

Adam Clarke:

Introduction

Manasseh reigns fifty-five years, and restores idolatry, pollutes the temple, and practises all kinds of abominations, 2 Chronicles 33:1-9. He and the people are warned in vain, 2 Chronicles 33:10. He is delivered into the hands of the Assyrians, bound with fetters, and carried to Babylon, 2 Chronicles 33:11. He humbles himself, and is restored, 2 Chronicles 33:12, 2 Chronicles 33:13. He destroys idolatry, and restores the worship of God, 2 Chronicles 33:14-16. The people keep the high places, but sacrifice to the Lord on them, 2 Chronicles 33:17. His acts, prayer, and death, 2 Chronicles 33:18-20. His son Amon succeeds him; and after a wicked idolatrous reign of two years, is slain by his own servants in his own house, 2 Chronicles 33:21-24. The people rise up, and slay his murderers, and make Josiah his son king in his stead, 2 Chronicles 33:25.

Verse 1

Manasseh was twelve years old - We do not find that he had any godly director; his youth was therefore the more easily seduced. But surely he had a pious education; how then could the principles of it be so soon eradicated?

Verse 3

Altars for Baalim - The Sun and Moon. And made groves, אֲשֶׁרֹת (Asheroth), Astarte, Venus; the host of heaven, all the Planets and Stars. These were the general objects of his devotion.

Verse 5

He built altars - See the principal facts in this chapter explained in the notes on 2 Kings 21:1-17 (note).

Verse 7

A carved image - אֵלֹהִים He set up an image, the likeness of himself, in the house of the sanctuary. The Targumist supposes he wished to procure himself Divine honors.

Verse 12

And when he was in affliction - Here is a very large addition in the Chaldee: אֲשֶׁרֹת For the Chaldeans made a brazen mule, pierced full of small holes, and put him within it, and kindled fires all around it; and when he was in this misery, he sought help of all the idols which he had made, but obtained none, for their were of no use. He therefore repented, and prayed before the Lord his God, and was greatly humbled in the sight of the Lord God of his fathers. אֵלֹהִים

Verse 13

And prayed unto him - אֵלֹהִים While he was thus praying, all the presiding angels went away to the gates of prayer in heaven; and shut all the gates of prayer, and all the windows and apertures in heaven, lest that his prayer should be heard. Immediately the compassions of the Creator of the world were moved, whose right hand is stretched out to receive sinners, who are converted to his fear, and break their heartsâ€™ concupiscence by repentance. He made therefore a window and opening in heaven, under the throne of his glory; and having heard his prayer, he favourably received his supplication. And when his Word had shaken the earth, the mule was burst and he escaped. Then the Spirit went out from between the wings of the cherubim; by which, being inspired through the decree of the Word of the Lord, he returned to his kingdom in Jerusalem. And then Manasseh knew that it was the Lord God who had done these miracles and signs; and he turned to the Lord with his whole heart, left all his idols, and never served them more. אֵלֹהִים This long addition gives the Jewish account of those particulars which the sacred writer has passed by: it is curious, though in some sort trifling. The gates of prayer may be considered childish; but in most of those things the ancient rabbins purposely hid deep and important meanings.

Verse 14

He built a wall - This was probably a weak place that he fortified; or a part of the wall which the Assyrians had broken down, which he now rebuilt.

Verse 15

He took away the strange gods - He appears to have done every thing in his power to destroy the idolatry which he had set up, and to restore the pure worship of the true God. His repentance brought forth fruits meet for repentance. How long he was in captivity, and when or by whom he was delivered, we know not. The fact of his restoration is asserted; and we believe it on Divine testimony.

Verse 17

The people did sacrifice - "Nevertheless the people did sacrifice on the high places, but only to the name of the Word of the Lord their God." - Targum.

Verse 18

The words of the seers that spake to him - "Which were spoken to him in the name of the Word of the Lord God of Israel." - Targum.

Verse 19

His prayer also - What is called the Prayer of Manasseh, king of Judah, when he was holden captive in Babylon, being found among our apocryphal books, I have inserted it at the end of the chapter, without either asserting or thinking that it is the identical prayer which this penitent king used when a captive in Babylon. But, as I have observed in another place, there are many good sentiments in it; and some sinners may find it a proper echo of the distresses of their hearts; I therefore insert it.

Written among the sayings of the seers - "They are written in the words of Chozai." - Targum. So says the Vulgate. The Syriac has Hunan the prophet; and the Arabic has Saphan the prophet.

Verse 21

Amon - reigned two years - See on 2 Kings 21:19 (note).

Verse 22

Sacrificed unto all the carved images - How astonishing is this! with his father's example before his eyes, he copies his father's vices, but not his repentance.

Verse 23

Trespassed more and more - He appears to have exceeded his father, and would take no warning.

Verse 24

His servants conspired against him - On what account we cannot tell.

Verse 25

The people of the land slew all them - His murder was not a popular act, for the people slew the regicides. They were as prone to idolatry as their king was. We may rest satisfied that idolatry was accompanied with great licentiousness and sensual gratifications else it never, as a mere religious system, could have had any sway in the world.

For an explanation of the term groves, 2 Chronicles 23:3, see the observations at the end of 2 Kings 21:26 (note).

I have referred to the prayer attributed to Manasseh, and found in what is called the Apocrypha, just before the first book of Maccabees. It was anciently used as a form of confession in the Christian Church, and is still as such received by the Greek Church. It is as follows: -

"O Lord, Almighty God of our fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and of their righteous seed, who hast made heaven and earth, with all the ornament thereof; who hast bound the sea by the word of thy commandment; who hast shut up the deep, and sealed it by thy terrible and glorious name; whom all men fear, and tremble before thy power; for the majesty of thy glory cannot be borne, and thine angry threatening towards sinners is insupportable; but thy merciful promise is unmeasurable and unsearchable; for thou art the most high Lord, of great compassion, long-suffering, very merciful, and repentest of the evils of men. Thou, O Lord, according to thy great goodness, hast promised repentance and forgiveness to them that have sinned against thee, and of thine infinite mercies hast appointed repentance unto sinners, that they may be saved. Thou, therefore, O Lord, that art the God of the just, has not appointed repentance to the just, as to Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, which have not sinned against thee; but thou hast appointed repentance unto me that am a sinner: for I have sinned above the number of the sands of the sea. My transgressions, O Lord, are multiplied; my transgressions are multiplied; and I am not worthy to behold and see the height of heaven for the multitude of mine iniquities. I am bowed down with many iron bands, that I cannot lift up mine head, neither have any release; for I have provoked thy wrath, and done evil before thee. I did not thy will, neither kept I thy commandments. I have set up abominations, and have multiplied offenses. Now therefore I bow the knee of mine heart, beseeching thee of grace. I have sinned, O Lord, I have sinned, and I acknowledge mine iniquities: wherefore I humbly beseech thee, forgive me, O Lord, forgive me, and destroy me not in mine iniquities. Be not angry with me for ever, by reserving evil for me; neither condemn me into the lower parts of the earth. For thou art the God, the God of them that repent; and in me thou wilt show all thy goodness: for thou wilt save me, that am unworthy, according to thy great mercy. Therefore I will praise thee for ever all the days of my life: for all the

powers of the heavens do praise thee, and thine is the glory for ever and ever. - Amen.â€•

The above translation, which is that in our common Bibles, might be mended; but the piece is scarcely worth the pains.