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King Manasseh, Another Mere Human

King Manasseh ruled over Judah for 55 years since he was 12 years old. Unfortunately, he led Judah into idolatry and sin. According to 2 Kgs 21 and 2 Chr 33:1-20, he encouraged the worship of gods and even built altars for them in the Temple of the Lord. This essay analyses the similarities and differences between these passages, examines the author who made these changes and their purpose, and what lessons Christians can apply in their lives from the study of King Manasseh's life.

The passages of 2 Kgs 21 and 2 Chr 33:1-20 delineate very similar accounts of King Manasseh's life. In both narrations, King Manasseh's reign is described. Both accounts depict idol worship, such as the worship of Baal and Asherah. Also, the passages mention the practice of King Manasseh sacrificing his own children to the false gods. These chapters state how "he did much evil in the eyes of the Lord" (2 Kgs 21:2 and 2 Chr 33:2, NKJV), which also led the people of Judah into great sin. Even though there are differences in the stories, many details in the narratives are consistent with one another.

King Manasseh's repentance in 2 Chronicles is the main difference between the passages. The passage depicts how after being taken into captivity by the Assyrians, Manasseh repents and seeks forgiveness from God. As a result, God restores Manasseh to his throne and the king

removed all idols he had established in Judah. In contrast, 2 Kings does not delineate King Manasseh's repentance and restoration. The passage in 2 Kings highlights Manasseh's evil deeds and also exhibits the warnings from God he received but ignored. Although both accounts narrate his reign, 2 Chronicles reveals his repentance while 2 Kings highlights his wickedness.

The Chronicler used the book of 2 Kings as a source for the narrative of King Manasseh's reign. Although the story is accounted in similar ways, the Chronicler details Manasseh's prayer and repentance after he was captured by the Assyrians, which is not portrayed in 2 Kings. The book of 2 Chronicles, provides a more positive view of Manasseh's reign, meanwhile, 2 Kings, portrays Manasseh as one of the most wicked kings. The addition of Manasseh's repentance to the narrative is valid because the book wants to highlight obedience. On the other hand, Kings focuses on the political view of history.

I believe that the author made this change to the narrative because each book has a different goal. The book of Kings was written to the people of Judah in exile, thus the book seeks to highlight the sins that should not be repeated. Meanwhile, Chronicles was written for the people of Judah after they had returned from exile which explains why the Chronicler emphasizes the obedience and repentance of the kings and people before the exile. As displayed in the passage:

“Now when he was in affliction, he implored the LORD his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, / and prayed to Him; and He received his entreaty, heard his supplication, and brought him back to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the LORD *was* God.” (2 Chr 33:12-13, NKJV)

The Chronicler adds Manasseh's repentance to the narrative. These verses set an example of how people should act, which is one of the main focuses of the book.

The narrative of King Manasseh's life and reign provides many life lessons that we can apply to our Christian life. The narrative highlights God's mercy and forgiveness as it displays how even the evilest can repent and be forgiven by God. 2 Chronicles teaches us that genuine repentance comes from acknowledging and confessing our wrongdoings. With this, we should make an effort to keep ourselves in check by repenting of our sins which will lead to our spiritual renewal. Also, the power of prayer is displayed as he asks God for forgiveness. From that, we learn that it is critical to make prayer a part of our daily lives to communicate with God and ask for his guidance. By applying these lessons in our lives, we can grow closer to Christ.

Finally, the passages 2 Kgs 21 and 2 Chr 33:1-21 regarding King Manasseh's life are similar but they do differ in some aspects. The addition of Manasseh's repentance by the Chronicler, allows us to see the full transformation of the king. The reasoning as to why the changes happened can be attributed to the different theological concerns of both books. King Manasseh's life serves as an example of how we should not act, however, it also displays that, regardless of our sins, God is merciful and graceful. We can learn from these passages the importance of repentance and prayer, as well as the importance of turning away from sin and towards God.