

## Nothing Like His Father!

We Three Kings – Part IV

II Kings 21; II Chronicles 33

### Introduction

This past week I was over at one of our church member's homes to pick up my new glasses. Dr. Clark marvels that I can read my Bible and preach without wearing them! While I was there, I had an opportunity to hold their newborn son Gabriel. He is a handsome boy – he takes after his mother! I was a little jealous though, as that kid has more hair than I do!

There is something about a newborn baby in a home. It made me think of our youngest. Although Charity was born on Halloween, she has been anything but a little monster. This fourth child that we did not plan, has lived up to her name, "love". Charity is now two and a half. This past week, we were sitting on our bed and she had brought two books for me to read to her. She sat down on a pillow beside me, looked up at me, and said, "You're my best 'fwiend'."

Now, I have to admit that she has said the same thing to her mother, although I do not believe she means it as much as when she says it to me! A couple of days ago, she told her mother, "I want to go see my 'fwiend' named Daddy."

You can just imagine how hard I am working to keep my wife from spoiling her! I am doing my best!

### A Newborn Son – Cherished Hopes

Today, we will study the life of another newborn. He is the child of Hezekiah, who was the great King

of Judah. So powerful was the revival under Hezekiah's reign that he was compared to King David.

We have previously studied the life threatening illness that overwhelmed King Hezekiah, and his subsequent prayer for healing. God granted that healing and gave him a promise. The promise was that Hezekiah would live for fifteen more years.

It was during this period of fifteen years that King Hezekiah became the proud father of a newborn son. He named his son Manasseh, which means, "God causes me to forget". It is as if Hezekiah and his wife were rejoicing over the fact that they finally had a child. The birth of their son erased the agony of wanting and waiting and hoping. They had forgotten all of that now; this boy had erased the pain. And, we can only imagine the hopes Hezekiah had for his son, the heir to the throne.

It was during this period of time that Hezekiah seemed to "coast". We have talked, in a previous discussion, about the fact that Hezekiah became proud of his accomplishments and showed off his strength to Babylon. He also seemed uncaring about the future judgment that Isaiah promised would come.

However, I have also discovered something that may indicate Hezekiah's worship of the Lord remained strong. Proverbs, chapter 25, verse 1, refers to the scribes of Hezekiah who busily copied Old Testament scriptures. You can find the Hebrew letters "H Z K" at the end of many Old Testament books in the Hebrew manuscripts. In fact, I have discovered that many Hebrew scholars believe that

“The Songs of Degrees” (Psalms, chapters 120 through 134), were actually put together to commemorate Hezekiah’s sickness and recovery. When you put these rare clues together, it would seem that in the last fifteen years of Hezekiah’s life, knowing that judgment was coming, he set about to protect the Old Testament scriptures for the sake of the people.

So, Manasseh grew during these fifteen years, and was the joy and pride of his father. As a young boy, he must have observed his father’s pride, but also his father’s diligent love and protection of the sacred writings of scripture.

It is a tragic thing to read then, in the book of II Chronicles, that Manasseh would become the most wicked king in Judah’s history. Manasseh would reign the longest of any king, and become the downfall of his nation. His father Hezekiah, was compared to King David. Manasseh, the king of the south, will be compared to Ahab, the vilest king of the north.

Before we go any further, I want to insert two things that a passage like this should accomplish.

#### **Presumption should be removed from the heart of a parent whose child is following after God**

1. First, this passage should remove presumption from the heart of a parent whose child is following after the Lord.

Do not become presumptuous; do not become an expert on child-rearing because your child is following after the Lord. If someone says, “My, your children have turned out so spiritual,” do not respond with self-appreciating answers like, “Well, we never missed devotions,” or “We always took them to church,” or “We never let them watch T. V. or drink Coke. Yep, that’s what did it.”

Beware of a program or a book or an author who teaches his or her methods with the subtle implication that, if you do A, B, C, D, . . . Z, you will spit out a godly child.

How wise and blessed you are to rear your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. That is the only foundation upon which to raise young lives. However, if and when they choose to follow after God, and thank you for your example and commitment to them, there is nothing more to say than, “Thank you, God.”

It is God’s miracle of the grace that brings about an awakened conscience in the child. Yes, do all you can as a parent, but let it never lead to presumption and pride. It is the result of grace – that is how we pray!

#### **Hope should be produced in the heart of a parent whose child is not following after God**

2. Secondly, this passage should produce hope in the heart of a parent whose child is not following after the Lord.

The miracle child of Hezekiah and Hephzibah was surrounded by blessing. He was influenced by a daddy who evidently revered the scriptures. And yet, when he reached the age of twelve, he turned his back on it all.

Perhaps you did all you could in giving your children roots, and then, you gave them wings. Yet, to the breaking of your heart, they chose to fly toward sin.

That is the story of this king’s prodigal son. As soon as he mounted the throne of Judah, it was clear that he would be nothing like his father.

May this passage give you hope.

### **A Prodigal Son – Shattered Dreams!**

You should circle the progression of Manasseh’s evil. In II Chronicles, chapter 33, we are told:

- in verse 2a,  
*“He did evil in the sight of the Lord . . .”;*
- in verse 6b,  
*“ . . . He did much evil in the sight of the Lord . . .”;*
- In verse 9a,  
*“Thus Manasseh misled Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to do more evil . . .”.*

He progressed in his evil ways, which led his nation to do evil. Notice verse 2 again, which says,

*He did evil in the sight of the Lord according to the abominations of the nations whom the Lord dispossessed before the sons of Israel.*

## Astrologers

Ezra will now catalogue Manasseh's wicked ways for us. Look at verse 3.

***For he rebuilt the high places which Hezekiah his father had broken down; he also erected altars for the Baals and made Asherim, and worshiped all the host of heaven and served them.***

In this verse, "the host of heaven" is a reference to the Zodiac. When it says that he "served them," it simply means that he ordered his days after the movements of the planets and the stars. This is the same as people today who read their horoscope. It is nothing new.

Manasseh certainly will not be the last political power to follow the calculations of the astrologers; that is, to serve the host of heaven. How amazing it was to discover that the White House, at one time, according to former white house Chief of Staff, Donald Regan, had a semi-resident astrologer who was influential in determining major presidential trips and times of events. Welcome to the practice of Manasseh, who followed the same self-destructive source of wisdom in his day.

Listen to the 1956 entry on astrology from the *Encyclopedia Americana*. It will show you how far we have come.

*In the seventeenth century, when scientists finally realized that the earth was not the center of the solar system, astrology fell into disrepute. It still flourishes however, in Asia and Africa, and is a means of livelihood to many charlatans who prey upon the ignorant classes in all countries.*

What does that say about us – from the White House to the track house?!

Today, one out of three newspaper subscribers follow the horoscope. In one poll, nearly forty percent thought astrology was scientific. New York telephone handles more than a million calls a month on its dial-a-horoscope lines. Yet, in 1956, it was said that, "It . . . is a means of livelihood to many charlatans who prey upon the ignorant classes . . .".

Notice verses 4 and 5.

***He built altars in the house of the Lord of which the Lord had said, "My name shall be in Jerusalem forever." For he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the Lord.***

In other words, now you can have your fortune told and your horoscope read by a priest. Perhaps you can have it done in the temple lobby while you wait for the next service to start.

## Sorcerers, Mediums, and Spiritists

Manasseh's practices get worse. Look at verse 6a.

***He made his sons pass through the fire in the valley of Ben-hinnom; . . .***

He, the only son of his parents, cruelly sacrifices his own children to Molech. Continue to the next phrase of verse 6.

***. . . and he practiced witchcraft, used divination, practiced sorcery . . .***

The word "sorcery," in the *Septuagint*, gives us the word "pharmacy," and has the meaning, "to cut up". It denotes a person who cuts up herbs and brews them for medicinal purposes. Sorcery was the black side of pharmaceuticals however, because it used drugs to create religious trances and hypnosis. For all we know, Manasseh, along with all his other problems, was addicted to drugs. Continue to read in verse 6.

***. . . and dealt with mediums and spiritists . . .***

Mediums and spiritists were individuals who were supposedly able to contact the dead on behalf of the living. The Syriac word for "medium" is "ghost". Manasseh was having conversations with dead people.

Jean Houston, the spiritist who has the White House on her résumé, says she has actually met Eleanor Roosevelt six times. She also claims to have talked with Helen Keller. *Newsweek* magazine quoted Houston, who said that when she talked to Helen Keller, she asked her "Why are you so happy?"

If I were Helen Keller, I would have said, "Because I don't talk to dead people!"

Enough!

The word translated "spiritist" comes from the verb "yada," which means, "to know". This person basically consults the spirit world as a channel.

It should come as no surprise that Ezra records, in verses 6b through 9,

***. . . He did much evil in the sight of the Lord, provoking Him to anger. Then he put the carved image of 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 from all the tribes of Israel, I will put My name forever; and I will not again remove the foot of Israel from the land which I have appointed for your fathers, if only they will observe to do all that I have commanded them according to all the law, the statutes, and the ordinances given through Moses." Thus Manasseh misled Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to do more evil than the nations whom the Lord destroyed before the sons of Israel.*

Then notice, in verse 10,

*The Lord spoke to Manasseh and his people, but they paid no attention.*

Manasseh was confirmed in idolatry! His wickedness was set in concrete! He was hopeless!

There is one more thing to add. You might wonder where the prophet Isaiah was during this time. He was boldly prophesying against Manasseh. In the book of Isaiah, chapter 8, verses 19 through 21, Isaiah declares,

*When they say to you, "Consult the mediums and the spiritists who whisper and mutter," should not a people consult their God? Should they consult the dead on behalf of the living? To the law and the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because they have no dawn. They will pass through the land hard-pressed and famished, and it will turn out that when they are hungry, they will be enraged and curse their king and their god as they face upward.*

These were strong words! So, what did Manasseh do? According to the same account in II Kings, chapter 21, we are told that the prophets were killed.

Josephus, the first century Jewish historian, wrote that Isaiah was one of the prophets who were killed.

It was Manasseh who executed the prophet Isaiah. Centuries old tradition informs us that he had Isaiah placed in a hollow log and then, sawed in two.

This act is made even worse by the fact that, according to the same oral traditions, Manasseh's mother, Hephzibah, was Isaiah's daughter. So, Isaiah was Manasseh's grandfather!

## **A Repentant Sinner – Revived Desires!**

It is at this point that God moves against the nation Judah and its king! Look at verse 11 of II Chronicles, chapter 33.

*Therefore the Lord brought the commanders of the army of the king of Assyria against them, and they captured Manasseh with hooks, bound him with bronze chains, and took him to Babylon.*

Imagine this picture in your mind. Proud Manasseh, who was rebelling against God, slaying prophets, and practicing black magic, could not protect himself against the power of Babylon.

The verse informs us that he was taken with hooks. In Assyrian fashion, this defeated monarch had a brass ring driven through his nostrils and a leather thong attached, as if he were being led like a mule or an ox. It was a metaphor of capture, submission, and defeat.

Where was Manasseh going? He was heading for the pig pen, which is the place where prodigals can come to their senses.

There is no doubt that all of the God fearing people in Judah had given up on Manasseh long before this. Surely they thought, "He's hopeless! He's incorrigible! He'll never follow God!"

Perhaps you know someone like that and have nearly given up hope. Can you imagine the way Hephzibah must have felt, if she were still alive at this time? Imagine the tears she must have shed over her wayward son, as she thought, "Will God ever answer my prayers?!"

Notice verses 12 and 13.

*And when he was in distress, he entreated the Lord his God and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers. When he prayed to Him, He was moved by his entreaty and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem to his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the Lord was God.*

Isn't that great?! He now knew for himself what his father had known – that the Lord was God! Continue to verses 14 through 16.

*Now after this he built the outer wall of the city of David on the west side of Gihon, in*

*the valley, even to the entrance of the Fish Gate; and he encircled the Ophel with it and made it very high. Then he put army commanders in all the fortified cities of Judah. He also removed the foreign gods and the idol from the house of the Lord, as well as all the altars which he had built on the mountain of the house of the Lord and in Jerusalem, and he threw them outside the city. He set up the altar of the Lord and sacrificed peace offerings and thank offerings on it; and he ordered Judah to serve the Lord God of Israel.*

### **A warning to prodigals**

There is a warning to prodigals in this. Perhaps you have identified with Manasseh as a prodigal and you are saying, "Okay, everything turned out alright, so I'll continue in my sin. What's the harm?"

The warning is this,

*Even when your sins are forgiven, your sinful influence may live on.*

Notice verse 17.

*Nevertheless the people still sacrificed in the high places, although only to the Lord their God.*

The people never returned to worship in Jerusalem at the house of the Lord! They followed half-heartedly. The worship of Yahweh just was not as sensational, exciting, or fleshly as witchcraft and sorcery. Manasseh's people did not return as he did.

Manasseh's son, Amon, a boy named after an Egyptian deity, put his father's idols back into circulation as soon as dear old dad passed away. The last phrase of verse 23 says it all,

*... but Amon multiplied guilt.*

Amon would reign for two brief years before his servants, not wanting another fifty year reign of the same kind of monarch, assassinated him in his own house.

Amon's son will reign and, if you can believe it, will be godly. We will study his life in our next discussion.

## **Application – Two More Lessons From the Life of Manasseh**

Let me give you, by way of application, two more lessons from the life of Manasseh.

### **No failure should be considered final**

1. The first lesson is that no failure should be considered final.

If you have read the biographies in the Bible, you have discovered the wonderful truth that God is faithful to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. No failure is final. Look at verse 19.

*His prayer also and how God was entreated by him, and all his sin, his unfaithfulness, and the sites on which he built high places and erected the Asherim and the carved images, before he humbled himself, behold, they are written in the records of the Hozai.*

It is all recorded. And, as wayward, immoral, and idolatrous as Manasseh had been, the grace of God accepted his prayer of confession.

### **No unbeliever should be considered unreachable**

2. The second lesson is that no unbeliever should be considered unreachable.

A young man, by the name of John, was born in London in 1725. His father was a sea captain and his mother was a committed Christian. Knowing that her illness would take her life within a short time after her son's birth, his mother taught him the word of God with great diligence. When the boy was seven years old, his mother died. He became a cabin boy and his years aboard a sailing ship were dangerous and exciting. Eventually, he joined the crew of a slave ship and in time, became its Captain. During all of this, John drifted far from his mother's God and her Bible. He would later write, "I often saw the necessity of being a Christian as a means of escaping hell, but I loved sin and was unwilling to forsake it."

Each year, John sank lower and lower into the pit of sin, until even his crew despised him. On one occasion, when he was drunk, he fell overboard. His men did not even want to make the effort to drop a boat over the side to rescue him. They simply took a whaling harpoon and threw it at him. It caught him in his hip and they hauled him aboard like a large fish. He would limp for the rest of his life.

It was during a slave run from Africa to England in 1748, that his ship encountered such a fierce storm that John thought they would all lose their lives. Under great conviction and guilt, John remembered

the God of his mother, the only true God of the Bible, and he gave his heart to Jesus Christ.

Years later, having pastored churches in England, this converted slave trader would reflect on his life's testimony and pen the words to, perhaps, the most popular hymn of modern time. Listen to the words.

*Amazing grace! how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me!*

*I once was lost, but now am found, was blind, but now I see.*

*'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,  
and grace my fears relieved;*

*How precious did that grace appear the  
hour I first believed!*

Close to his death at eighty-two years of age, in one of the final sermons that John Newton preached, he said, "Two things are clear to me: I am a great sinner and Christ is a great Savior."

I am a great sinner and Christ is a great Savior.

This manuscript is from a sermon preached on 7/7/1996 by Stephen Davey.

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