

**Lesson 22 - 2 Kings 21:1-23:30****Introduction**

In chapter 21 we have Manasseh of Judah, who will rule for 55 years, the longest of any king of either the northern or southern kingdoms. He sets a new standard for wickedness, exceeding even the depravity of the Canaanites. As a result, Judah's exile becomes inevitable.

Contrasting this, in chapters 22-23 there is Josiah, the last good king of Judah, and his reign is characterized by temple repair, covenant renewal, and the destruction of idolatrous centres. Like Hezekiah, Josiah compares favourably to David, thus evoking the promise of David's eternal dynasty (2 Sam 7:11-16).<sup>1</sup>

**Study Questions**

1. In 21:1-9, the sins of Manasseh are recounted. Manasseh is the very worst of the Judean kings, and his 55-year reign leads Judah into greater sin than had been committed by the nations Israel had driven out in the first place. According to verses 7-8, what effect did this rule have on the temple?
  
2. In 21:10-15, God declares utter devastation upon Judah and Jerusalem because of their sin, promising to deliver them into the hands of their enemies. How do the images used in these verses emphasize the horrific nature of this judgment? What do you think it would be like to receive this prophecy?
  
3. From all the evidence you see in chapter 21, what does God want his people to remember most about each of these rulers?
  - a) Manasseh of Judah
  
  - b) Amon of Judah
  
4. How is the Book of the Law discovered during Josiah's reign (22:1-8)? Why does its discovery provoke the reaction that it does from Josiah?
  
5. What does the Lord's promise to Josiah in 22:14-20 reveal about Josiah's character? How do God's mercy and judgment relate to each other in this passage?

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<sup>1</sup> ZSB Study Notes

## **Gospel Glimpses<sup>2</sup>**

MERCY AND JUDGMENT. This portion of scripture is concerned greatly with God's judgment, which he has declared upon Judah for the sins of Manasseh, and which not even the righteous reign of Josiah can avert. Nonetheless, while even pledging his commitment to carry out his determined judgment (22:16-17; 23:26-27), God responds graciously to King Josiah "because your heart was penitent, and you humbled yourself before the Lord" (22:19). The story of righteous Josiah reminds us that God gives grace to all who respond to him with a penitent heart, know matter how dire the circumstances of life. It also reminds us that God's mercy and wrath are not to be pitted against one another; the Lord is capable of expressing mercy even amid the larger purposes of judgment. As Habakkuk prayed, "In wrath remember mercy" (Hab. 3:2)

6. In 2 Kings 23, a number of Josiah's reforms are listed;

- Covenant renewal (1-3)
- Purging of various idolatrous institutions (4-20)
- Celebration of the Passover meal for the first time since the book of Judges (21-23)
- The ridding of the mediums, spiritists and other forms of idolatry (24-25)

What strikes you as the greatest of Josiah's accomplishments in this chapter and why?

7. Despite all of Josiah's reforms, God declares that exile is still ordained for Judah (23:26-27). According to these verses, why are Josiah's reforms insufficient to avert this disaster?

8. King Jehoahaz of Judah takes up only a small section of chapter 23 and his reign is only for three months. Are there any lessons to be learned from this king? What might God want us to remember about him?

## **Personal Reflection**

- Romans 5:1-11 is one of many New Testament texts which speaks about God's grace and mercy. What is it that you find so marvellous about this grace and mercy in your life?
- Consider the theme of God's sovereignty and how it impacts your spiritual journey. How might this be of comfort?
- Pray that the lessons learned will help change your life for the better.

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<sup>2</sup> Ortland, pg. 87