
Day 192 - July 11

Judah after Israel's Fall (725-585 BCE) *Spiritual Decline under Manasseh*

Readings: *2 Kings 20:21; 21:1-16; 2 Chronicles 32:33; 33:1-9*

Reflections:

- Here is a big surprise. After Hezekiah dies, the people return to idolatry. His own son at a young age leads the way. Is this the case of a father who fails to invest in his own son or a son who gets power too quickly for good judgment? I think at least two things are clear. First, there are no grand-children in God's family. Only children. A parent can only introduce their children to God. The child themselves must decide if they want to be in relationship with God. Second, whatever good happened under Hezekiah, it did not change the heart of the people, even his own son. In the ongoing story of "what doesn't work" this account makes it clear again that unless people are changed from the inside out we have no hope of lasting transformation.
- Manasseh not only turns the nation back to its previous idolatry, but he goes even so far as actually building altars to the gods of the star in the temple of the Lord. As he got older, he actually sacrificed his own son. He led the nation to do even more evil than the nations around them. This evil also led to great violence and bloodshed.
- Once again the nation falls under judgment and God sets his purpose to "wipe the dish clean." Even in the midst of great sin and evil, we see that God will continue to call the people to look forward to the coming of their king, the Messiah.
- I wonder what motivated Manasseh to turn back to idolatry so quickly. At 12 years old he was given complete power of the nation right at the time he was just coming into puberty. Imagine giving a 12 year old complete power to have as much sexual indulgence as he wants? The pagan religions would have offered up complete sexual freedom for Manasseh. Maybe it was this simple. This reminds us that the human heart, if it is not changed from the inside out, is a dangerous thing. Self-indulgence can send us right into self-destruction. The good news is a Messiah would come and offer a grace that would free us from this. He would tell the story of a young man, much like Manasseh, who would sell everything he had for the pleasures of this world. It was a story that would remind us that each of us have a "Manasseh/Prodigal Son" part to our

self-centered brokenness and that our Heavenly Father has the grace to rescue us from our own hearts.