation, and the celebration, the reinstatement of the priesthood, and the temple worship, and the, and the Passovers that they celebrated. And it was a time of great joy and rejoicing, and he grew in great strength and power. So, but the last 15 years are kind of silent, except for the fact that he had Manasseh as a son. And when the ambassadors came from Babylon, he, in his pride, showed them all the treasures of his house. So, there was pride there, in, in addition, to, giving birth to Manasseh.

So, but with Manasseh, then, we see that one of the very best of the kings, second only, I think, to David himself, he's compared there to the very worst of the kings. There wasn't any that were worse than Manasseh. We'll read more about how he filled Jerusalem with blood, and so on, a little bit later. But one wonders, what influences turned this young man, 12 years of age, when he came to the throne, with every advantage of a kingdom that was good, a good kingdom, well established under a beloved king? What were the influences that

formed Manasseh so quickly? At 12 years of age, I don't expect that things would have got as bad as we read here immediately. But certainly, certain trends would begin.

But what were his early influences, you might say? Well, Harold has mentioned his mother, Hephzibah. Hephzibah means my delight is in her. Now, Hephzibah is only found, one other place in scripture, in Isaiah chapter 62, and verse 4. And, not in relation to Hezekiah's wife, but, in a wholly different context.

[Isaiah 62:4 NKJV]

You shall no longer be termed Forsaken, Nor shall your land any more be termed Desolate; But you shall be called Hephzibah, and your land Beulah; For the LORD delights in you, And your land shall be married.

So, Isaiah chapter 62, and verse 4, where the Lord is assuring Zion, giving assurance to Israel, that in the future days, in the latter days, God is going to bring back Jerusalem to be the prominent city of the world, and to save all of Israel, when all Israel will be saved. And He's going to bring them back and establish them in their land, according to the promises that He makes in so many different places by the prophets.

In verse 4, He says, "You shall no longer be termed forsaken." He's speaking to the nation now, of the Jews. "You'll no longer be termed forsaken," as they are today, in many lands, the Jews are being attacked on every hand, and have down through the last 2,000 years, been subject to persecution from one country to another country to another country. They were forsaken. Well, they had forsaken their king, had they not? And so, God forsook them and scattered them among the nations. But He says, "Here's a coming time when you'll no longer be forsaken, and nor shall your land anymore be turned desolate. But you shall be called Hephzibah. That is, my delight is in her. And Beulah." A Beulah means literally married. And we get that as he continues. For he says, the Lord delights in you. And as a young man marries, and your land shall be married. The Lord

delights in you, and your land shall be married. Hephzibah, my delight is in her. Well, she must have been a well-loved woman. It's hard for me to understand that she would have an evil influence upon this young boy. What other—it's possible, though, that she became very self-centered. Who knows? Scripture's silent on all this.

The Atmosphere of the Nation

Eric How could then this young man, with such a godly heritage, turn to such wickedness at that young age? Verse nine, and we'll get there in a little while. But we find the general sense of the nation was complacency. When they—it says in verse eight, that they paid no—or verse nine—they paid no attention, that is, to the law. They had become complacent under Hezekiah. Things have been going so well for so long. And now, they're coasting along. And they're not ready for the next hill to climb. They become self-satisfied. And "we don't need the Lord any longer."

Do we not see parallels in our land here? A land of freedom and wealth. A land that God has blessed in the past. But now, what do we see? We see our leaders leading us in paths of unrighteousness. We see parliament passing laws that may restrict a real, righteous living and freedom to do so. So, we have become complacent here in the West. And the laws of God, we don't pay any heed to the laws of God. We make our own laws, people say. So, perhaps then that the general attitude around Manasseh, this young king, and all his counselors, were, "We don't really need to worry about God and his laws. Things have been going good for the last 29 years since Hezekiah came. He's established all these things, and really, it, it, we deserve it as the people of God. We're the chosen people. Our history is, God has done great things for us. We deserve it because we are the people." And so, they don't need God anymore. They become complacent.

And, perhaps, with this attitude around him, a national complacency around him, not only among the leaders, among the priesthood—why would the priests allow Manasseh to invade the courts of the temple and bring in into the idolatry into those courts where the people would gather, the people of Israel, and those that had been purified,

only? So, this complacency, I think it was partly part of the problem with Manasseh. But he had a rebellious heart, as well. It's in full display.

But we'll see later on that in his heart, he still acknowledged God. And we'll see as we go through his life this evening that he was, probably, a true believer. Even as wicked as the things that he did in his turning away from God, we find in Chronicles a record of him being restored. It shows you the depths of the human heart. It shows the degradation, the absolute sinfulness of the old nature. That Paul could say, "I know that in me, that is in my flesh, dwells no good thing." There's nothing in me that is of any good. The only good that is in us is that which is born by the spirit of God, the new man that is lived out in us as we submit ourselves to Christ. So I think that Manasseh will give us a stark example of that: in the flesh, there dwells no good thing. Utterly, utterly corrupt, and as far as God is concerned, has consigned the flesh to utter destruction, to death itself. The cross is the means by which God has destroyed the flesh, the sinful nature. So, those are my opening verses. I'll just say one more thing—I'll wait until verse nine, but I better wait until you left off, I think, in verse six, did you not, Harold?

Harold Yeah, I finished verse six, yes.

Eric Well, you carry on then, in verse seven, because I have some more comments that'll be.

Speaker Eric, can I just make one quick? Yes, please. I do have a question because in the previous chapter, Hezekiah received that prophecy from Isaiah, and I'm wondering if that prophecy—it seems likely that it would have been told to Manasseh as well. So, I'm wondering if that complacency you talked about could have been a misplaced idea of abandonment, because that prophecy, it's unclear exactly who Hezekiah's descendants would be. Which prophecy? The one that occurs in verse 16 on chapter 20.

[2 Kings 20:16-19 NKJV]

¹⁶ Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, "Hear the word of the LORD: ¹⁷
'Behold, the days are coming when all that is in your house, and

what your fathers have accumulated until this day, shall be carried to Babylon; nothing shall be left,' says the LORD. ¹⁸ 'And they shall take away some of your sons who will descend from you, whom you will beget; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.'"

¹⁹ So Hezekiah said to Isaiah, "The word of the LORD which you have spoken is good!" For he said, "Will there not be peace and truth at least in my days?"

And Hezekiah's response is very interesting. It seems very odd, almost like... he says the word of the Lord you have spoken is good, which seems like a correct response. But then he says, "Will there not be peace and security in my lifetime?" Which almost seems very like myopic and very short-sighted. But what if Manasseh heard that same prophecy and felt abandonment? And I'm not sure if they were worshipping Babylonian gods. In other words, could they have felt abandoned by, you know, by God? And maybe that created a defiance or... The reason I'm saying this is there's always a way back. Like if you think of Jonah, the prophecy that Jonah gave to the Ninevites was eight words. "In 40 days, the nation will be completely overturned." That's like an eight-word prophecy. They didn't know anything about God, and yet they managed to repent in a proficient way. But I'm wondering if Manasseh and the culture was demoralized by Isaiah's prophecy. Am I off?

Eric No, you're not off. I haven't considered that. That's interesting. An interesting connection. How, what effect would that have on it? Now, that prophecy was made before Manasseh was born, certainly, 15 years. That happened, I would take it. Was it not? No. Sorry. No. I think it was after the ambassadors came. That's true. So when they came, we don't know, but it would be in the last 15 years of the life of Hezekiah when his life was extended that amount of time. Right? So it would be sometime during that time. What effect would that be? Yes. I'm not sure. It's a consideration and an interesting aside there. But it just adds, I think, to the—what was the atmospheric change in the nation for the people to react the way they did, not heeding the word, and willingly be seduced by Manasseh?

Later on, we read how he was not a passive king. He was active. He actually seduced others into this idolatry. But where he learned that and why he did that—whether or not he felt, as you suggested, that he felt abandoned by the Lord, that there was no hope with Jehovah, that there was going to be coming a judgment because of the past sins of the kings but was now deferred during Hezekiah's time. But now in Manasseh's time, that is no longer in effect. His father passed away and thus the terms of that prophecy. Correct? Yeah. But then, so it may have been the speculation that he might have turned to the other gods then to try and deflect this coming judgment. I'm not sure of that. But that is a definite possibility. I hope you are as impressed as I am. Anyway.

Seducing the Nation

Harold It's interesting that because of his sin, we're going to see when we get to 2 Chronicles that Manasseh is taken captive by the kings of Assyria and he is taken captive by them into Babylon. And I just wonder when he was in Babylon if he didn't go back to this prophecy that we've been talking about and say, "It hasn't been fulfilled completely but I am in Babylon and I have been carried into Babylon and maybe the prophecy is beginning to be fulfilled in me." So, I'm not going to elaborate on this more, but brethren, just remember that Manasseh was taken captive not to Assyria but by Assyrians he was taken captive to Babylon. All right, back now to 2 Kings chapter 21 and verse 7.

[2 Kings 21:7-9 NKJV]

⁷ He even set a carved image of Asherah that he had made, in the house of which the LORD had said to David and to Solomon his son,

"In this house and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, I will put My name forever;

⁸ and I will not make the feet of Israel wander anymore from the land which I gave their fathers--only if they are careful to do according to all that I have commanded them, and according to

all the law that My servant Moses commanded them." ⁹ But they paid no attention, and Manasseh seduced them to do more evil than the nations whom the LORD had destroyed before the children of Israel.

How bad was Manasseh? Well he knew the promise that the Lord had made that they will never go out of the land, but he did more evil than the nations that had been there before and verse 9 he seduced Judah to do more evil than the nations. It wasn't just he that did the evil; he went about seducing them to do evil. Manasseh was a bad man. Manasseh said, "My job is I am going to teach these people to do more evil than even the nations who Joshua destroyed."

There's a lot of evil in the world and it continues for a long time because the Lord though highly provoked does not execute judgment immediately. Remember the verse in Ecclesiastes?

[Ecclesiastes 8:11 NKJV]

Because the sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.

And the judgment did not come immediately for the nation. It did ultimately come for Manasseh but it didn't come immediately for the nation. So going back now to Canada to the world in which we live—not just Canada but the world today—big changes in government laws. Have you noticed what they often are? The big changes in government laws are very often that we have decided to **legalize what God says is sin**. Now that's bad news. There's a movement which basically says "defund the police." Why would you defund the police? Because we don't want to call sin anymore.

How did abortion ever come about? How did the rotten morals laws that we've got come about? Very simply, we simply said, "God calls it sin. We will make it legal. We know better than God." That is a primary problem in the world today. Governments are saying and the people choosing were saying, "We know better than God." What we

will do is we will say, "God, you were wrong. Sin is not that bad." And remember I told you repeatedly that the devil's two greatest lies are: number one, God is not that good; and number two, sin is not that bad. And both of them are from the pit of hell. God **is** good. And don't ever pick up a theology or anything else that might suggest that God is anything but good. And don't ever pick up a theology that says sin is anything other but very bad.

So here we have this terrible man at the end of verse nine. Manasseh seduced them to do more evil than did the nations whom the Lord destroyed before the children of Israel. You remember Billy Graham's famous line? He said, "If God doesn't judge America, he will have to apologize to Sodom and Gomorrah." And there's a sense in which America is heading down the road where they will be doing more evil than Sodom and Gomorrah. So those are my thoughts down to the end of verse nine.

Eric I'll only make one observation which I suggested earlier. That is that the king was not a passive observer or a passive king sort of bending to the desires of the people and the wishes of the leaders. But instead, he was the **active seducer**, the active participant in Satan's bringing the nation down to its knees. And we compare Satan's devices. Manasseh was really just doing the devil's work there. Seduce. The devil, Satan, is a seductive force. He seduced Eve in the garden. And Paul was worried that the Corinthians might be seduced too by the devil's lie. And so he's very persuasive.

So this young king was a very persuasive power in the kingdom to take this complacent nation, probably still performing the daily rituals in the temple, coming up to the feasts, doing them as more a social gathering than worship in the temple. But now because of that, the weakness of their spirituality, he was able to seduce them to begin this terrible list of idolatry that we had read earlier. And he seduced them, it says, to do more evil than the nations whom the Lord had destroyed before the children of Israel. **More evil.**

Remember God telling Abraham hundreds of years before, he said, "It's going to be 400 years, 430 years." But he said,

[Genesis 15:16 NKJV]

But in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete."

They were bad people then. He waited 400 years in waiting until the Amorites or the Canaanites, their wickedness had come to heaven, and they must be destroyed, replaced by God's people. And so he brought them in under Joshua, and they destroyed those Canaanite tribes. But now it says that Manasseh seduced the children of Israel to do **more evil** than those same nations whom the Lord had destroyed.

The terrible sins that the Canaanites practiced, not only the sacrifice of their children, but their rites and their cultish practices are hardly—you can hardly read them without your mind becoming defiled by the wickedness of their sinful practices. And he seduced them to more and more and more. If Solomon, in all his wisdom, tried to find meaning in the world without God, Manasseh tried everything to do to go into the very depths of hell, as it were, for the most degrading human things possible. He led the nation down on a downward spiral, a downward path that they never ever would really recover from.

Josiah, we're going to read a couple of kings, his grandson Josiah, did have a limited and temporary reform, but it was only a stopgap measure before the nation was carried away into the land where idolatry had its birth—the beginning of idolatry—into Babylon itself. And of course, from there, the children of Israel, just as Manasseh did, the children of Israel, when they come back out of Babylon from their captivity, they are no longer idolaters. That temptation is gone forever. And we find that Manasseh is a bit of a type of the Jews themselves, a prefiguring of them in his restoration after his captivity in that land of idolatry. So I hand it back over to you, dear brother. Carry on.

The Prophetic Judgment

Harold Okay, we'll take a look at verses 10 down through 15.

[2 Kings 21:10-15 NKJV]

¹⁰ And the LORD spoke by His servants the prophets, saying, ¹¹ "Because Manasseh king of Judah has done these abominations (he has acted more wickedly than all the Amorites who were before him, and has also made Judah sin with his idols), ¹² therefore thus says the LORD God of Israel: "Behold, I am bringing such calamity upon Jerusalem and Judah, that whoever hears of it, both his ears will tingle. ¹³ And I will stretch over Jerusalem the measuring line of Samaria and the plummet of the house of Ahab; I will wipe Jerusalem as one wipes a dish, wiping it and turning it upside down. ¹⁴ So I will forsake the remnant of My inheritance and deliver them into the hand of their enemies; and they shall become victims of plunder to all their enemies, ¹⁵ because they have done evil in My sight, and have provoked Me to anger since the day their fathers came out of Egypt, even to this day."

Those are pretty strong words. And the prophets came to Manasseh. It's interesting, the word here is, "the Lord spoke by his servants the prophets saying," there wasn't just one prophet who came to Manasseh. There wasn't just one occasion when the prophets came to Manasseh. He got it over and over and over and over again. That is God's way. Have you ever noticed that much of scripture is warnings? Over and over and over and over. He warns us. So the verse is that every mouth will be shut when they stand before God. God will say, "Why did you do that?" And they'll say, "Well, I did it for this reason." And God said, "Did you not hear my warning? Did I not warn you not to do that?" And over and over and over again, he's issued his warnings.

Very few people in the world today can say, "I never heard the warnings of God." Most of them heard it from the Bible. Many of them heard it through the stories of their life. And you probably, like

me, have heard warnings from the Lord, not out of scripture, but out of the circumstances of life. God sends warnings, and here he's sending his warnings to Manasseh, not by the voice of one, but by the voice of many prophets. And it's interesting, he says in the end of verse 12, "Behold, I am bringing such evil upon Jerusalem, and Judah, that whoever heareth it, both his ears shall tingle." I found that little phrase amazing when I read this verse many years ago.

Both his ears shall tingle. Sometimes we say, "Wow, that tingled my ear." But in this case, both ears tingled. How could it possibly be that God will do such terrible things to Jerusalem and to Judah?

Answer: because they wouldn't listen to the prophets in the days of Manasseh. And it's going to come. It'll be so bad, both their ears will tingle.

When did these prophecies begin? Well, a long time ago. But certainly, Moses reiterated it over and over again in the book of Deuteronomy. It's there in Exodus, Leviticus, Deuteronomy, Numbers. The Lord says it over and over again. How many prophets have prophesied evil for those who do—prophesy calamity and destruction for those who do evil? And the warnings are multitudinous. There's a line then, "both his ears shall tingle." I found very interesting.

And then the next verse, he says, "I will wipe Jerusalem as a man wipes a dish, wiping it and turning it upside down." When was the last time you did the dishes? And the answer is, you say, "That dish is dirty." And so, you put your hand in the water, you take a cloth, and you rub the dish clear on one side. Then you turn it upside down, and you rub it clear on the other side. And you say, "This is a dirty dish. It is going to be clean by the time it goes into the dryer, and I am going to make this clean." And that's God saying a very colorful language. Every one of us who's ever dried a dish, washed a dish, understands. And God says, "That's what I'm going to do. I am going to make Jerusalem clean."

Verse 14, "I will forsake the remnant of mine inheritance." Who were the remnant? Well, the remnant were those who were carried into Babylon. And when they got to Babylon, not all of them were treated very well. Many of the remnant there were in deep trouble. Sorry,

Daniel was there. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were there. But they had big problems. They had big problems.

All right. So, why did he do this? Because verse 15, "they have done that which was evil in my sight. And they have provoked me to anger." Our God is in the heavens. He looks down. Does he ever see anything that provokes him to anger? And the answer is yes, in the world, in the church, and very often in the hearts of his people. All right. So, that's the story. Then, down to verse 15. Probably should do 16 as well.

[2 Kings 21:16 NKJV]

¹⁶ Moreover Manasseh shed very much innocent blood, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another, besides his sin by which he made Judah sin, in doing evil in the sight of the LORD.

How many did he kill? Many. Who did he kill? Well, the innocent. 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. So, was it just that he said, "You can do bad things now? You should do bad things now?" No. He shed the innocent blood of those who said, "Manasseh, you say we should do these bad things. We will not do it." Manasseh said, "Off with your head." And many of the godly in that land were slaughtered by Manasseh. He was a fearsome man. I don't think you walked into his office and said, "Excuse me Manasseh, but you are wrong." I think that those who did so very often were met with the sword. I don't understand it. All we know is Jerusalem was filled from one end to another with the people who were slain. So, those are our stories down to the end of verse 16, the story of Manasseh and the evil that he did.

Tradition and Restoration

Eric Yeah, in verse 10, again, "the Lord spoke by his servants, the prophets," and as we complete our evening, the—the only prophet that we know of that prophesied during Manasseh's reign of 52 years

was the prophet Joel. And so, he may have been one of those prophets. And, of course, Joel, the prophet Joel, prophesied concerning the day of the Lord, the coming, the final judgment, when the Lord will come to earth to judge the earth in righteousness.

But, it says there in verse 16—I'll make some comments there—that there is a Jewish tradition, and it's quoted often by commentators, and that is that the prophet Isaiah, who prophesied during the reigns of Ahaz, his grandfather, and Hezekiah, his father, now Isaiah was a very aged man. And there's a Jewish tradition that Isaiah was sawn in two by Manasseh. Now, Josephus makes a bleak reference to it, but doesn't mention who the prophet was. But, we do have a record in Hebrews. If you turn to the New Testament, the book of Hebrews chapter 11, there it refers to those who had lived by faith, those that had died by faith. We read there in verse 35,

[Hebrews 11:35-37 NKJV]

³⁵ Women received their dead raised to life again. Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. ³⁶ Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. ³⁷ They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented--

Now, that tradition is an ancient one, and whether or not it's true or not, but it certainly fits into the character and the depths to which this Manasseh's sin had carried him to. But also, next week, as we will look into the restoration of Manasseh, we'll see the **great mercy of God**. If Manasseh's sin was so great, God's mercy is even greater. He can restore this man again.

So, next week, we're going to get a little sunshine poking out from the clouds, and maybe it'll warm our spiritual bones a little bit to think of Manasseh in his brokenness, and we'll see how it took—what it took God to bring him to the breaking point. And we might see a comparison to a man like Pharaoh, where trials and difficulties only

make them harder, but those who are the Lord's, those trials and so on finally break them and soften them to the point of restoration—of repentance and restoration. I see our time is gone. Are there any other comments that might be made before we ask someone to close in prayer?

Harold Just one comment, and that is that we're going to start next week with the part of the story of Manasseh that is not found in 2 Kings chapter 21. We're going to be reading in 2 Chronicles chapter 33. 2 Chronicles 33 for our studies next week to pick up the story and the story of what happened immediately to Manasseh, how he went into captivity and how in that place he humbled himself and the Lord restored him. So that's where we go next week if you want to read ahead. Thank you.