

2 Kings Chapter 21

Verses 1-2

Manasseh's 55 year reign was the longest of any of the Old Testament kings.

Unlike his godly father, Hezekiah, he reproduced the wickedness of his grandfather Ahaz.

He emulated Ahaz's spiritual evil by bringing pagan altars into various places of the temple complex and placing the Asherah symbol within the temple itself (verses 3-7).

For Asherah (see the note on Judges 3:6).

Manasseh was the worst of the Judean kings (2 Chron. 33:1-9).

Besides killing a mass of innocent people (21:16), including the prophet Isaiah, he "built up again the high places" so idolatry could resume, "worshiped all the host of heaven" (sun, moon, stars), rather than God (Deut. 4:19; 17:2-7), and immersed himself in occult practices and human sacrifice.

As a final act of perversity, he brought idols into God's temple.

Even so, 2 Chronicles reports that when Manasseh prayed and repented, God heard him (2 Chron. 33:12-16).

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."

"Twelve years old":

Manasseh began to reign as co-regent alongside his father, Hezekiah (in 695 B.C.).

Since the years of the subsequent royal reigns in Judah total 10 years longer than the actual historical period and the dates of the later kings synchronize well with history, it is best to assume a 10 year co-regency in Manasseh's long reign.

Hezekiah groomed his son as a youth to succeed him as king; however, Manasseh turned out to be the worst king in Judah's history.

"Fifty and five years".

695-642 B.C.; see notes on 2 Chron. 33:1-20.

Since Manasseh was 12 years old when he began to reign, we can safely assume that this child was born to Hezekiah 3 years after his terrible illness.

The name "Manasseh" means forgetting.

We can see why Hezekiah would have named his son this.

He was forgetting his illness, and this child was helping him forget.

In some places, Manasseh is spoken of as Manasses.

"Hephzibah" means my delight is in her.

2 Kings 21:2 "And he did [that which was] evil in the sight of the LORD, after the abominations of the heathen, whom the LORD cast out before the children of Israel."

“The abominations of the heathen”:

The detestable practices of the Canaanites were enumerated.

In Deut. 18:9-12.

Israel’s reproduction of these abominable practices of the nations that precede her in the land was forbidden (in Deut. 12:29-31).

The idolatry of Manasseh is detailed (in verses 3-9; compare 17:7-12; 15-17).

Manasseh was rather young when Hezekiah died, so he possibly did not have much of the training of his father.

It appears that many of the people in Jerusalem still believed like Ahaz, Manasseh's grandfather.

Manasseh probably was influenced by them.

It seemed that many of Manasseh's friends were heathens.

2 Kings 21:3 "For he built up again the high places which Hezekiah his father had destroyed; and he reared up altars for Baal, and made a grove, as did Ahab king of Israel; and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served them."

“High places ... altars ... host of heaven”:

See note on 17:16.

The worship of the sun, moon and stars was prohibited (in Deut. 4:19; 17:2-5).

The children of Israel all through the ages, had wanted to worship in the high places, instead of in the temple provided for that purpose.

We read where Hezekiah abolished Baal worship and the worship in the high places, but we did not hear where he executed those involved in these evil worship practices.

They had probably secretly still carried on the worship, after Hezekiah had done away with it.

That is why it immediately was re-instituted the minute Hezekiah dies.

Worshipping the host of heaven has to do with astrology.

That is just as evil today, as it was in the time of Manasseh.

2 Kings 21:4 "And he built altars in the house of the LORD, of which the LORD said, In Jerusalem will I put my name."

“Altars in the house of the LORD”:

These altars were dedicated to “the host of heaven” (verse 5).

The building of altars for other gods in the temple, would be an abomination.

The LORD God Jehovah had put his name in the temple.

It was for His use and no other.

This building of altars to false gods in the temple, would bring down the wrath of God.

2 Kings 21:5 "And he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the LORD."

Sun, moon, and stars.

"In the two courts of the house of the LORD":

In the court of the priests, and in the court of the people.

And all this must be supposed to be done, not as soon as he began to reign, but when he was grown up to man's estate, and had children, as the next verse shows.

Unless it can be thought that those nobles in Judah, who liked not the reformation made by Hezekiah, took the advantage of his youth, and advised him to these idolatries.

The outer court was for the people, and the inner court had been for use of the priests.

These altars stood beside the altar of God.

2 Kings 21:6 "And he made his son pass through the fire, and observed times, and used enchantments, and dealt with familiar spirits and wizards: he wrought much wickedness in the sight of the LORD, to provoke [him] to anger."

“Made his son pass through the fire”:

See note on 16:3.

“Times ... enchantments ... familiar spirits and wizards”:

The king was engaged in every form of occultism, including black magic, fortune-telling, demon contacts, and wizards.

All this was in direct violation of God’s law (Lev. 19:31; Deut. 18:9-12).

We can see from the following Scriptures that they were without excuse, because they had the law of God which strictly forbids these practices anywhere.

It would make it even worse for them to be doing them in the house of the LORD.

Deuteronomy 18:10-12 "There shall not be found among you [any one] that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, [or] that useth divination, [or] an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch," "Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer." "For all that do these things [are] an abomination unto the LORD: and because of these abominations the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee."

In just a few years, the LORD would allow the temple to be burned, because of these terrible practices in the temple.

He would also (in His wrath), let Jerusalem be burned.

2 Kings 21:7 "And he set a graven image of the grove that he had made in the house, of which the LORD said to David, and to Solomon his son, In this house, and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all tribes of Israel, will I put my name for ever:"

“Set ... put”:

Manasseh provoked the LORD by “setting” an idol of a Canaanite goddess in the temple where the LORD had “set” His name (see 1 Kings 8:29; 9:3; 2 Chron. 17:12, 16).

Asherah (23:4; 2 Chron. 15:16), was believed to be the mother of 70 deities, including Baal.

It is forbidden in the Ten Commandments to make a graven image, but it is a much worse sin to set the abomination up in the temple.

God had chosen the city of Jerusalem and the temple to be His forever.

They had broken the heart of God with this blasphemy.

Verses 8-9

This alludes to the promise of (2 Sam. 7:10).

From the very start of their time in Canaan, the people were called to this obedience, but because the people of Judah did not follow carefully the stipulations of the Mosaic Law, they were again led into idolatry by Manasseh.

Their idolatry even exceeded the idolatry of the Canaanites from whom they took the land.

2 Kings 21:8 "Neither will I make the feet of Israel move any more out of the land which I gave their fathers; only if they will observe to do according to all that I have commanded them, and according to all the law that my servant Moses commanded them."

Or suffer them to be carried captive into another land, as in the times of the judges; that is, on the following condition.

"Only if they will observe to do according to all that I have commanded them, and according to all the law that my servant Moses commanded them":

By obedience to which they had the tenure of the land of Canaan (Isa. 1:19).

This land had been given to the tribes of Israel as their inheritance forever.

God had no intention of them ever living anywhere else.

The only thing they had to do, was remain faithful to the LORD and keep His commandments.

The law of God is, many times, spoken of as the Law of Moses.

2 Kings 21:9 "But they hearkened not: and Manasseh seduced them to do more evil than did the nations whom the LORD destroyed before the children of Israel."

God sent repeated warnings to "Manasseh" and the people, but to no avail (2 Chron. 33:10).

Those who pay "Harkened not" to the words of God would be "destroyed" by evil (Prov. 29:12).

The sins were of the people of Judah.

Manasseh was their leader, but they were willing to be led into these abominations.

This was a young king with no desire to follow the ways of the LORD.

There was revelry, and many of the people were caught up in this sinful way of life.

A king can influence his people toward good or evil.

In the case of Manasseh, he led them into terrible sin, blaspheming the name of the LORD.

Verses 10-15

“The line” indicates the city would be assessed by God and, like a dangerous building today, would be condemned.

2 Kings 21:10 "And the LORD spake by his servants the prophets, saying,"

“The prophets”:

Through his spokesman, the LORD announced Judah’s judgment.

In (verses 11-15), the prophetic message to Judah is summarized.

Prophets, in the verse above, is a plural word.

We know from that, there were some other prophets that were loyal to God besides Isaiah.

Some believe that Habakkuk was of this time, and perhaps, Nahum and Zephaniah.

These were definitely the LORD's prophets.

He spoke to them in this verse.

It is believed Manasseh killed Isaiah.

2 Kings 21:11 "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:"

“Amorites”:

A general designation of the original inhabitants of Canaan (Gen. 15:16; Joshua 24:8).

2 Kings 21:12 "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."

Who, though kind and gracious to Israel as their covenant God, is yet just and righteous, as well as he is a sovereign Being and LORD of all.

"Behold, I am bringing such evil upon Jerusalem and Judah, that whosoever heareth of it, both his ears shall tingle":

It will make such a noise in the world, and be so horrible and terrible; and if, the report of it would be so dreadful as to make a man's ears tingle, and his heart tremble, what must it be to endure it (Ezek. 22:14)?

We know that the LORD had postponed judgment on Jerusalem and Judah because of the things that Hezekiah had done.

Jerusalem and Judah were no better than the heathen nations that God had run out of this country.

They were not worshipping the One True God, but had begun to worship idols and false gods, such as Baal.

The worst thing they had done was desecrate the temple of the LORD, by bringing these abominations into the temple of the LORD.

The wrath of God will come upon them so greatly, it will be the talk of all the nations around them.

The destruction will be so great, it will be worse than they could imagine.

2 Kings 21:13 "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."

“The plummet”:

These were weighted lines dropped from walls to see whether they were structurally straight (Isa. 28:17; Amos 7:7-8).

Walls out of line were torn down.

The LORD had measured Jerusalem by the standard of His Word and had determined that the fate of Samaria (Israel), was also to befall Jerusalem.

“Wipe Jerusalem”:

As one would wipe food off a dish the LORD would wipe Jerusalem clean off the earth, i.e., obliterate her, and leave her turned upside down, empty and useless.

Samaria was evil and was judged severely, but the judgment on Judah and Jerusalem will be even greater.

They have been measured, and they came up short.

God has a standard that He measures all with.

They will not be able pass the standard.

His anger will be so great, He will wipe them off the earth like a person would wipe a plate.

They will be turned upside down until nothing is left.

2 Kings 21:14 "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;"

“Deliver”:

The LORD was going to abandon His people into the hands of enemies who would plunder them (Jer. 12:7).

“Remnant”:

Judah, the only remaining group of the chosen people.

The remnant, which God had always preserved, will not be under God's protection any longer.

There will be a small remnant, but they will not be kept by divine intervention.

When the wrath of God has fallen, they will all feel the punishment.

God will not only not help them, but He will help their enemies.

2 Kings 21:15 "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."

“Provoke me to anger”:

The history of God’s people Israel was a history of disobedience toward the LORD.

With the reign of Manasseh, the sin of Gods people climaxed, God’s patience was withdrawn, and the judgment of exile became inevitable (24:1-4).

God had forgiven them over and over for their sins, but they had done too much this time and God will not look the other way.

His fury has come up in His face.

During this time, the LORD will remove His presence from the temple in Jerusalem, and will allow the temple to be destroyed.

Their evils were worse than they had ever been before.

They were "worshipping the hosts of heaven".

They were practicing astrology.

They were worshipping Baal and Astarte.

They were even sacrificing their children to some of the false gods.

Even worse than doing all of this, was the fact that they had brought the images of the false gods and their altars into the temple.

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."

The author of Chronicles records that "Manasseh" was later captured by the Assyrians and that upon his release he repented (2 Chron. 33:11-17).

This may have occurred during the late campaigning of Ashurbanipal (668-626 B.C.; in 652-648 B.C.).

He may have been brought to Babylon in the year that Ashurbanipal himself occupied the throne (648-647 B.C.).

If so, his reforms were too few and too late to stop Judah's growing apostasy.

"Shed innocent blood very much":

The reference here is ambiguous and several interpretations have been offered:

1. Child sacrifice (verse 6);
2. Oppression and persecution of the weak (Jer. 7:6; 22:3, 17; Ezek. 22:6-31); or
3. The martyrdom of God's prophets (verse 10).

A combination of all 3 is most likely, Jewish and Christian tradition alike report that Manasseh had Isaiah sawn in two inside a hollow log (Hebrew 11:37).

It appears, that Manasseh was killing innocent people, who did not agree with him.

This killing was slanted toward those, who would not participate in the worship of false gods. Some of these killed were actually prophets.

2 Kings 21:17 "Now the rest of the acts of Manasseh, and all that he did, and his sin that he sinned, [are] they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah?"

Both good and bad, for he repented, and was humbled, and did many good things afterwards, though not recorded in this book.

"And his sin that he sinned":

His idolatry.

"Are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah?"

In which were recorded the most memorable events of their reigns.

And in the canonical book of Chronicles are many things concerning Manasseh, which are not written here (see 2 Chron. 33:11).

The book of Chronicles in the Bible tells of the warnings God sent to Manasseh through the prophets.

He did not change, and the judgment of God fell upon him.

There are many more things, besides what is in the Bible in this book of records mentioned here.

Notice, not only the things he did, but the sins that he committed are recorded.

2 Kings 21:18 "And Manasseh slept with his fathers, and was buried in the garden of his own house, in the garden of Uzza: and Amon his son reigned in his stead."

Or died, after a reign of fifty five years, and a life of sixty seven.

"And was buried in the garden of his own house, in the garden of Uzza":

Whether the burial of him here was his own choice, judging himself unworthy to lie with the kings of Judah, who had been guilty of such great sins.

Or whether the will of others, on the same account, is not certain.

And as much at a loss are we for the reason of this garden being called the garden of Uzza, whether from Uzzah that died for touching the ark (2 Sam. 6:6), or from King Uzziah (2 Kings 15:7).

The Jews buried in gardens in the times of Christ, who himself was buried in one (John 19:41).

"And Amon his son reigned in his stead":

Of whom we have the following account in the next scripture.

The burying of Manasseh in the garden of his house could be for several reasons.

He was such an evil king, he should not be buried with Hezekiah and David, who pleased God.

There is a message in this.

All men, good or bad, must one day die.

The judgment of God is pronounced on them one at a time.

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."

“Two years”

642-640 B.C.

Amon continued the idolatrous practices of his father, abandoning the LORD completely (verse 20-22; see note on 2 Chron. 33:21-25).

Amon was an evil king.

He did just what his evil father had done.

All of the worship of false gods grew even worse.

He added magic and necromancy to the evils of his father.

There seemed to be nothing too evil for him to do.

His own men killed him, after a reign of two years.

Haruz was probably an Arab.

2 Kings 21:20 "And he did [that which was] evil in the sight of the LORD, as his father Manasseh did."

Committed idolatry.

"As his father Manasseh did":

He imitated him in that, but not in his repentance and humiliation (2 Chron. 33:23).

He and his dad would rank with the vilest of all the kings of Judah.

2 Kings 21:21 "And he walked in all the way that his father walked in, and served the idols that his father served, and worshipped them:"

In his wicked way, his idolatry, witchcraft, and murders.

"And served the idols that his father served, and worshipped them":

Baal, Ashtoreth, and all the host of heaven, and all the carved images his father made, which it seems he only removed, but did not break in pieces (2 Chron. 33:22).

This is where a father was a very bad influence on his son.

They both worshipped Baal, Ashtoreth, Moloch, and Asherah.

They both followed every evil in existence in that day.

They followed astrology, witchcraft, magic, and necromancy among all other evil things.

2 Kings 21:22 "And he forsook the LORD God of his fathers, and walked not in the way of the LORD."

David, Solomon, etc.

"And walked not in the way of the LORD":

Prescribed by him in his law for the worship of him.

Some of the other evil kings had the high places, but still worshipped Jehovah too.

Manasseh and Amon did not worship the LORD at all.

They even put statues of the false gods and their altars in the temple of God.

2 Kings 21:23 "And the servants of Amon conspired against him, and slew the king in his own house."

No reason is assigned for the assassination of the wicked "Amon" (2 Chron. 33:22-24).

Perhaps the renewed religious conservatism of Manasseh's later days had produced a spark of spirituality that could not tolerate his extreme wickedness.

At any rate, with the installation of Amon's eight year-old son Josiah, a final period of spiritual concern arose in Judah (compare 22:2 with 2 Chron. 34:2).

He was so evil many people wanted to kill him.

It is interesting that his own servants killed him.

He was killed in his own home, probably because of some of the cruelty he had shown to others.

2 Kings 21:24 "And 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."

"The people of the land":

Probably a group of Judah's national leaders who killed the assassins of Amon and installed his son Josiah on the throne.

Apparently, they desired to maintain the Davidic dynasty (2 Kings 11:14-18).

The people in the land that this is speaking of were those who had followed him into this idolatrous worship.

The terrible thing about his horrendous sin, was that he had led the people into the same sins.

These same people killed the people, who killed Amon.

They, out of faithfulness to him, find his 8 year old son Josiah and make him king.

Josiah will be a king that does right in the sight of the LORD.

2 Kings 21:25 "Now the rest of the acts of Amon which he did, [are] they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah?"

No other acts of Amen have come down to us.

He was probably, during his short reign of two years, a submissive tributary of Assur-bani-pal.

2 Kings 21:26 "And he was buried in his sepulcher in the garden of Uzza: and Josiah his son reigned in his stead."

Where his father Manasseh was buried (2 Kings 21:18).

"And Josiah his son reigned in his stead":

Of whom many things are said in the two following chapters.

He was buried in the same garden with his evil father.

2 Kings Chapter 21 Questions

1. How old was Manasseh, when he began to reign?
2. How many years did he reign?
3. What does "Manasseh" mean?
4. What kind of king was he?
5. What were some of the specific evil things he did?
6. Where had these worshippers of false gods been in the reign of Hezekiah?
7. The building of altars to other gods in the temple, would be an _____.
8. Where had the LORD put His name?
9. The building of altars to false gods, would bring down God's _____.
10. What did they cause their children to do?

11. What will happen to the temple in a few years, because of these abominations?
12. Where do we read that it is forbidden to make a graven image?
13. How did these terrible things being done in the temple affect God?
14. The inheritance of this land by the children of Israel, was to be _____.
15. What must they do to keep their inheritance?
16. Who is at fault in these sins?
17. Who had the LORD sent with messages of warning?
18. Who were, probably, some of the other prophets besides Isaiah?
19. The evil, that the LORD would bring on Judah and Jerusalem, would be how bad?
20. How will God wipe Jerusalem?
21. What will happen to the remnant?
22. Who will God help?
23. What is "worshipping the host of heaven"?
24. What innocent people was Manasseh killing?
25. Where was Manasseh buried?
26. How old was Amon, when he began to reign?
27. What kind of king was he?
28. How long did he reign?
29. What evils did he add to his father's evils?
30. Who were some of the false gods they worshipped?
31. Who killed Amon?
32. Who reigned in his stead?
33. How old was he, when he began to reign?
34. What kind of king was he?