

### The Reigns of Manasseh and Amon, Evil Kings of Judah

#### 2 Kings 21

**2 Kings 21:1-18** - *“Manasseh was twelve years old when he became king, and he reigned fifty-five years in Jerusalem. His mother’s name was Hephzibah. 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. 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.*

*He also built altars in the house of the LORD, of which the LORD had said, “In Jerusalem I will put My name.” And he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the LORD. 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. 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; 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.” 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.*

*And the LORD spoke by His servants the prophets, saying, “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), 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. 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. 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, 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.’”*

*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. Now the rest of the acts of Manasseh—all that he did, and the sin that he committed—are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? So Manasseh rested with his fathers, and was buried in the garden of his own house, in the garden of Uzza. Then his son Amon reigned in his place.”*

#### Background Notes

In answer to Hezekiah’s prayer, God graciously raised King Hezekiah up from his deathbed and gave him fifteen more years to live (2 Kings 20). Notice, by the way, that the prophet Isaiah, who brought the good news, told Hezekiah to take

a lump of figs and place it on his boil (20:7). We don't know what effect this remedy had on the boil, and how it worked in the healing process. The point is that God is not opposed to using a medical approach to sickness, even when you're also praying to the Lord for healing.

Unfortunately Hezekiah did not use all the additional years of life that the Lord gave him for the glory of God. In fact, in his foolish pride, he showed off all the Temple's sacred treasures to a delegation of officials from Babylon. As a result, the Lord sternly rebuked Hezekiah, and told him that the Babylonians would return and take these treasures to Babylon, along with many Israeli captives. All of this came true when the Babylonians conquered Jerusalem, and eventually destroyed the city and the Temple in 586BC.

Another significant event took place in the fifteen extra years of life that God granted to King Hezekiah. Since King Manasseh, Hezekiah's evil son, began his reign when he was twelve years old (v1), it's quite likely that Manasseh was born during the last fifteen years of Hezekiah's life. Maybe Hezekiah should not have twisted the Lord's arm and asked for a longer life. Maybe it would have been better if good King Hezekiah had died and gone to Heaven at the time God originally intended.

## Doctrinal Points

### 1. Godliness is not genetic.

Question 1: What king of Judah had the longest reign? Answer: Manasseh - fifty-five years! Manasseh had the longest reign of any king of either Judah or Israel. Question 2: What king was the most wicked of all the kings of Judah? Answer: again, Manasseh. Verse 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."* And verse 9: *"But they paid no attention [to God's Law], and Manasseh seduced them to do more evil than the nations whom the Lord had destroyed before the children of Israel."* And verse 11: *"Manasseh acted more wickedly than all the Amorites who were before him."* The Amorites were Canaanites. From the biblical record and extra-biblical sources, we know how idolatrous and immoral the Canaanite nations were. Archaeological finds also support the biblical record of the immoralities of Canaanite pagan worship.

But wasn't Manasseh was the son of good King Hezekiah? Yes! How could such a godly father produce such an ungodly son? The answer is - **godliness is not genetic.**

Verses 3-7 list some of the terrible sins of King Manasseh. His wicked idolatry is compared with that of former King Ahab of the northern kingdom of Israel. He brought idolatrous altars right into the courts of the Temple of the Lord (v4-5). He even practiced the atrocity of child sacrifice – a horrible sin! He actually sacrificed his own sons to pagan gods (v6). Manasseh was also involved in witchcraft, in divination, and in the occult. All these practices were directly and explicitly forbidden in God's Law.

Verse 16 reveals that *"Manasseh shed very much innocent blood, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another."* Reliable Jewish tradition says that it was Manasseh who killed the prophet Isaiah by sawing his body in half.

Manasseh made Judah sin by doing what was evil in the sight of the Lord. Manasseh not only did great wickedness himself, but he led the entire nation of Judah farther into evil in the sight of the Lord. God is especially angry when national leaders desensitize the people to sin and lead them to do evil.

Verses 12-13 are the Lord's very descriptive prediction about the coming captivity of Judah, and the destruction of Jerusalem at the hands of the Babylonians. The calamity would be such that *"ears would tingle"* (v12) - in other words, the horror would be shocking to all who heard. The same plumb-line standard that God used to prove Samaria's overwhelming guilt would be used against Jerusalem (v13) – and we know what had already happened to Samaria. As dishes are wiped out and turned upside down to dry, so God would do with Jerusalem (v13).

And notice – King Manasseh was held responsible for the coming judgment because he had done these abominations himself, and led the nation into grave sin. Evil King Manasseh, the son of good King Hezekiah! **Godliness is not genetic.**

## **2. Ungodliness is natural.**

**2 Kings 21:19-26** - *"Amon was twenty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned two years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Meshullemeth the daughter of Haruz of Jotbah. And he did evil in the sight of the Lord, as his father Manasseh had done. So he walked in all the ways that his father had walked; and he served the idols that his father had served, and worshiped them. He forsook the Lord God of his fathers, and did not walk in the way of the Lord.*

*Then the servants of Amon conspired against him, and killed the king in his own house. But the people of the land executed all those who had conspired against King Amon. Then the people of the land made his son Josiah king in his place. Now the rest of the acts of Amon, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? And he was buried in his tomb in the garden of Uzza. Then Josiah his son reigned in his place."*

King Amon, son of wicked King Manasseh, followed in all the evil ways of his father for the two years, before he was assassinated. Godliness is not genetic, but ungodliness is.

The Bible teaches that the sinful nature that we all possess is passed on naturally from parents to children. As a result, ***we not only are sinners because we sin, but we sin because we are sinners by nature.*** You never have to tell a child to sin for a change - it's always the other way around. And as we know, this is also true of adults. Only when we turn in faith and trust to the Lord Jesus Christ is the natural tendency to do evil halted. But King Amon never turned to the Lord, so it was just natural for him to follow on in the evil ways his father had established. **Ungodliness is natural.**

The same is true today. In the secular world, the evil of mankind can be checked and governed and restrained in a number of ways - but **only God can reverse the natural tendency toward evil**. True godliness is only attained through conversion, because **ungodliness is natural**.

## Practical Application

### Set up godly patterns!

2 Chronicles 33:10-13 – *“The Lord spoke to Manasseh and his people, but they paid no attention. So the Lord brought against them the army commanders of the king of Assyria, who took Manasseh prisoner, put a hook in his nose, bound him with bronze shackles and took him to Babylon. In his distress he sought the favor of the Lord his God and humbled himself greatly before the God of his ancestors. And when he prayed to him, the Lord was moved by his entreaty and listened to his plea. So he brought him back to Jerusalem and to his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the Lord is God.”*

Toward the end of his life, after being taken into captivity, Manasseh repented of his evil ways. In His grace and mercy, God brought him back from captivity to continue reigning as king in Jerusalem. *“Then Manasseh knew that the Lord is God,”* and he brought reform to Judah - to some degree. But it was “too little - too late.” It was not enough to keep his son Amon from continuing in the evil ways that he had learned from his father.

Manasseh should have set up godly patterns in his household long before his old age - and so should we! Because the tendency towards **ungodliness** is natural, we need to set up godly patterns in our own lives, in our family’s lives and in our homes to keep from forsaking the Lord.

**We don’t “drift into godliness”!** Our natural tendency is to gradually drift into **ungodliness**. How can we prevent drift? It takes dedication and determination. We prevent drift by setting up godly patterns, like spending time with the Lord daily, family devotions, and regular attendance at Sunday school and church.

**Godly patterns are a must, because ungodliness is natural!** So be dedicated and determined. Set up godly patterns!