

Most evil King's famous prayer: Sincere? or, Phony?

Manasseh may be the most evil king who ever lived. But did he repent in his later years? – which there is some evidence for – or was it all feigned? – which there is some evidence for, also. And what lessons can we learn from the life and reign of Manasseh? He began to reign over Judah at age 12, and reigned 55 years – an amazingly long reign, (about as long as the reigns of the last six kings of Judah put together), and chuck full of ungodliness and unrighteousness.

Manasseh was good king Hezekiah's son, and good king Josiah's grandfather. He came on the scene near the end of Judah's life as a nation, when God had already determined to destroy Judah for her sins – and a good chunk of those sins were the blatant sins of Manasseh. In fact, judgment on Judah (the Babylonian Captivity) was stayed by the righteous intervention of good king Josiah. It was a kind of STAY OF EXECUTION, FOR THE SINS OF MANASSEH:

“And like unto him (Josiah) was there no king before him, that turned to the Lord with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses; neither after him arose there any like him. NOTWITHSTANDING – the Lord turned not from the fierceness of his great wrath, wherewith his anger was kindled against Judah, because of all the provocations that MANASSEH had provoked him withal.” 2 Kgs. 23:25,26.

Does this sound like Manasseh's repentance was sincere, and that the Lord had forgiven Manasseh and cleansed him? What lessons are we to learn? The record of Manasseh's life and 55-year reign is given twice – almost identical accounts – at **2 Kgs. 21** and **2 Chron. 33**. I say, ALMOST identical accounts – with one vital exception; to wit: The account of the so-called “Prayer of Manasseh,” which appears ONLY in **2 Chron. 33:10-19**. Did Manasseh truly repent after all his bloody deeds and blasphemous mistreatment of God's Elect people – or was his foxhole conversion feigned? And what are we to learn? Here's how the story goes; to wit: ***“And the Lord spake to Manasseh, and to his people: but they would not hearken. Wherefore the Lord brought upon them the captains of the host of the king of Assyria, which took Manasseh among the thorns, and bound him with fetters, and carried him to Babylon. And when he was in affliction, he besought the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers...”*** – stop right there for a minute, and consult Bro. Gill about Manasseh's affliction.

Gill says he was bound with painful fetters both hands and feet, with chains of brass which were never removed or loosened all the way to Babylon. There he was in prison, in fetters, in great affliction; and the Targum reads as follows: *“The Chaldeans made an instrument of brass with holes in it, and put him in it, and fire about it, and one Arabian historian calls it a tower of brass.”*

And now, continuing the account of how Manasseh's PRAYER came about, look at **2 Chron. 33:12**; to wit: ***“And when he was in affliction, he besought the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, And PRAYED unto him: and he was intreated***

of him, and heard his supplication, and brought again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the Lord he was God....And he took away the strange gods, and the idol out of the house of the Lord, and all the altars that he had built in the mount of the house of the Lord, and in Jerusalem, and cast them out of the city. And he repaired the altar of the Lord, and sacrificed thereon peace offerings and thank offerings, and commanded Judah to serve the Lord God of Israel. NEVERTHELESS – the people did sacrifice still in the HIGH PLACES, yet unto the Lord their God only. Now the rest of the acts of Manasseh, and HIS PRAYER unto his God, and the words of the seers – (Gill: Joel, Nahum and Habakkuk) – that spake to him in the name of the Lord God of Israel, behold, they are written in the book of the kings of Israel. HIS PRAYER also, and how God was intreated of him, and all his sins, and his trespass, and the places wherein he built HIGH PLACES, and set up groves and graven images, before he was humbled: behold, they are written among the sayings of the seers.” 2 Chron. 33:10-19.

THE PRAYER OF MANASSEH

And so you see, that the mysterious PRAYER OF MANASSEH means the repentance or reformation of Manasseh. Did Manasseh get right with the Lord or not? Which brings us back to the fundamental question this sermon seeks to answer; to wit: Did Manasseh truly repent after all his bloody deeds and blasphemous mistreatment of God’s Elect people? – or was his foxhole conversion feigned? And, what are we to learn? I submit that he did NOT truly repent. He did NOT bring forth fruits meet for repentance (**Mat. 3:9**), in that he did NOT take away the HIGH PLACES (**2 Chron. 33:17**), and he did NOT brake down the houses of the sodomites that were in the house of the Lord (**2 Kgs. 23:7**).

It is not possible to get right with the Lord and leave institutionalized idolatry (HIGH PLACES) and institutionalized SODOMY firmly in place. After listing all the good things Manasseh did following his so-called conversion experience, the following verse gives it all away; to wit: *“NEVERTHELESS, the people did sacrifice still in the HIGH PLACES, yet unto the Lord their God.”* (**2 Chronicles 33:17**) This was no small matter, and effectively cancelled out everything else. *“For they provoked him to anger with their HIGH PLACES, and moved him to jealousy with their graven images. When God heard this, he was wroth, and greatly abhorred Israel.”* **Psa. 78:58,59**. *“Then ye shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land from before you...and quite pluck down all their HIGH PLACES.”* (**Num. 33:52**). The HIGH PLACES stood for institutionalized idolatry, sodomy and other forms of filthiness in religious doctrine and conduct.

***“And it came to pass after all thy wickedness, (woe, woe unto thee! saith the Lord God;) That thou hast also built unto thee an eminent place (SODOMITE WHOREHOUSE), and hast made thee an HIGH PLACE in every street. Thou hast built thy HIGH PLACE at every head of the way, and hast made thy beauty to be abhorred, and hast opened thy feet (spread thy legs) to every one that passed by, and multiplied thy whoredoms.”* (**Ezek. 16:23-25**).**

Manasseh knew all about the HIGH PLACES – where they were, how many there were, and the sinful nature and filthy practices peculiarly associated with each place. Besides carefully rebuilding and refurnishing each HIGH PLACE that his father good king Hezekiah had torn

down – Manasseh himself reared up and financed innumerable altars for Baalim and groves for star worship – during his long 55-year reign; to wit: *“For he built again the HIGH PLACES which Hezekiah his father had broken down, and reared up altars for Baalim, and made groves, and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served them.”* 2 Chron. 33:3. All of this knowledge and conduct pertaining to HIGH PLACES made it especially binding upon Manasseh to completely and thoroughly destroy every vestige of every HIGH PLACE in the land, if he truly and sincerely repented. Instead, he did the opposite, leaving in untouched, filthy splendor each and every HIGH PLACE existing in the land; so that we will read these damnable words for ever and ever; to wit: *“Nevertheless the people did sacrifice still in the HIGH PLACES, yet unto the Lord their God only.”* 2 Chron. 32:17. What an insult to the Lord our God! As if they said: “We are dedicating these vile, idolatrous, blasphemous practices to the Lord!” As if they should say: “It’s OK to have unspeakably filthy sodomite sex with my partner, as long as I dedicate it to the Lord as a sacrament, like Bishop Robinson does.”

Even the pinheads in England, who wrote and/or edited The Illustrated Bible Dictionary, see through the pretended conversion of Manasseh; saying: *“His (Manasseh’s) reformation appears to have been superficial.”* Indeed it does. They had no business even HAVING a single HIGH PLACE in the land – let alone building and worshiping in them on every high hill and every street corner of every city in the land. An eternal principle – as old as God, and as binding as Thou shalt not kill or commit adultery – is involved here. That principle permeates the Bible and is drawn sharply into focus at **Deut. 12:1-14**. Only God’s Elect people can see and understand that principle. By dealing fast and loose with the HIGH PLACES, Manasseh demonstrated beyond any doubt that his reformation (or better said, his repentance) was superficial.

WHAT WORD DON’T YOU UNDERSTAND? DESTROY ALL HIGH PLACES

The only way to get right with God was to destroy ALL HIGH PLACES. That destruction must be complete and thorough. “ALL” means without exception. Anybody who does not understand **Deut. 12:1-14** is an ignorant fool, as defined by **Psas. 14 and 53**. Take a look:

“These are the statutes and judgments, which ye shall observe to do in the land, which the Lord God of thy fathers giveth thee to possess it, all the days that ye live upon the earth. Ye shall utterly destroy all the places, wherein the nations which ye shall possess served their gods, upon the high mountains, and upon the hills, and under every green tree. And ye shall overthrow their altars, and break their pillars, and burn their groves with fire; and ye shall hew down the graven images of their gods, and destroy the names of them out of that place. Ye shall not do so unto the Lord your God. But unto THE PLACE which the Lord your God shall choose out of all your tribes to put his name there, even unto his habitation shall ye seek, and thither thou shalt come. And thither ye shall bring your burnt offerings, and your sacrifices, and your tithes, and heave offerings of your hand, and your vows, and your freewill offerings, and the firstlings of your herds and of your flocks: And there ye shall eat before the Lord your God, and ye shall rejoice in all that ye put your hand unto, ye and your households, wherein the Lord thy

God hath blessed thee. Ye shall not do after all the things that we do here this day, every man whatsoever is right in his own eyes. For ye are not as yet come to the rest and to the inheritance, which the Lord your God giveth you. But when ye go over Jordan, and dwell in the land which the Lord your God giveth you to inherit, and when he giveth you rest from all your enemies round about, so that ye dwell in safety; Then there shall be A PLACE which the Lord your God shall choose to cause his name to dwell there; thither shall ye bring all that I command you; your burnt offerings, and your sacrifices, your tithes, and the heave offering of your hand, and all your choice vows which ye vow unto the Lord: And ye shall rejoice before the Lord your God, ye, and your sons, and your daughters, and your menservants, and your maidservants, and the Levite that is within your gates; forasmuch as he hath no part nor inheritance with you. Take heed to thyself that thou offer not thy burnt offerings in EVERY PLACE that thou seest: But in THE PLACE the Lord shall choose in one of thy tribes, there thou shalt offer thy burnt offerings, and there thou shalt do all that I command thee.” Deut. 12:1-14.

ONE PLACE FOR LEGITIMATE PUBLIC WORSHIP

The only legitimate place for public worship in the days of Manasseh was the Temple of God in Jerusalem. The Lord chose that PLACE, and dwelt there, and spoke to His people there; where every vessel and every piece of furniture spoke clearly and definitively of some grand Truth; and where accurate notions of the nature and attribute of God were communicated to God’s Elect people. EVERY OTHER PLACE – EVERY HIGH PLACE – was corrupt, and led to error of the grossest kind and to idolatrous practices of the filthiest kind.

Nowadays, – (since the destruction of the Temple by Titus in 70 A.D.) – the PLACE God has chosen to dwell and meet with His people is where two or three are gathered together in Christ’s Name. **Mat. 18:20.** It is of the utmost importance to locate and dwell in the PLACE. The mongrel, half-breed, Samaritan woman at the well said to Christ:

“Sir, Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the PLACE where men ought to worship.” “Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father ...God is a spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.” (Jn. 4:21,24).

As in the days of the Temple, there is only ONE PLACE today where legitimate public worship of God can take place. It is everyone’s duty to find that PLACE and dwell there. It is easy to identify. The outward indicia are numerous and recognizable. It is local and visible. It has but two ordinances (not sacraments) - water baptism by immersion, and the Lord’s Supper with one loaf of unleavened bread and one cup of grape wine, with none but church members participating. It preaches nothing but pure Calvinism. It exercises close discipline to see that its members are walking orderly. That PLACE is always, ***“fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners.”*** Song of Solomon 6:10. These are the lessons we learn from Manasseh. Amen.