

King Manasseh and Christ

Contrasts and comparisons

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King Manasseh, in his early wickedness and later repentance, provides contrasts and comparisons with Christ that teach important lessons to subsequent believers.

QUITE RIGHTLY, the Bible student searches for types of Christ in both Old and New Testaments, and in the lives of faithful men like Joseph, David and Paul it is possible to perceive the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. So often, a comprehension of these types strengthens the faith of the Bible student by providing prophecy, doctrine and exhortation.

However, this faith-building study of the Scriptures can also be achieved by examining what may seem to be unlikely candidates and seeing Christ in them in one way or another. Abimelech (Judges 9), Eli and Absalom are some examples of men who, with carnal minds, aspired to kingship or priesthood, and their faithless methods contrast with and thereby highlight the greatness of the Son of God. The evil king Manasseh falls into this latter category, but, even more unusually, Manasseh's eventual repentance enables the Spirit to then reveal him as a faithful type of Christ. This article provides examples from Manasseh's life of contrasts and comparisons with the true Messiah.

The temple

2 Chronicles 33 reveals most of the information about this king. From verse 1 we learn that he was twelve years old when he began to reign, the same age that Jesus was when he was found 'being about his Father's business' in the temple (Lk. 2:42,49). However, Manasseh failed to do the works of his father, good King Hezekiah, and returned to idolatry (2 Chron. 33:2,3), unlike Jesus, who always did those things that pleased his Father (Jno. 4:34; 8:29). In 2 Chronicles 33:4-7 we read that Manasseh defiled the temple with his altars and an idol; but Jesus cleansed the temple from its state as a place of trade (Jno. 2:14-16).

Manasseh the forgetful

The name 'Manasseh' means 'one that makes to forget', and not only did he choose to forget his father, but he also caused Judah to forget Yahweh by seducing them with his idols (2 Kgs. 21:9). This contrasts with Jesus, who teaches his disciples, "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in His love" (Jno. 15:10).

Manasseh was born during the fifteen-year extension of Hezekiah's life, when Hezekiah was granted an opportunity to continue the Davidic line (*cf.* Isa. 38:19), but the covenant with David meant nothing to Manasseh (2 Kgs. 21:7). What a contrast, then, with the greater son of David, who was ever mindful of his responsibility as the future King and was regularly addressed as the son of David (Mt. 9:27)!

Not only did Manasseh forget his faithful father and the unusual circumstances of his own birth, but he also forgot his mother Hephzibah (2 Kgs. 21:1). Her name means 'My delight is in her', which connects with the woman of Genesis 3:15: "and I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel". This verse had its outworking in the mother of Jesus the seed, Mary, of whom it is written, "And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God" (Lk. 1:30).

It is significant that the prophet Isaiah was contemporary with Manasseh, and he took up the allegory of Hephzibah when he was inspired to prophesy of Zion:

"Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate: but thou shalt be called Hephzibah, and thy land Beulah: for the LORD [Yahweh] delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married. For as a young man marieth a virgin, so shall thy sons marry thee: and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the

bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee" (62:4,5).

Manasseh's mother, then, was an allegory of Zion, the significance of which is described in Psalm 87:5: "And of Zion it shall be said, This and that man was born in her: and the highest Himself shall establish her". Let us therefore not be forgetful, like Manasseh, of the fact that Jerusalem is the mother of us all; all our hope rests in her, and we must be watchmen who "shall never hold their peace day nor night: ye that make mention of the LORD [Yahweh], keep not silence, and give Him no rest, till He establish, and till He make Jerusalem a praise in the earth" (Isa. 62:6,7).

Yahweh waits to be gracious

Manasseh's reign was indeed a long one, some fifty-five years (2 Chron. 33:1), and the faithful remnant might have felt that Yahweh had forgotten them during the time that much innocent blood was shed; but, again citing the words of the prophet Isaiah:

"therefore will the LORD [Yahweh] wait, that He may be gracious unto you, and therefore will He be exalted, that He may have mercy upon you: for the LORD [Yahweh] is a God of judgment: blessed are all they that wait for Him" (30:18).

In a real sense, Yahweh was waiting to be gracious to this wicked king, knowing that the suffering of judgement would lead to repentance, and the faithful remnant must also therefore wait. The number five in Scripture is often associated with grace, and therefore there may be significance in the length of the reign of fifty-five years, which in turn would link with the ministry of Christ expressed in John 1:16: "And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace".

There can, of course, be no presumptuous thinking on our part that we can delay responding in obedience to the Truth; nevertheless, how comforting it is to peruse a concordance under the word 'gracious' and see how regularly it is a major feature of the character of Yahweh! It is a notable matter that the Almighty God is prepared to forget, as it is written concerning a repentant Israel: "For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more" (Heb. 8:12).

Manasseh a type of Israel

It is also worth mentioning that, like, for example, Samson and Jonah, King Manasseh is a type of Israel as well as a type of Christ. A sinful Man-

asseh was bound with fetters and taken captive to Babylon, where he repented and returned to Jerusalem, which is a prophetic epitome of what was to happen to Judah.

The experience of Manasseh would have been a warning to the faithless of his own time, as well as an encouragement to the faithful. It is likewise a prophetic cameo of the second exodus (Isa. 11:11,12), and therefore yet another encouragement for those today who cleave to the hope of Israel (Acts 28:20).

While we are examining the life of this king, it is interesting to note that he was a nobleman who went into a far country and returned as king. Therefore, when Jesus spoke the parable of the pounds in Luke 19:11-27, saying, "A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return", although this was likely a reference to Archelaus' visit to Rome, there is a Biblical link with Manasseh, whom that description fitted.

Made perfect through suffering

2 Chronicles 33:10,11 records Yahweh sending seers to warn Manasseh and his people; but they would not hearken, and there followed the inevitable consequence of the judgement of an Assyrian invasion. The cruel suffering the king endured not only brought him to his senses but also formed a prophetic type of the sufferings of the Christ. Manasseh was taken "among the thorns", and the RV margin translates this as "with hooks", which corresponds with the Assyrians' pitiless practice of leading prisoners with hooks passed through their flesh.

However, there is an obvious link between the word "thorns" and John 19:2, which records that the Roman soldiers "platted a crown of thorns, and put it on his [Jesus'] head". Manasseh was then bound with fetters, even as Jesus was taken and "bound" by the Roman soldiers (18:12). Manasseh was subsequently carried away captive to Babylon, as Jesus was led to the Gentile hall of judgement to appear before Pilate (v. 28).

Of Jesus it is written in Hebrews 5:8: "though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered"; and of Manasseh it is written: "And when he was in affliction, he besought the LORD [Yahweh] his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers . . ." (2 Chron. 33:12). It is also indicated thereby that he no longer was forgetful of his fathers Hezekiah and David, but recalled their afflictions and how

they were answered when they besought Yahweh (Jer. 26:19).

Manasseh “humbled himself greatly” (the point is repeated for emphasis in verses 19 and 23); and, although Jesus was without sin, yet being a partaker of sinful flesh and blood (Heb. 2:14; Rom. 8:3), he humbled himself, as it is written: “and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Phil. 2:8).

Manasseh’s prayer

2 Chronicles 33:13 continues the record of the king’s repentance by referring to his prayer to Yahweh: “[he] prayed unto Him: and He was intreated of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the LORD [Yahweh] He was God”. This is a very comforting verse, for this man had provoked Yahweh to anger with his abominable practices, even the shedding of innocent blood (2 Kgs. 21:16). This contrasts with the innocent blood of the Saviour that was shed (Mt. 27:4). Yet, amazingly, upon his repentance, Yahweh was intreated of him and heard his supplication.

The effects of Manasseh’s sins, of course, continued to scar the kingdom, with dreadful consequences (Jer. 15:4); but, in that Yahweh was intreated of him, we can safely take it that he was forgiven those sins. The words of the apostle Paul come to mind: “In whom [Jesus] we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace; wherein He hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence” (Eph. 1:7,8).

This matter of Manasseh praying and being heard links with the Lord Jesus Christ, of whom it is recorded, “Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him That was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared . . .” (Heb. 5:7). Just as God “brought [Manasseh] again to Jerusalem into his kingdom”, even so Jesus of Nazareth, “whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death” (Acts 2:24), will return to Jerusalem as king.

It is surmised that Manasseh returned to Jerusalem, having been physically scarred by the Assyrian hooks through his flesh, with these wounds evident to all those who saw him. If this was the case, there is a link with the scarred hands and feet of Jesus: “Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself” (Lk. 24:39).¹

“Then Manasseh knew that the LORD [Yahweh] He was God” (2 Chron. 33:13). How poignant are these words, which connect with John 17:3: “And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent”!

Eight works of repentance

Manasseh brought forth fruits meet for repentance by eight works, specified in 2 Chronicles 33:14-16. The number eight in Scripture is often associated with a new beginning. Each of these deeds was the opposite of his practice prior to his conversion. For example, he had seduced Judah and Jerusalem to commit idolatry (v. 9), yet in verse 16 it is said that he “repaired the altar of the LORD, and . . . commanded Judah to serve the LORD [Yahweh] God of Israel”.

Again, each of these works will have a correlation in the Kingdom when Christ has returned. A case in point is where Manasseh placed captains of war in all the fenced cities of Judah, which compares with the parable of the pounds, to which reference has been made above, when the nobleman, having received the kingdom, returned and said, “Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities” (Lk. 19:17).

Manasseh: an unlikely type of Christ

The history of this king was a prophetic warning to Judah that they would be taken into captivity but would be restored to Jerusalem and the Land upon repentance (Lev. 26:40-42). It is also an exhortation to us that our God knows the end from the beginning and is prepared to “be gracious to whom [He] will be gracious” (Ex. 33:19).

However, the inspired record of King Manasseh is further prophetic evidence of the central role of Christ in all the Scriptures, as it is written: “for by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: and he is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church [ecclesia]: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the pre-eminence” (Col. 1:16-18).

1. Joseph, one of the greatest types of Christ, is described as having his feet hurt with fetters (Ps. 105:18).