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Old Testament Literature

23 March 2023

“Merciful God”

Both stories, 2 Ki 21 and 2 Chro 33:1-20, are about king Manasseh. There are four similarities between these two stories. First, both stories mention that king Manasseh was twelve years old when he became king and reigned in Jerusalem for fifty years. Second, they both mention that he did evil in the eyes of the Lord. The second verse of both stories says, “He did evil in the eyes of the LORD, following the detestable practices of the nations the LORD had driven out before the Israelites.” Both stories mention that he rebuilt the high places his father Asherah destroyed, erected altars to Baal, and made Asherah poles. He also bowed down to all the starry hosts and worshipped them. It also says that he sacrificed his child in the fire, practiced divination, sought omens, and consulted mediums and spiritists, arousing God’s anger. Third, they mention the pole that the king put in the temple that said, “In this temple and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, I will put my Name forever.” The people and the king did not obey it and rebelled against God. Lastly, both stories mention where Manasseh was buried and that his son Amon was the next king.

These stories have many similarities. However, they also have many differences. First, while 2 Ki says that king Manasseh’s mother is Hephzibah, 2 Chro does not say anything about her. The second difference is that the author only mentions the king’s son’s sacrifice in 2 Ki, while in 2 Chro, the author mentions even the place where the king sacrificed his son. The third difference is that 2 Ki says that the Lord spoke to king Manasseh through his servants, the

prophets. The servant told him his actions were evil, and the Lord's anger was arousing. However, 2 Chro says that the Lord spoke to Manasseh and his people, and they ignored Him. The fourth difference is that 2 Ki focuses more on king Manasseh's sins. On the other hand, 2 Chro writes about the consequences of his disobedience, his repentance, and his actions after repenting. Lastly, both stories mention that Manasseh was the next king of Judah. However, only 2 Ki writes about Amon and his reign.

I do not think that any of the authors changed the stories. However, I think the author of 2 Ki removed all the details, while the author of 2 Chro left them. I think so because the book of Kings is more of a historical record. It explains what happened and who has been involved with details. On the other hand, the book of Chronicles brings less information. However, it shows how the king repented and God had mercy on him. I think the book of Chronicles wants to show the people that repentance is important and that they should return to God.

There is something very important that we can learn from this story. One thing that caught my attention is 2 Chro 33:12-13 which says, "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." As mentioned above, king Manasseh's actions were evil in God's sight. His father was a man of God. However, Manasseh decided to go the other way and worship other gods. He even sacrificed his son for them. When the Lord spoke with Manasseh and his people, they ignored Him, so God brought against them the army of commanders of the king of Assyria, who took Manasseh as a prisoner. In Manasseh's lowest moment of his life, he cried out to God, and He listened to his plea. We can see God's mercifulness and forgiveness. No matter how many times we sin and turn away

from Him, He still waits for us to return to His arms and forgives those who repent wholeheartedly. However, as Manasseh did, we also have to do our part. We have to realize what we have done and repent. We make many daily mistakes, whether in action or in our minds. This nature of sin has been a part of us since the garden of Eden. However, the most important thing is how we deal with it. From this story, we can see that it started with Manasseh realizing what he had done and the state that he was in. Then he prayed, asked for forgiveness, and repented, which is the same for us. God's mercy goes beyond our understanding. We are sinners and do not deserve His love and forgiveness, but He still loves and forgives us. He is our only hope and refuge that we can run to in our distress. In conclusion, we can see how failed men are and how God is merciful to us. God loves and forgives us no matter how often we make mistakes and sin.

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