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King Manasseh's Accounts

The account of the reign of King Manasseh in 2 Kings makes it hard to ignore what a horrible king he really was. Almost the entirety of chapter 21 focuses on the "detestable sins" that Manasseh committed throughout his fifty-five-year reign of Judah (2 Kings 21:11). Manasseh did almost every sin under the sun, such as erecting alters to the god Baal, consulting with necromancers and mediums, child sacrifice and much more like supposedly shedding "so much innocent blood that he filled Jerusalem from end to end" (2 Kings 21:16). The story of Manasseh in 2 Chronicles gives us a different perspective of the king, one in which he was completely transformed by the hand of God. In this account, Manasseh still commits those sins which were seen as "evil" by God, but that does not define his entire character in stark contrast to the account in 2 Kings 21. Here in 2 Chronicles, the king is captured by Assyrians after leading Judah astray. It's only then when he turns to the name of God out of desperation, that God had forgiveness in Manasseh's prayers and pleas, and gifted him back to Jerusalem (2 Chr. 33:13). This sparked a transformation for Manasseh as he went around the kingdom getting rid of all his false idols, and he even "restored the altar of the Lord" (2 Chr. 33:16).

When comparing the two accounts, it is safe to say they both have a similar start, however, while Kings has a consistently negative view of King Manasseh, Chronicles includes an entire redemption arc for him. Realistically you can assume that the more accurate depiction of Manasseh's rule is the one depicted in 2 Kings. It cannot be assumed that, even in the most positive account of his rule, Manasseh was a good king at all, arguably he could be the worst in the history of Judah. It is evident that the Chronicler had made changes to the story of Manasseh and it is important to discuss why that is.

As described in *Discovering the Old Testament*, the book of Kings focuses on "the events that led to the destruction of both nations (Judah and Israel)" (*Varughese*, pg.190). This explains why certain historical aspects and information are prioritized throughout the book, as the "historians who complied this book… vividly portray God's judgment and the unleashing of the covenant curses in Deuteronomy." (*Varughese*, pg.190). A reason we might not see anything about Manasseh's transformation is that the purpose of 2 Kings is to depict the "religious apostasy" and fall of Israel. It wouldn't make sense for the author to include a seemingly unbelievable change in the heart of the evil king if shortly after, in the same book, he is blamed for the exile. An important aspect of Chronicles is that it is a postexilic text, meaning that the entirety of Chronicle was written after the exile of Israel. This means that the author is looking back at the events of Kings and adding a "new theological perspective", one of these new perspectives is indeed the redemption of king Manasseh. Here in 2 Chronicles, Manasseh is rewarded by God for his faithfulness after being captured by Assyrians. The chronicler might have made this change because it creates an important message for the reader of the Old Testament, that "God holds out hope even for the most treacherous sinner" (*Varughese*, pg.221). I feel that a lesson to be learned from Manasseh's life is exactly that, no matter what sins you've

committed in the eyes of God, he will always have forgiveness and love for His creation. Although I am not sacrificing children, or killing enough people to fill the city of Jerusalem, I still do things that make me feel as though I do not deserve the love that God provides. It's important to understand that we can always find redemption in God's eyes, no matter our transgression, thanks to His forgiving and understanding nature.

Work Cited

Varughese, Alex, et al. *Discovering the Old Testament: Story and Faith*. Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 2003.

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