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Learning the life of King Manasseh

King Hezekiah's son, who also ruled over Judah, is Manasseh. Manasseh became king at age 12 after his father. Manasseh is classified as the worst kings of Judah. He reign in Judah the longest for nearly 55 years between 686- 642 BCE. Manasseh allowed child sacrifices, built Baal altars, and did many other things throughout his rule. Despite being the worst king, Manasseh saw God and eventually turned from his crimes. "Second Chronicles 33 describes the positive deeds he had done in the land after his submission to the Lord." I also learned the aim of the text and the rationale behind its construction in both Manasseh narratives. Further in this essay, I will discuss some similarities and differences between the two accounts of Manasseh in 2Kin 21 and 2Chr 33:1-20.

There are five parallels between the two texts that have helped me better understand King Manasseh. The first similarity that was discovered between the two texts was the fact that they spoke about Manasseh's age and the length of his reign. (2Chr 33:1 and 2Kin 21:1) The second similarity was that both texts spoke about Manasseh's evil deeds in the sight of the Lord. (2Chr 33:2 and 2Kin 21:2) The third similarity that was discovered is that both texts spoke of Manasseh rebuilding the Baal altar and high places after it was destroyed by his father Hezekiah. (2Chr 33:3 and 2Kin 21:3) The fourth similarity is that in both texts God declares, "In Jerusalem shall My name be forever." (2Chr 33:4 and 2Kin 21:4) The fifth and final similarity is that both accounts ended with the death of King Manasseh. (2Chr 33:20 and 2Kin 21:18)

There are three contrasts that highlight the discrepancies between the two stories of King Manasseh when examining the distinctions between them. The first distinction between these two texts is that “Second Chronicles 33:11 relates the punishment that Manasseh suffered from God for offending him.” Yet “Second Kings 21:11 expresses the evil deeds of Manasseh.” The second distinction between the two readings is that “Second Kings 21:15 concludes with Manasseh’s sinful deeds.” Yet, the final verses of “Second Chronicles 33:14-17 focuses on Manasseh’s actions and good deeds.” The third difference that I discovered was that “Second Kings 21 gave details about Manasseh’s sins and dreadful acts.” Yet, “Second Chronicles 33 mostly gave an account of Manasseh’s good deeds and actions during his reign in Judah.”

I believe the author of 2Chr 33:1-20 made changes to the account of Manasseh because of the positive recap of the story before the exile. The Chronicler gave brief accounts of the kings of Judah however, they are more on the positive side of things. For example, in the course text book, (Discovering the Old Testament Story and Faith) “The Chronicler, however, records his humbling before God when the Assyrians took him as a prisoner...” (pp. 220) The Chronicler's main focus was on the return of the people from the exile, therefore the author accounts mostly positive aspects of Manasseh and gave brief accounts of his evil actions. This also suggest that the goal of 2Chr 33:1-20 is to emphasize more of the story’s positive elements as opposed to 2Kin 21, which recounts the tale of covenant-breaking that the king and people of Judah adopted as their way of life.

Based on the life and reign of King Manasseh, it has taught me about God’s love even when I have sinned against him. We have all sinned against God, just like Manasseh did, but because of God’s love, he gives us opportunities to atone for our transgressions. Even if my friends’ gods differ, Manasseh’s life and reign have taught me not to worship false gods.

God's wrath will be directed against my family or at myself as a result, just as it was directed upon the people of Jerusalem and Judah.

In conclusion, 2Kin 21 provides a negative account of Manasseh's evil deeds, on like 2Chr 33:1-20 provides a positive account of Manasseh's honorable royal activities. This is true since the Chronicler's primary goal was to recount the positive parts of the kings' lives rather than their flaws. Whether the kings accomplished good or ill in the nation, the author of 2Kin 21 wanted to recount their narratives. The author of 2Chr 33:1-20 wrote about the success of the rulers of Judah during the exile period, as can be seen by comparing the two versions of this event. Between both texts, the similarities are more than the differences. Manasseh's discovery that God is the true King and ruler of the world has had a profound impact on my Christian life.