

2 Kings 21:1-26

We step into an interesting yet very unfortunate ch when we come to chapter 21 of the book of 2nd Kings. Interesting because of the circumstances that surround it, unfortunate because Manasseh would be the single most wicked king that Judah ever knew.

You recall perhaps that since ch 18 we've been studying the reign of Hezekiah. And Hezekiah was one of the single most godly kings that Judah ever knew, perhaps more so than any other outside of David himself. The record states of Hezekiah, "*And he did what was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father David had done.*" 2 Kings 18:3 And again, "*He trusted in the LORD God of Israel, so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor who were before him. For he held fast to the LORD; he did not depart from following Him, but kept His commandments, which the LORD had commanded Moses.*" 2 Kings 18:5-6

But something interesting took place in Hezekiah's life. Only 14 yrs into his reign he became deathly ill. And Isaiah the prophet came to him with a word from the Lord and he said, "Set your house in order, for you shall die, and not live." And he turned around and walked out of the king's presence, Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and he began to weep bitterly, and sob convulsively saying things like, "Lord, I've walked before you in truth, with a loyal heart, I've done what was good in your sight." And what he was doing was pleading with the Lord to heal him because he wanted to live and not die rather than die and not live. And we can't really blame him for that, none of us really want to go through the process of death, its not natural, we've been programmed for life, but death is something altogether foreign to us. So it's only natural for him to cry out to and appeal to God's mercy to heal him. And God did just that, He turned Isaiah around before he got even 1/2 way out of the palace courts and said to him, "Go tell Hezekiah that I've heard his prayer and that I'll give him 15 more years." God healed him.

Now that's pretty exciting (and it brings up an interesting side note that we'll touch on in a moment). But as we ponder the outcome, the overall fruit of Hezekiah's plea, we have to wonder if his healing from the Lord was the best thing for him. "What do you mean?" We'll get to that in a minute, but suffice it to say for now that it seems to me that the *perfect* will of God for his life would've been to take him home when he became sick unto death. That's what God said to him, that was His *Ist* word to Hezekiah. "Set your house in order, for you shall die, and not live." But because of his prayer, and his plea and all, God healed him, which seems to indicate at least to a degree that Hezekiah's healing would've been God's *permissive* will. And That's the side note that I want to touch on. Is it possible for us to (through prayer), persuade God from His perfect will for our lives into His permissive will for our lives? The scripture would seem to show that at least in certain circumstances that it is. We could think of the children of Israel in the wilderness wanderings. It was God's perfect will to feed them manna from heaven, but they murmured and complained, cried out to Moses how they remembered the fish and the meat that they had in Egypt, that they were sick of being thirsty, and how their souls loathed this worthless bread.

So God said, “You want meat? Fine, I’ll send you meat until it comes out of your nostrils, you’ll just be sick of it.” Or perhaps Balaam whom Balak hired to curse the children of Israel, Balaam said, “God can I go with them?” (Balak had sent ambassadors to try to get Balaam to come with them) God said, “No.” So they came back with lots of money, Balaam says, “God that’s a lot of money, can I *please* go with them.” And this happened a few times until God finally said, “Fine, you want to go with them, go with them.” And of course it didn’t turn out well ultimately.

Here we have Hezekiah; “You’re going to die” was the word of the Lord originally. He begs God otherwise and God heals him, so it would seem as though at times through persistence, God is able to be persuaded into allowing us to walk in His *permissive* will for our lives. Now it never goes as well for us, or others around us when that happens. But it’s as though He says, “If you want to learn the hard way, that’s your prerogative.” So it would seem to me that when we pray we would do well to always couch our requests, regardless of how passionate we may be about our position, in the terms something to the effect of “Nevertheless not my will, but Your will be done.” Would it have been better for Hezekiah to simply have submitted to the word of the Lord the 1st time and go home to be with Him? I’ll let you be the judge of that as the text unfolds.

Vs1-2

A minute ago I made the comment that I wasn’t sure that Hezekiah’s healing was the best thing for him, and this is a large part of my reasoning in that. Not only did Hezekiah get all puffed up with pride after God healed him (though he did humble himself and repent ultimately) but he showed the Babylonian ambassadors all the treasure that was under his dominion, not sparing anything. Which would lead to them coming back in a # of years to plunder Jerusalem for every bit of it and carry them off into captivity. But we also read here that Manasseh was 12 yrs old when he became king. You say, “What does that have to do with anything?” God’s word to Hezekiah that he was going to die was 15yrs prior to this point, Manasseh is only 12, that means that the most wicked king that would ever sit on the throne in Judah (who would defile the nation to such an extent so as to bring the irreversible judgment of God upon them) was born 3 yrs *after* Hezekiah was healed. Had Hezekiah died when he was given that word from the Lord, he would’ve never shown Babylon his kingdom, and Manasseh would’ve never been born.

Now there’s lots of thought that goes into this whole thing. I mean does God take a man’s life because of the future sins of a son not yet conceived? David had some wicked sons, should God have wiped *him* out before *they* were born? Consider Josiah, he was Manasseh’s grandson. He was one of the most godly kings (along with Hezekiah) outside of David that Judah would know, had there been no Manasseh, there’d have been no Josiah, so it’s not a simple situation and what was done was done so there’s no point in spending too much time wondering “What if?” But it’s food for thought, it would simply seem to me that when God gives you His word the 1st time, that’s His perfect will, outside of that you begin to operate in the permissive will of God, but ultimately either way we can be sure that God’s will, will be done.

Here are a couple more things to chew on. Manasseh, Judah's most wicked king enjoyed the longest reign of any of the kings of Judah, 55yrs. But Hezekiah was nearly cut short after only 14, then God gave him 15 more out of grace. Go figure, natural reasoning would cause you to think that a godly king would be blessed with a long reign, and a wicked king would be cut off. But God, who sees the end from the beginning is longsuffering and kind, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. Often times people mistake the *grace* of God, for the *approval* of God. That if something goes on for years God must be ok with it, but the fact of the matter is that God is being gracious giving ample opportunity for repentance. So if there's something going on in your life that you know is contrary to the Word of God, but nothing's happened so you figure you must've slipped through the cracks, take heed. God is giving you time to repent, but ultimately He'll deal with it you can be sure. The bible says, "... *be sure your sin will find you out.*" Num 32:23 God was gracious to Manasseh,

The other thing that I see here (and we've spoken of this before) is that there in vs 2 we're told that, "He did evil in the sight of the Lord." Manasseh would be in essence the worst of the worst, yet his dad was one of the most godly kings Judah ever knew. Some say that he was sitting on the throne beside his dad for 10 yrs as a co-regent. So it is possible and sometimes it happens that bad kids come from good/godly parents. Often times we have a tendency to look at a person who's corrupt and say, "Man, where did his/her folks go wrong? They must've had no discipline, no instruction, no accountability," and all the rest. But such is not always the case, now there's no doubt that good parenting as a general rule will turn out good children, but that's not an emphatic, or absolute occurrence. Sometimes parents can spill all that they have to offer into a child in order to try and fashion that child into a godly young man, or young woman, but ultimately they make their own choice as they reach that age. So to think that the only families that turn out children that become troublesome to society are dysfunctional families is a misnomer because here's the news flash, no family is fully functional! We've all sinned, and fall short of the glory of God, we all make mistakes. But each of us will ultimately have to give account to God for ourselves, and assume the consequences of our own actions. We might be able to blame our parents in the court of law here in America, but not before the judgment seat of God. He holds us each individually accountable for our own lives and choices. Deut 24:16, "*Fathers shall not be put to death for their children, nor shall children be put to death for their fathers; a person shall be put to death for his own sin.*" So sometimes children choose the wrong path regardless of how godly their parents may've been.

Now to the other extreme, some of the most wicked parents produce incredibly godly children, Josiah would be a perfect example of that (we'll read of him briefly at the end of this ch). His dad was wicked, yet we're told that he didn't turn aside to the left or to the right from following the Lord, but that he did what was right in the sight of the Lord and walked in the ways of his father David. So it can happen both ways, we just want to do our best to be the godly parents/examples/disciplinarians that our children need, and commit the rest into the Lord's hands. But it just sort of blows us away to see this young man turn out so wicked after having such a godly father.

Vs 2 here gives us the general overview in letting us know that he did evil in the sight of the Lord according to the abominations of the nations whom the Lord cast out of the land before Israel inhabited it, and the following 7 vs or so give us the details as to what that entailed or broke down into.

Vs3

We might understand this to say that he built up everything his father had torn down and he tore down everything his father had built up. He just completely brought the nation into ruin, it's amazing how long it can take to establish a pattern of righteousness, and how quickly it can all be torn down and re-established in wickedness. We just naturally gravitate towards the lusts of the flesh, so it doesn't take a whole lot of persuading, the nation just follows him right into these disreputable practices.

Notice the standard that's mentioned; Ahab the king of Israel. You remember him, if not you'll remember his wife's name-Jezebel. He instigated the worship of Baal in Israel, now later on Jehu completely eradicated all of that in Israel, but now here it is happening in Judah thanks to Manasseh. And he worshipped *all* the hosts of heaven and served them. Or in other words he practiced astrology. That practice that stems all the way back to ancient Babylon when Nimrod had them build a tower up into the heavens that they might worship the stars, the hosts of heaven.

It's amazing to me that people would place some sort of credence to the myth that the position of the stars on the day you're born have some sort of dealing with your destiny. And it's an abomination before the Lord because it presumes to take control of the universe out of the hands of God as the Creator and place control into the "hands" of creation. But the whole thing is ludicrous, through Isaiah, God said sarcastically to Israel when they were in trouble having not sought after Him, *"Let now the astrologers, the stargazers, And the monthly prognosticators Stand up and save you From what shall come upon you. Behold, they shall be as stubble, The fire shall burn them; They shall not deliver themselves From the power of the flame;"* Isa 47:13-14 much less be of any value to you, they can't even save themselves. But Manasseh worshipped and served the hosts of heaven, Baal, and Asherah or Easter, the goddess of fertility.

Vs4-5

So he even defiled the temple of God by placing pagan altars in the holy place and in the outer court of the temple. The place that was to be reserved for God alone

Vs6-8

And this latter portion of vs 8 obviously serves to inform us of the fact that Judah is in breach of contract. Therefore very soon they'll be wandering off into captivity because they haven't kept the commands of God, the law of Moses and all, they haven't walked in the ways of God but rather they've pursued their own lusts. Manasseh sacrificed his son to Molech (which we've spoken of before) burning his son alive in the incandescent arms of Molech while the people shout their chants and pound loudly on their drums so as to drown out the screams of the baby being burned alive. He practiced sorcery, (or soothsaying), used witchcraft, consulted with spiritists and conferred with mediums. There just wasn't much on the scale of abominations before God that he didn't deliberately endeavor in, he was just a wicked man. If there was a pagan practice out there that he was aware of he'd give it a go, and all of these things that flew directly in the face of the Word of God. Over and over again God told them in His words things to the extent of, "*When you come into the land which the LORD your God is giving you, you shall not learn to follow the abominations of those nations. There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, or one who practices witchcraft, or a soothsayer, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, or one who conjures spells, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead. For all who do these things are an abomination to the LORD, and because of these abominations the LORD your God drives them out from before you.*" Deut 18:9-12 But not only did Manasseh do these things, he seduced the nation in the same way. The bible says, "*If a ruler pays attention to lies, All his servants become wicked.*" Prov 29:12 They just walked contrary to the written revealed word of God.

Vs9

How would you like to have that little indictment documented in your record? Manasseh seduced them to do more evil than the nations whom the Lord had destroyed before the children of evil. Now to me that's just an ominous tone, because if God destroyed those nations before Israel for doing less than what Manasseh has persuaded them to do now, what do you think is going to happen to them? He's no respecter of persons, so if the hammer fell on the nations before them, it'll fall on them as well. But how much more when they had the word of God telling them differently, the other nations were judged even though they didn't have the written word of God, and here they are in deliberate disobedience to God's Word. And the bible tells us that to him who knows to do what is right and doesn't do it, to him it is sin. And God is holy and righteous, and He judges sin.

Vs10-15

Wow, those are some heavy statements. God says He's going to bring such calamity on the nation that whoever hears it, it'll send shivers down their spine. It'll hurt their ears just hearing about it (sort of a thing). And they'll be wiped up like dish, just taking all those scraps and clearing them out.

And God draws attention to His plumb line, and in essence He's saying, "By the same standards I judged Ahab and Israel, I'll judge Judah, they were carried off, you'll be carried off. They were plundered, you'll be plundered, I'm fed up and finished tolerating your sin and rebellion." As for who the prophets were, most think Isaiah, Habakkuk, Nahum, I read perhaps Joel somewhere. But look at vs 16

Vs16

Most commentators take this as an inference meaning that he killed the prophets and those who sought to uphold godly standards. If they in anyway opposed him, he had them killed. Tradition holds that he's the one who had Isaiah sawn in half in the hollow of a log, of course Heb 11 speaks of those who were sawn in two and most believe that's speaking specifically of Isaiah and the death he underwent by the command of Manasseh. God hates the shedding of innocent blood. Which amongst other ways our country has a lot of innocent blood on its hands in the form of abortion. *"These six things the LORD hates, Yes, seven are an abomination to Him: A proud look, A lying tongue, Hands that shed innocent blood, A heart that devises wicked plans, Feet that are swift in running to evil, A false witness who speaks lies, And one who sows discord among brethren."* Prov 6:16-19 So on God's top 7 list of most detestable sins #3 on the list is the shedding of innocent blood. Yet isn't it interesting that the redemption of mankind would come through the vehicle of just that as Judas cried out before the chief priests and elders saying, "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood." He who knew no sin became sin for us that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

Vs17-18

Now if this is all we had of the record we'd be left to believe that Manasseh died a wicked/evil man who'd wrought much destruction and brought the judgment of God upon Judah, but the Chronicler gives us a little more of his story. Turn quickly to 2nd Chronicles 33

Vs10-17.

Isn't that interesting? Remember when we began how we spoke of his incredibly long reign and how that God who sees the end from the beginning isn't willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance therefore He's gracious and gives a span of time to repent? Well in the end Manasseh did just that, the lowest of the low, the worst of the worst being brought to the end of himself, hitting rock bottom finding himself willing to cry out to God. And God responded to his cry, remember what Paul said? *"This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life."* 1 Tim 1:15-16 If I were God I'd have given up on him long ago and cast him off, he'd be frying. But God saved Manasseh, we'll see him on the other side. What a pattern of longsuffering and grace that God has shown in taking this absolute deliberate blasphemer and saving him. There is no sin that you can commit, no act so utterly heinous but that God won't forgive you, and save you if you'll just cry out to him.

And God loves us enough to take us to the end of ourselves, Manasseh found himself with hooks (literally) in his nose, and in his jaw, being carried off as the prophets said, and he *humbled himself greatly* before the God of his fathers. And he cried out to God and God rescued him, reestablished him in Jerusalem and then he *knew* that the Lord was in fact God.

And he tried to make right all his wrongs, but it was too late, it's hard to make right in a few years what you've spend decades destroying. And that's the tragedy of end of the line repentance, people think, "When I get older I'll get right with God." Which 1st of all presumes that you'll make it till you are older which is a huge risk. But not only that, often times the damage that your pattern of sin over the years has done in the lives of others is irreparable.

I mean it's great that Manasseh got right with God, but most of the people only served the Lord because they were made to politically. They still were sacrificing on the high places, we applaud the repentance of Manasseh but unfortunately he did more damage in his early years than he was able to repair in his latter years. His dad was one of the greatest kings Israel ever knew, and yet he squandered the majority of his life in wickedness. But God will save all who will humble themselves and call upon Him, repenting of their sin.

Vs19-23

You see, his son didn't get that same opportunity, and unfortunately he reverted to the way his dad *used* to be, rather than following the example of repentance. And so Manasseh lost his own son who was assassinated after only 2 yrs in office.

Vs24-26

And so the scale reverts back from wickedness, to righteousness.

Prayer Points: God help us to lead our lives as set apart to You all of our days, that we not presume upon opportunity to repent but that we just live for you period. We thank You that there's no sin that we can commit but that You won't forgive us, if we'll but humble ourselves before You, confess our sin, cry out to You in repentance, teach us what it means to have a heart of repentance. We don't want to be repeat offenders, but rather a repentant people, a people who forsake our sin and lead lives of holiness for You are holy. Lord I pray for anyone here who may have some sort of secret sin of which they think they're getting away with because You haven't busted them yet, help them to recognize Your grace and repent while there's still time knowing that our sin finds us out, of that we can be sure. We thank You for Your grace and mercy, help us to be the parents, that our kids need, and we pray for our kids Lord, that they would grow up to know You, to fear You, and to follow You all the days of their lives.