

2 Kings 20-21 - The Worst King

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2 Kings chapter 20 begins by saying, “*In those days...*” Let me just take a moment to remind you about what those days consist of. This is during the reign of king Hezekiah. He's a good king. He's a king of Judah. You might say, well, wait a minute, where are the kings of Israel? They're gone.

Israel has fallen by this time. The Assyrian empire came and swallowed them up and now they've been harassing the kingdom of Judah but haven't invaded them. And you remember last week we dealt with an Assyrian invasion into Judean soil, and we're told in those chapters we dealt with that God moved very powerfully on their behalf to rescue them from the Assyrian invasion. That's what's going on.

Now when we start chapter 20 here, we're actually stepping back in time. One of the things you need to understand as you read through and study the Old Testament is that the Old Testament writers weren't all that concerned with chronology. When you and I read a book, we assume that you start at the beginning of the book, you go to the end of the book, and you get the final story.

In individual books of the Bible, chronology was not their number one goal. In other words, telling events in order, it wasn't all that important. They just wanted to get the information to you. There are several biblical books where they just, they bounce back and forth in terms of the chronology of what's happening.

Chapter 20 of 2 Kings probably goes back before chapter 18. This is before the Assyrian invasion and the Lord's deliverance which we read about in the last two chapters, okay. Chapters 18 and 19. This is before that. Okay. Just know that as we're going through this.

Hezekiah as king, remember he's a good king, godly king, restored many, many things in the kingdom of Judah but the Assyrians are knocking on his door. And the Assyrians remember, they're the big guy on the block right now, and they're pretty much big enough and strong enough to bloody anybody's nose and take over any country they want. And they've been doing a really good job of it up to this point.

Now, God as we saw in the last chapter, moved very powerfully on behalf of the kingdom of Judah to deliver them from the Assyrians. But that hasn't happened yet when we're dealing with the things we are in chapter 20.

What can you, if you had to imagine. You know how they say, when it rains, it pours. If you, imagine you're the king of Judah and Assyria is flexing its muscle in your backyard? Swallowing up all the nations around you and they're coming, they're gunning for you, and they're going to come, they're going to come. It's a foregone conclusion.

What would be the worst thing to add to that right now? That's got to be a lot of stress right there to deal with. What would be one of the worst things you could think of to add to that? Well, maybe a personal crisis of some kind? Well, that's exactly what Hezekiah goes through and he's not that old right now. In fact, he's about 39 years old.

And it says here in verse 1, *“In those days Hezekiah became sick and was at the point of death. And (and it tells us that) Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz came to him and said to him, “Thus says the LORD, ‘Set your house in order, for you shall die; you shall not recover.’””* (ESV)

Now, this is what's going on in Hezekiah's world. How would you like to be Hezekiah? With the king of Assyria, breathing down your neck, and now, you're being told, not by a doctor, by God Himself, you will not recover. We've all heard stories about people who've gone to the doctor, and they've gotten a prognosis, or a diagnosis that they only had so long to live, and they not only beat that, but they ended up, it was wrong, it was misdiagnosed, and they went on to live many years.

After that I remember a particular story about a woman missionary years ago that I read who had a heart issue, came back to the States, and a doctor told her if she went back to the mission field, she wouldn't last six months. And she decided that's just my calling, and she went back and lived till she was in her 90s. Doctors sometimes, they get it wrong, right? It's just the bottom line.

Well God never gets it wrong and so when the Lord tells you something like, you're not going to survive, you're going to die. You know that you have just been told exactly what is going to take place.

That doesn't mean that God won't relent, because it says in verse 2, *“Then Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and prayed to the LORD, saying, ³ “Now, O LORD, please remember how I have walked before you in faithfulness*

and with a whole heart, and have done what is good in your sight.” And Hezekiah wept bitterly.”

Now it tells us here that Hezekiah “*turned his face to the wall...*” and I would assume that is a way of essentially saying that he went into his own personal prayer closet, and got alone with the Lord, and just began to cry out to God. He wasn't talking to anybody else about this thing. He went to the Lord and he went to Him alone, and he began to speak about the kind of a life that he had lived.

Now, I want to remind you about something. I want to remind you, this is the Old Testament. The reason that's important is because for Hezekiah to receive a death sentence, essentially, due to an illness under the Old Covenant, he could potentially assume from that, that he had done something wrong. Because you see, under the old covenant, God promised them that if they kept His covenant, that He would give them long life, and that the illnesses, and sicknesses that had ravaged the people of Egypt, would not touch His people.

There were great blessings that went along with a covenant keeping people under that covenant, under the Mosaic covenant in Israel. God on the same hand promised curses for those who defied His law and who rejected His covenant. For Hezekiah to receive this word from the Lord that he would not recover is more than just, you're sick and you're not going to get better.

Under a covenant understanding and relationship with God, this has great implications beyond that, you see. You and I might be bummed just by simply, I mean, good grief. I can't imagine. You go to the doctor and the doctor says, you're going to die. That's horrible, but from a covenant understanding, to carry the weight of the fact that somehow I've done something against the Lord.

Now, here's what's interesting. When people get sick today or when something bad, doesn't have to be a sickness. Could be something bad happens. You lose your job or your spouse decides that they don't want to be married anymore and they blow you off. Any number of other things that could happen that are the usual nasties that go along with living life in a fallen world.

People today will quickly begin to bargain with God almost in a way that Hezekiah is doing right here. Lord, I've been trying to live for You. I've tried to live my life for You. I've tried to focus my attention on You and be obedient. And Hezekiah was right. He had. I mean, it wasn't a perfect man by any stretch, but he was pretty good guy. Particularly when you compare him with the kings who came before him and after him. But you see, he had a covenant opportunity to speak to God that way.

Do you understand Christians that under the New Covenant, you have absolutely no promise along those kinds of lines. Now there are Christians who really disagree with me on this one, okay? And I mean, there are some churches here in the United States of America, if I would have made the statement I just made to you right now, some people would get up and walk to the door.

In fact, it happened to me the very first time I ever preached. I'm not kidding you, I was in my early, well, mid-twenties, and I was the youth pastor at a church up in Montana. And they decided they were going to give me a, I think it was a Sunday night and it was the first time I'd ever spoken to the adults in the body. And I got up and I talked about how under our, under the covenant that we are, that we currently have with our Lord Jesus Christ there is no promise related to sparkling health. This just isn't there. There is under the old covenant but not under the new.

And I had people get up and walk out on me. And I was probably no, strike probably, I was stupid for tackling that a subject as the youth pastor, to be completely honest with you. That was pretty dumb of me. The fact remains, it is what it is.

The covenant that you and I are under promises us salvation if we believe and eternal life. Forgiveness of sins. Promises us that we will be children of God and that we will receive an inheritance that we don't deserve or earn. But that's it. And I say, that's it. I mean, that's enough, right?

I mean, the covenant that you and I have is a covenant that conquers death and that's pretty sweet. But there are many believers today who very strongly believe that in the death of Jesus, freedom from sickness is guaranteed. And they will quote passages such as "*by his stripes we are healed.*" (Isaiah 53:5) Or as the NIV says, "*by his wounds we are healed.*" And they assume, and this is an assumption on their part, they assume the word, healed, applies only physically, and that's it. It's just, it's speaking of physical healing.

I take issue with that. I take strong issue with that as a matter of fact. I think that's a very superficial interpretation of the Scriptures. People are welcome to believe what they're going to believe, but boy, I'll tell you something. It creates havoc in a person's life when they go through a difficult period or they become ill. And the Lord allows that illness to take somebody home to be with Him, to those people, that is a failure. That is a colossal failure.

And there can be a great deal of questioning the love and faithfulness of God at that point. God, if You promise this to me, why didn't You give it? Fact of the

matter is He didn't promise it. And I will go toe to toe with anyone who wants to argue the passages related to those things. It is not a promise.

In Hezekiah's day, there were connections related to those kinds of promises, and that is why Hezekiah turns his face to the wall, praying to God, and appealing to Him based on the kind of life he had lived.

He says, God, you know that I've walked in faithfulness before you, and we're told in verse 4 that, *"before Isaiah had gone out of the middle court, the word of the LORD came to him."* So he hasn't even left the palace.

And the Lord said, *"⁵ Turn back, and say to Hezekiah the leader of my people, Thus says the LORD, the God of David your father: I have heard your prayer;..."* You might underline that. That's a great reminder to you and I once again that prayer matters.

People will ask from time to time, does it even matter if I pray? I mean, some people are so taken by the sovereignty of God that they wonder if, do my prayers even do anything? I mean, God is sovereign. He's going to do what He wants to do so why do we even pray?

Well, we pray because He invited us to pray. We pray, because He has given us an opportunity to change circumstances and situations by our prayer.

Somebody once asked me, how is it possible for the prayers of human beings to change the will of God? And it was a great question and I answered him. I said, it's not unless God says, I'll let you do that. See, that's the only way that's possible.

Your prayers and my prayers can't do anything unless God deems it possible. And He has deemed it possible and He has told you and I to pray. He calls us to the place of intercession and prayer. And we need to begin to recognize prayer that way as something that makes a difference, that can be very effective.

Anyway He says to Hezekiah, *"I've heard your prayer."* He goes on to say, *"I have seen your tears. (as a matter of fact, God cares) Behold, I will heal you. On the third day you shall go up to the house of the LORD, ⁶ and I will add fifteen years to your life."*

I wouldn't have wanted to hear that, personally. I don't know about you. I wouldn't you be counting and wouldn't that be a little bit morbid? I would have said, oh no, don't tell me that.

But anyway, it goes on to say, *“I will deliver you and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria, (that's how we know this happened before the events of the last two chapters because by the end of the last chapter, He already had delivered them out of the hands of the king of Assyria) and I will defend this city for my own sake and for my servant David's sake.”* ⁷ *And Isaiah said, “Bring a cake of figs. And let them take and lay it on the boil, that he may recover.”*”

Now this is, I want you to stop there for just a moment. I don't know if anybody here has made a poultice of figs lately and put it on a boil. It's old medicine. But, and I'm pretty sure we don't do it anymore. I have a hard time even eating figs. Never really a fan of fig newtons, thank you very much, but anyway.

But they're making this compress this poultice out of figs, which apparently they did back in those days when somebody had a boil, and put it on the thing, and through this, God brought about a healing.

Now stop and think about this for a second. Did God need them to do this? In other words, is there something magically healing about a poultice of figs? I don't think so. Probably something the doctors would have even tried. Couldn't God just say, hey I've heard your prayer. I've seen your tears, in 3 days, you will recover. Wasn't that enough? God could have said, in 1 day, you'll recover. God could have said, boom, you're done. You're..., get up and go. You see, there's no limitations on God.

He uses things to accomplish His will but sometimes those things are very mundane. Sometimes they're very ordinary. Sometimes they're even boring, like a poultice of figs, which was like the medicine of the day. Isn't that interesting? God's not limited. He can do anything He wants to do, and He doesn't need anything to do what He wants to do. And yet He calls for a poultice of figs to be made up and applied to the boil so that he might heal.

Here's the point of what I'm saying. Sometimes you and I, when we're praying for God to move, we miss Him because we're looking for something that is so out of the ordinary in terms of it's just got to be whoa! We have to just be blown away. Oh, I never would have expected Him to do it that way. This is probably one of the ways that they would have expected potentially for a healing to take place.

Now God had previously said it wasn't going to but then He goes back and says, okay, go ahead and apply the medicine today, and he's going to recover. Why apply the medicine today? I don't know. That's just what He chose to do.

When you and I find that somebody's been healed. Somebody was taken to the doctor, and they gave them some medicine, and they recovered. Our initial response is, well, that wasn't a healing, they did it through medicine. Really?

My God is sovereign. He uses all kinds of things to bring about His healing. Sure. He can do it instantaneously, miraculously, and without any means whatsoever, but sometimes God brings healing out of some of the most mundane, ordinary, and every day sorts of things.

And you and I are to be careful I believe, ought to be careful not to dismiss those things as God's method, God's way. He can do anything He wants to do. Lord, you want to heal me through the doctor? You want to heal me miraculously? You want to, I don't care. I'll just, I'll take it however it comes, right? I don't care.

God can do what He wants to do, and I don't think you and I should limit Him on how He wants to work. And don't look down your nose at somebody in some sort of super spiritual, arrogance say, well, I wish you would have trusted God instead of taking that medicine.

The Bible says that we are to acknowledge the Lord in all of our ways, right? Isn't that what it says in Proverbs chapter 3? Acknowledge the Lord in all of your ways. That means in every aspect of life, acknowledge the Lord.

You go to the doctor and you get some medicine, you get better, you know what? God healed me. I acknowledge that God did. You see what I'm saying?

It's important that we see God in our lives, even in the mundane, even in the everyday, even in the things that look very humanly orchestrated to see the Lord working in our lives, and so forth.

It says in verse 8, *“And Hezekiah said to Isaiah, “What shall be the sign that the Lord will heal me, and that I shall go up to the house of the Lord on the third day?”* He's not necessarily asking a bad thing here.

Again, under the covenant, the Mosaic Covenant, these sorts of signs were fairly common, and you'll remember it was to his father that a sign was offered, and he actually turned it down and the Lord gave it anyway.

But it says, *“⁹ And Isaiah said, “This shall be the sign to you from the LORD, that the LORD will do the thing that he has promised: shall the shadow go forward ten steps, or go back ten steps?” ¹⁰ And Hezekiah answered, (well) “It*

is an easy thing for the shadow to lengthen ten steps. (that's what happens when the sun goes down) Rather let the shadow go back ten steps.”¹¹ And Isaiah the prophet called to the LORD, and he brought the shadow back ten steps, by which it had gone down on the steps of Ahaz.”

Remember Ahaz was his father. He had apparently built these steps and somehow on these steps, they could use them even potentially for the telling of time because a shadow would be cast upon the steps, and as it lengthened they could see the time of day.

As he's given the option of this sign to go forward or backward, he says, well, hey, the shadow goes down the steps every day. That's what happens so let it go the other way and that's exactly what the Lord did. Pretty cool, huh? How'd the Lord do that? I don't know.

We do know that it wasn't something that happened just there in Judah. It was obviously seen by other people as well. And some of these pagan nations who relegated gods to the stars, and the sun, and the moon, and so forth, they paid very close attention to what happened to those celestial bodies because those were their gods. And that's what we find out here in the last part of this chapter.

It says, “¹² At that time Merodach-baladan the son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent envoys with letters and a present to Hezekiah, for he heard that Hezekiah had been sick.”

Now, again, this is not an entourage that has come to Judah just simply to say, hey, heard you weren't doing so well there for a while, glad you recovered. Here's a little gift card to Home Depot on us or something like that. There's more to this.

The Babylonians are very, I mean, like I said, they have a god for the sun, and they watch the stars, and they watch how things move. And no doubt they were aware of the fact that the shadow had gone back. That literally the day came to a place and then it went backwards. It lengthened that much and then proceeded on from there. And they probably began to put out the word. They know nothing like that happens just by accident.

So what happened to...? What happened? Put out the word Hezekiah was sick. He prayed, the Lord gave him a sign. Okay, let's get our stuff together. We're going to go see this Hezekiah guy. And there's all kinds of other political reasons that they might be coming to.

But let me remind you about where Babylon is at this particular juncture. Remember that Assyria is the nation that is in charge right now. The Assyrian empire. And the capital of the Assyrian empire was Nineveh. You guys remember that? Nineveh was the, remember of the city that Jonah was sent to preach the Gospel. He didn't want to go, he hated the Assyrians. Well, these are the same Assyrians.

Now again, they're the big by a big guy on the block but Babylon is the up and coming world power. And it's not going to be too many years from now that Babylon is going to conquer Assyria, and then they're going to come and they're going to conquer Judah. And they will finally take all of the Jews living in Judah captive and take them to Babylon. I want you to just understand politically what's going on here.

There is a very strong implication here that Babylon is already got it in their heads that we're going to conquer Assyria, but you know what? We need to go talk to this Hezekiah guy because there's some pretty powerful juju going on with this guy.

I mean, the sun went backwards so we're going to go talk to this Hezekiah guy, perhaps even align ourselves with him somehow against the king of Assyria. He's really, Judah is about the only country now that hasn't been completely overrun by the Assyrians up to this point so they come to Hezekiah.

Verse 13 says, *“And Hezekiah welcomed them, and he showed them all his treasure house, the silver, the gold, the spices, the precious oil, his armory, (in other words, where all the weapons of warfare were kept) all that was found in his storehouses. (in fact, we're told) There was nothing in his house or in all his realm that Hezekiah did not show them.*

(and) ¹⁴ *Then Isaiah the prophet came to King Hezekiah, (obviously after the Babylonians had left) and said to him, “What did these men say? And from where did they come to you?” And Hezekiah said, (well) “They have come from a far country, (they come from) from Babylon.” (and he goes, huh?)* ¹⁵ *He said, “What have they seen in your house?” And Hezekiah answered, “They have seen all that is in my house; (I’ve showed them everything, in fact) there is nothing in my storehouses that I did not show them.”*” And you can imagine here that was probably not the brightest thing Hezekiah ever did.

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 that which your fathers have stored up till this day, shall be carried to Babylon. (in fact) Nothing shall*

be left, says the LORD. ¹⁸ And some of your own sons, who will come from you, whom you will father, shall be taken away, and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.” ¹⁹ Then Hezekiah said to Isaiah, “The word of the LORD that you have spoken is good.” For he thought, “Why not, if there will be peace and security in my days?” That sounds a little shallow, doesn't it?

And then we're told for “²⁰ The rest of the deeds of Hezekiah and all his might and how he made the pool and the conduit and brought water into the city, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah? ²¹ And Hezekiah slept with his fathers, and Manasseh his son reigned in his place.”

Now, this last story here in 2 Kings is a little bit of a little bit of an enigma. And honestly, I've read a lot of commentaries on Hezekiah's response to the prophecy of Isaiah that one day the Babylonians would come and they would carry all that off, including some of his own children. And that means not children, but grandchildren, grand, great, great, great grandchildren by the time that actually happens. But Hezekiah's response to say, yeah, cool. That's a good thing simply because it wasn't going to happen in his lifetime just sounds like, wow. Why would you say that?

And the commentaries that I've read, you can tell that they don't know because you get some people saying one thing and some people saying another. And they're trying to interpret what's there in the passage. And honestly, we're not really sure exactly why he said what he said, but there is a companion passage to this in the Book of 2 Chronicles, which gives us some really important insight into this whole event.

And I'd like you to keep your finger here in 2 Kings and turn over with me to 2 Chronicles, chapter 32. 2 Chronicles, chapter 32. By the way, 1 and 2 Chronicles are right after 1 and 2 Kings. It shouldn't take you terribly long to get there.

Go to 2 Chronicles, chapter 32 and then skip down to verse 24. It says, “*In those days Hezekiah became sick and was at the point of death, and he prayed to the LORD, and he answered him and gave him a sign. ²⁵ But Hezekiah did not make return according to the benefit done to him, for his heart was proud. Therefore wrath came upon him and Judah and Jerusalem. ²⁶ But Hezekiah humbled himself for the pride of his heart, both he and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the wrath of the LORD did not come upon them in the days of Hezekiah.*”

Now, this is an interesting insight, is it not? That he got sick, God healed him, and instead of responding properly to the Lord. It says it in a weird way here in the ESV. It says, he *“did not make return according to the benefit done to him.”* Which is a way of saying he didn't respond appropriately to the grace and the goodness of God that was given to him in that healing and instead he became prideful, right?

He's prideful. Look what God did. He healed me. God even created this miracle in the heavens all for me. And then shortly thereafter, he gets this note from the Babylonians, along with this entourage of people, saying, ooh, you're really cool, king Hezekiah. And he's like, hey, just let me show you around and show you how cool I am. And he just got puffed up and he thought he was all that.

And it tells us here that the wrath of the Lord came out but Hezekiah being the godly man that he was, he humbled himself. In fact, it says here that he even encouraged the inhabitants of Jerusalem to follow him in his contrition and we don't know exactly what he did. He could have told everybody in Jerusalem to go around wearing sackcloth for all we know, like the king of Nineveh did. We don't know exactly.

All we know is that he humbled himself and he averted the wrath of God in his lifetime. That could be what he was saying to Isaiah. I'm glad it's..., the wrath of God has been averted, sort of a thing. And it's not going to happen in my lifetime.

But if you read on here in 2 Chronicles, look in verse 27 and following. It goes back and tells us, *“And Hezekiah had very great riches and honor, and he made for himself treasuries for silver, for gold, for precious stones, for spices, for shields, and for all kinds of costly vessels; ²⁸ storehouses also for the yield of grain, wine, and oil; and stalls for all kinds of cattle, and sheepfolds. ²⁹ He likewise provided cities for himself, and flocks and herds in abundance, for God had given him very great possessions. (so it says,) ³⁰ This same Hezekiah closed the upper outlet of the waters of Gihon and directed them down to the west side of the city of David. (which is huge, having a city that can be closed and still have a water supply) And Hezekiah prospered in all his works.*

³¹ *And so in the matter of the envoys of the princes of Babylon, who had been sent to him to inquire (look at this, to inquire) about the sign...*” See, like I told you, they weren't all just interested in coming and saying, hey, here's a get well card. They inquired about the sign. They wanted to know about the sign. And that's one of the things that made Hezekiah so prideful. Yeah, God did that for me.

They came “*to inquire about the sign that had been done in the land, (look at this last sentence) God left him to himself, in order to test him and to know all that was in his heart.*” Interesting phrase, huh?

God just backed off to let his heart go the way it was going to go. And how did it go? It got filled with pride. God doesn't... When the Bible says that God does something to see what will happen, please understand that's human language describing an action of the eternal God.

God never doesn't know what something is going to produce. He always knows everything so the language is given to us to help us just read it. It's more that God wants you and I to see what's in our hearts. And sometimes God will allow us to see, to show ourselves what is in our hearts, what's what we're made of.

And He can do it lots of different ways. Book of Proverbs says that a man is tested by the praise he receives. (Proverbs 27:21) And that was certainly the case with Hezekiah, because the Babylonian envoys are talking to him like he is just the best and Hezekiah let it all go to his head.

Go back to 2 Kings. Now, chapter 21, we now have dealt with the death of Hezekiah as he slept with his father's. Of course, that's another euphemism for death.

And it says in verse 1 that, “*Manasseh was twelve years old when he began to reign, and he reigned fifty-five years in Jerusalem.*” Now, please stop there for just a moment.

You remember that in the, just in this last chapter, God came to Hezekiah through the prophet Isaiah and said, you're sick and you're not going to get better. And Isaiah cried, petitioned the Lord, and God gave him 15 more years. Now we find out that his son takes over the throne at the age of 12.

Now, it is the belief of many Bible scholars and teachers, Manasseh was born, conceived and born during that 15 year period of grace, if you will, that Hezekiah received as an extension to his life.

However, there is also reason to believe, strong reason to believe that Manasseh entered into a co-regency with his father prior to his death. A co-regency means they reigned together for a period of time and often this happened when a king became sick, or infirmed, or whatever, a son would join him in a co regency. And then when the father passed away, the son would then take the throne by himself.

We believe that Manasseh entered into a co-regency with his father prior to his father's death, which would mean that Manasseh was not born during that 15 year period, but in fact was conceived and born prior to that 15 year period of grace. Now, we're not positive about that. Say, okay we're absolutely not positive.

Here's what we know for sure. Manasseh reigned longer than any other king in Judah. Okay. That's the first thing we know. Here's the second thing we know. He was the worst king of them. The son of a godly man, which, by the way, reminds us all that our children don't begin to follow the Lord just simply because they're children of ours. Those are the things we know about Manasseh. Let's see how it goes.

Manasseh began to reign. He was he reigned. 55 years. It says, *“His mother's name was Hephzibah. ² And he did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, according to the despicable practices of the nations whom the LORD drove out before the people of Israel.”*

Do you guys remember before when it would talk about an evil king? It would say, he did evil in the eyes of the Lord according to. And then it would usually mention the previous king or maybe an earlier king who started some practice of paganism but it was still an Israelite. It was still a Jewish king.

Doesn't say that about Manasseh. It says, he was evil in the sight of the Lord according to the nations that God had ousted. In other words, the Canaanites. Okay.

Look what it goes on to say, verse 3. *“For he rebuilt the high places that Hezekiah his father had destroyed, and he erected altars for Baal and made an Asherah, as Ahab king of Israel had done, (now they're likening him with Ahab, who was married to Jezebel in the northern kingdom of Israel. You don't want to be likened to Ahab in God's book. And it tells us here that he) ...worshiped all the host of heaven and served them.”* He considered the sun, the moon, the stars, gods. He thought they were gods and he worshipped them.

But that's not all. *“⁴ And he built altars in the house of the LORD, (or in other words, the temple) of which the LORD had said, “In Jerusalem will I 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 And he burned his son as an offering (he literally offered his son as a burnt offering sacrifice) and (he) used fortune-telling and omens and dealt with mediums and with necromancers. (which are people who deal*

with communicating with the dead and) *He did much evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking him to anger.*”

You know what I would say about Manasseh? I would say he was a very religious man. He was a very spiritual man, wasn't he? Do you see all the things he did? He built all these altars, he built these temples, he built these shrines, he rebuilt the high places that his father had. He went to necromancers and mediums and spiritists, and he did all, he was a very, very religious man. He was not a godly man, but a very religious man. Very spiritually minded.

I mean, this guy just absolutely went 100% into these things. All the whatever he could find that had a spiritual overtone, he wanted it. He wasn't a secularist. He wasn't a naturalist. He wasn't somebody who said, if I can't see it or taste it or touch it, I won't believe it exists. No, he believed in all kinds of spiritual realities. He believed in the spirit realm, but he was an ungodly wicked man. Because just because you're spiritual doesn't mean that you are godly.

Spiritual means nothing. Well, no, no, I'm sorry. It means something. It's just dumb. It just means anything goes. If somebody says to me, I'm a spiritual person, I get a red alert because to me that means anything goes. I'll pray one minute to God and I'll do a seance the next. I'll look at the Bible for an answer one minute and the next minute I'll bring out the tarot cards. Doesn't matter, because I'm a spiritual person. I'll do a little of God, but I'll do a little of this, too, and a little of that, and a little of this. We'll just bring a smorgasbord of things into play. And that's kind of the man Manasseh was.

Verse 7 says, *“And the carved image of Asherah that he had made he set 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 the tribes of Israel, I will put my name forever.”⁸ And I will not cause the feet of Israel to wander anymore out of the land that I gave to their fathers, if only they will be careful to do according to all that I have commanded them, and according to all the Law that my servant Moses commanded them.”* That's given to us as a reminder.

But verse 9 tells us very clearly *“...they did not listen, and Manasseh led them astray (he's the leader, look at this, look at this) to do more evil than the nations had done whom the LORD destroyed before the people of Israel.”*

Now he wasn't just likened to the nations, he's now likened to more evil than the nations. Are you guys getting the gist of what's being said here? This guy is, by far, the worst king ever to ascend to the throne in the Jewish nation. You with me? The worst. Son of a godly man. The worst.

Now, what would you do if you were God? I'd nuke the guy. It's simple. Just, we're going to be interested to see what the Lord does here.

“¹⁰ And the LORD said by his servants the prophets, ¹¹ “Because Manasseh king of Judah has committed these abominations and has done things more evil than all that the Amorites did, who were before him, and has made Judah also to sin with his idols, ¹² therefore thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: Behold, I am bringing upon Jerusalem and Judah such disaster that the ears of everyone who hears of it will tingle. ¹³ And I will stretch over Jerusalem the measuring line of Samaria, (that means I’m going to do for them what I did to Samaria which is the northern kingdom of Israel) and the plumb line of the house of Ahab, (which is a way of saying what happened to them will happen now to you) and I will wipe Jerusalem as one wipes a dish, wiping it and turning it upside down. ¹⁴ And I will forsake the remnant of my heritage and give them into the hand of their enemies, and they shall become a prey and a spoil to all their enemies, ¹⁵ because they have done what is evil in my sight and have provoked me to anger, since the day their fathers came out of Egypt, even to this day.”

¹⁶ Moreover, (we're not done talking about how bad Manasseh was) Manasseh shed very much innocent blood, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another, besides the sin that he made Judah to sin so that they did what was evil in the sight of the LORD.”

It doesn't say exactly what he did to be such a man of blood, but there is a non-biblical book, I think it's called the Assumption of Isaiah, considered an apocryphal book. But it actually tells that king Manasseh is the one who killed the prophet Isaiah by sawing him in two. We don't know if that's true, but this book exists that says so. And it would certainly go along with the idea here that he was a man of blood, but precisely what all he did related to that we don't know for sure.

It just simply says in verse 17, “Now the rest of the acts of Manasseh and 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? ¹⁸ And Manasseh slept with his fathers and was buried in the garden of his house, in the garden of Uzza, and Amon his son reigned in his place.”

Now, you read that you go okay well I guess he got his. God said I'm going to judge this people, judge this country, but it didn't happen during the life of Manasseh. He died first. Isn't that crazy? See, if I was God, of course, He

doesn't ask me for my opinion, but I'd have taken care of him. Right? I mean, I'd have fixed his wagon like good.

Not only does God let him die in peace, something else happens too. He blesses the end of Manasseh's life. Turn over again to 2 Chronicles 33, this time. 2 Chronicles 33. I want to show you what your God does to Manasseh. Skip down to verse 10.

2 Chronicles 33:10. *“The LORD spoke to Manasseh and to his people, (meaning, through the prophets) but they paid no attention. ¹¹ Therefore the LORD brought upon them the commanders of the army of the king of Assyria, who captured Manasseh with hooks and bound him with chains of bronze and brought him to Babylon.”*

We're thinking like, yeah, that's the ticket, God. Get that guy, put a hook in his nose and drag him to the Syrian empire. But look what it says in verse 12. *“And when he was in distress, he entreated the favor of the LORD his God and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers. ¹³ He prayed to him, (look at this) and God was moved by his entreaty and heard his plea and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the LORD was God.”*

Do you know what's interesting about that? There are people who believe that God, the God of the Old Testament is so mean, and He's always striking people, killing them and people will say that. Oh, I like to read the New Testament. God's much nicer in the New Testament, but boy, He seemed like He was really having a bad day in the old.

Well, I got news for you, the worst king in the history of the kings of Israel and Judah who deserved nothing but judgment cried out to God in his distress and it says, God was moved. He was moved by the king's entreaty. And not only moved, He allowed him to come back and to retake his throne there in Jerusalem. Are you blown away? Pretty amazing.

Look at what it goes on to say here in Chronicles. It says, *“¹⁴ Afterward he built an outer wall for the city of David west of Gihon, in the valley, and for the entrance into the Fish Gate, and carried it around Ophel, and raised it to a very great height. He also put commanders of the army in all the fortified cities in Judah. ¹⁵ And he took away the foreign (oh look at this, he took away the foreign) gods and the idol from the house of the LORD, and all the altars that he had built on the mountain of the house of the LORD and in Jerusalem, and he threw them outside of the city. (wow!) ¹⁶ He also restored the altar of the*

LORD and offered on it sacrifices of peace offerings and of thanksgiving, and he commanded Judah to serve (YAHWEH) the LORD, the God of Israel.

¹⁷ Nevertheless, the people still sacrificed at the high places, but only to the LORD their God.”

Then it ends by saying, “¹⁸ Now the rest of the acts of Manasseh, and his prayer to his God, and the words of the seers who spoke to him in the name of the LORD, the God of Israel, behold, they are in the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel. ¹⁹ And his prayer, and how God was moved by his entreaty, and all his sin and his faithlessness, and the sites on which he built high places and set up the Asherim and the images, before he humbled himself, behold, they are written in the Chronicles of the Seers. ²⁰ So Manasseh slept with his fathers, and they buried him in his house, and Amon his son reigned in his place.”

Wow, wasn't that crazy? When somebody comes to me and says, pastor Paul, you don't know how much I've, how much sin I've done. I don't think God can forgive me. You don't know, you don't know what all I've done. Oh, I can take them over here to 2 Kings and talk, we can talk about Manasseh.

Say, yeah. Did you sacrifice your children in the fire? Did you build an altar to a pagan god inside the temple of the Lord? Did you shed much blood? Were you the worst king of all the kings who ever ruled and reigned in Israel?

God forgave Manasseh. God forgave him. God brought him back and Manasseh ended his life serving the Lord. Isn't that amazing? What a story of repentance and restoration. Guys, it's never too late. It's never too late to give your life to God.

Back to 2 Kings. Let's finish very quickly here. Chapter 21 again. We're down at verse 19. This is pretty quick. It says, “*Amon (this is the son of course of Manasseh) was twenty-two years old when he began to reign, and he reigned two years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Meshullemeth the daughter of Haruz of Jotbah. ²⁰ And he did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, as Manasseh his father had done. (did not learn from his father's repentance) ²¹ He walked in all the way in which his father walked and served the idols that his father served and worshiped them. ²² He abandoned the LORD, the God of his fathers, and did not walk in the way of the LORD. ²³ And the servants of Amon conspired against him and put the king to death in his house. (they assassinated him) ²⁴ But the people of the land struck down all those who had conspired against King Amon, and the people of the land made Josiah his son king in his place. ²⁵ Now the rest of the acts of Amon that he did, are they not written in the*

Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah? ²⁶ And he was buried in his tomb in the garden of Uzza, and Josiah his son reigned in his place.”