

Titus J. Wright

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BIB 102

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The Change of Manasseh

Both accounts of Manasseh show many similarities when it comes to the atrocities he commits during his kingship. Both outline his sacrificing of his son to foreign gods, his support of idol worship, and the use of fortune tellers and necromancers. It is interesting to note that in ESV there are a few phrases between the passages that come across through translation to be entirely the same, such as “He did much evil in the sight of the Lord, provoking him to anger.” I find this to be quite interesting that it would be a phrase with such significance as this to come across precisely the same.

One difference that lies between the two passages is that the account in 2Kings seems to be written in a much more analytical style, as an effort to simply display facts about a situation. The 2Chron. account appears to be telling more of a story, portraying some more details of actions, and giving language and phrases to Manasseh. Herein lies the greatest difference in my mind between the two accounts, with the 2Kings account seeming to, intentionally or not, display a larger assortment of Manasseh’s unwise actions than 2Chron., which appears to be telling a sort of redemption story of Manasseh. 2Chron. shows the king praying to God in a time of distress, with God providing grace and delivering him. After this, Manasseh is seen doing away with the idols and altars of foreign gods and replacing them with places of sacrifice, peace offerings, and thanksgiving to Israel’s God.

It seems quite unclear who made the changes in the account, though with 2Chron. being written after the return from exile it would seem easiest to declare it to be the one with changes. However, I do not think this to be true necessarily. My indication of this would be in the fact that

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both seem to reference a similar text, “the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah” as referenced in 2Kings, and “the Chronicles of the Seers” as referenced in 2Chron. I do not hold the background knowledge to confirm the validity of this being the same text, but due to the nature of the two very similar accounts, I would be willing to bet a large sum that they speak of the same. In my mind, I believe this to mean that they are both adaptations of a much more detailed outline of the Kings of Judah, with each passage choosing to emphasize certain aspects of the history based on the author’s present situation.

In regards to what I can learn from the accounts of Manasseh’s life in application to my own, I would say that the major defining factor is the assessment that people, including myself, are not one-dimensional. People can be rulers in the wrong and right direction at times. People can be peacemakers and sacrificers of their sons. People can oppose God on one side of things, pray out of despair in the middle of them, and oppose everything besides God on the other side of them. It is abundantly obvious throughout the story of Manasseh that grace is sufficient. It is also abundantly obvious from an analysis of both passages that perspective can greatly influence how facts of a situation can be perceived. The writer of 2Kings can display a certain set of facts that can be entirely true, while the writer of 2Chron. can do the same, and both tell entirely different stories. This is a reminder that no matter the situation, we have to be mindful of the fact that our vision of it can be skewed, no matter how objective we might like to think we are. God sees now, yesterday, and tomorrow, and asks us to trust that on the other side of things we cannot see, there is a time in which we all might lie peacefully with those before us.

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In summary, 2Kings and 2Chron. both retell the story of a king. And while the accounts might seem short in comparison to the rest of the text, it is large in their value, especially in regard to what can be learned from looking at both accounts. One account shows a quite frank reality in which our actions simply have the consequences they deserve, while another shows a grace that tells us otherwise. 2Kings gives weight to the change in personhood that 2Chron. displays for Manasseh, and we ought to be thankful for both.