

SECOND CHRONICLES

Chapter 33

Manasseh Reigns in Judah

Manasseh was twelve years old when he began to reign, and he reigned fifty-five years in Jerusalem. 2 And he did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, according to the abominations of the nations whom the LORD drove out before the people of Israel. 3 For he rebuilt the high places that his father Hezekiah had broken down, and he erected altars to the Baals, and made Asheroth, and worshiped all the host of heaven and served them. 4 And he built altars in the house of the LORD, of which the LORD had said, “In Jerusalem shall my name be forever.” 5 And he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the LORD. 6 And he burned his sons as an offering in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, and used fortune-telling and omens and sorcery, and dealt with mediums and with necromancers. He did much evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking him to anger. 7 And the carved image of the idol that he had made he set in the house of God, of which God said to David and to Solomon his son, “In this house, and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, I will put my name forever, 8 and I will no more remove the foot of Israel from the land that I appointed for your fathers, if only they will be careful to do all that I have commanded them, all the law, the statutes, and the rules given through Moses.” 9 Manasseh led Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem astray, to do more evil than the nations whom the LORD destroyed before the people of Israel.

3:1–20 Manasseh had the longest reign of any of the kings of Judah, a total of 55 years (v. 1). The emphasis in the two accounts differs: While both histories report at length the evil done in Manasseh’s reign, only the Chronicler mentions his journey to Babylon and his repentance and restoration to rule. For the writer of Kings, the picture is only a bad one in which Manasseh could be considered almost single-handedly the cause of the exile (2Ki 21:10–15; 23:26). Some scholars regard the record of Manasseh’s repentance in Chronicles as motivated by the author’s emphasis on immediate retribution: Length of reign is viewed as a blessing for obedience, so that the Chronicler deliberately records some good in Manasseh as a ground for his long reign. However, it must be noted that length of reign is not elsewhere used by the Chronicler as an indication of divine blessing. The usual indicators for such blessing in his account are peace and prosperity, building projects, success in warfare and large families. (CSB)

33:1–9 The Chronicler includes the list of evils characterizing Manasseh’s reign. Sinful patterns of Ahaz became the model for his grandson Manasseh, who reversed Hezekiah’s reforms by rebuilding pagan sanctuaries and erecting false altars in the temple (cf 28:24–25; 29:15–19; 31:1). He effectively swayed the people’s religious devotion over his long reign. (TLSB)

33:1 *fifty-five years.* 697–642 B.C. (CSB)

Manasseh’s 55-year reign, longer than that of any other king, also set a record for apostasy. For decades the detestable practices of the Canaanites held sway. Like Ahaz, he sacrificed his sons; like Saul, he engaged in demonic practices. *twelve.* Probably guided by a regent. (TLSB)

Manasseh's Repentance

10 The LORD spoke to Manasseh and to his people, but they paid no attention. **11** Therefore the LORD brought upon them the commanders of the army of the king of Assyria, who captured Manasseh with hooks and bound him with chains of bronze and brought him to Babylon. **12** And when he was in distress, he entreated the favor of the LORD his God and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers. **13** He prayed to him, and God was moved by his entreaty and heard his plea and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the LORD was God. **14** Afterward he built an outer wall for the city of David west of Gihon, in the valley, and for the entrance into the Fish Gate, and carried it around Ophel, and raised it to a very great height. He also put commanders of the army in all the fortified cities in Judah. **15** And he took away the foreign gods and the idol from the house of the LORD, and all the altars that he had built on the mountain of the house of the LORD and in Jerusalem, and he threw them outside of the city. **16** He also restored the altar of the LORD and offered on it sacrifices of peace offerings and of thanksgiving, and he commanded Judah to serve the LORD, the God of Israel. **17** Nevertheless, the people still sacrificed at the high places, but only to the LORD their God. **18** Now the rest of the acts of Manasseh, and his prayer to his God, and the words of the seers who spoke to him in the name of the LORD, the God of Israel, behold, they are in the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel. **19** And his prayer, and how God was moved by his entreaty, and all his sin and his faithlessness, and the sites on which he built high places and set up the Asherim and the images, before he humbled himself, behold, they are written in the Chronicles of the Seers. **20** So Manasseh slept with his fathers, and they buried him in his house, and Amon his son reigned in his place.

33:10 The Chronicler abridges what the Lord said to Manasseh and the people through the prophets; the fuller record is found in 2Ki 21:10–15. (CSB)

The Chronicler notes the sending of prophets, also noting that they were not listened to (cf 2Ki 21:10). This was also an issue in the death of Saul and the final destruction of Judah by Babylon (cf 1Ch 10:13–14; 2Ch 36:15). (TLSB)

33:11–17 Unique to the Chronicler, showing his stress on immediate retribution: Manasseh's evil brings invasion and defeat, while his repentance brings restoration to rule. (CSB)

33:11 *captured Manasseh*. Assyrian ruler Esarhaddon (681–669 BC) records the tribute of 22 kings west of the Euphrates, and Manasseh is listed among them. (TLSB)

brought him to Babylon. In extant non-Biblical records there is no reference as yet to Manasseh being taken to Babylon by an Assyrian king. Esarhaddon (681–669 B.C.) lists him among 22 kings required to forward materials for his building projects, and Ashurbanipal (669–627) names him as one of a number of vassals supporting his campaign against Egypt. The fact that an Assyrian king would have him taken to Babylon suggests that this incident may have taken place during the rebellion of Shamash-Shum-Ukin against his brother and overlord Ashurbanipal. This rebellion lasted from 652 to 648, and Manasseh may have joined or at least have been suspected of assisting in the Babylonian defection from Assyria. Manasseh may have been found innocent, or he may have been pardoned on the basis of a renewed pledge of loyalty. Egypt had also bolted from the Assyrian yoke under the new 26th dynasty, and the return of Manasseh to rule may reflect the Assyrian need of a vassal near the border of Egypt. (CSB)

33:12–16 Unique to 2Ch. Manasseh’s repentance reflects the prayer of Solomon at the temple dedication (7:14). Gr Naz: “I know of a Fifth [baptism] also, which is that of tears, and is much more laborious, received by him who washes his bed every night and his couch with tears; ... who goeth mourning and of a sad countenance; who imitates the repentance of Manasseh and the humiliation of the Ninevites upon which God had mercy” (NPNF 2 7:358). Luth: “Why shall we have any doubt that God in His heart considers and counts the afflictions of His children and that He measures our tears and records them on unbreakable tablets which the enemies of the church are completely unable to destroy except by repentance? Manasseh was a very great tyrant and a most terrible persecutor of the godly. Therefore his exile and captivity would not have been sufficient to atone for those sins; but when he recognizes his sin and is truly repentant, the Lord shows him mercy” (AE 1:289). (TLSB)

33:12 The language is reminiscent of Solomon’s prayer (7:14). (CSB)

33:14 *built an outer wall*. For the Chronicler such building programs are a sign of divine blessing (8:1–6; 11:5–12; 14:6–7; 26:9–10, 14–15; 32:1–5, 27–30; 1Ch 11:7–9; 15:1). (CSB)

33:15–16 Whatever the precise nature of Manasseh’s reforms, Josiah would later still need to remove “the altars Manasseh had built in the two courts of the temple” (2Ki 23:12). (CSB)

33:16 *restored*. By consecration or even by physically bringing it back to its rightful place. (TLSB)

33:17 *high places*. Manasseh’s reformation, which came at the end of his life, failed to eradicate worship at the high places. But by every act of sacrifice contrary to God’s ordinance, the people heaped up wrath for themselves (cf Jer 15:4). Even the king’s son remained unregenerate (vv 21–25). (TLSB)

33:19 *prayer*. Such a prayer is found in the apocryphal writings. (TLSB)

33:20 *buried in his house*. Cf. 2Ki 21:18. His burial in the palace garden makes Manasseh the fifth king the Chronicler names who was not buried in the tombs of the kings. (CSB)

33:10–20 Through distress and the admonitions of the prophets, the Lord leads Manasseh to repentance. Like a patient father, the Lord disciplines us and even allows us to learn our lessons the hard way, through error and pain. Yet He is always ready to hear us, just as He heard and had compassion on the wicked king Manasseh. • O Lord, instruct me through the words of Your prophets, and grant me sincere repentance day by day, that I may know You alone as my God. Amen. (TLSB)

Amon's Reign and Death

21 Amon was twenty-two years old when he began to reign, and he reigned two years in Jerusalem. 22 And he did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, as Manasseh his father had done. Amon sacrificed to all the images that Manasseh his father had made, and served them. 23 And he did not humble himself before the LORD, as Manasseh his father had humbled himself, but this Amon incurred guilt more and more. 24 And his servants conspired against him and put him to death in his house. 25 But the people of the land struck down all those who had conspired against King Amon. And the people of the land made Josiah his son king in his place.

33:21–25 See 2Ki 21:19–26. The Chronicler’s account of the reign of Amon (642–640 B.C.) is quite similar to that in Kings, apart from (1) the additional note that Amon was not repentant like his father Manasseh, a note based on a passage unique to the Chronicler (vv. 12–13), and (2) the absence of the death formula. (CSB)

Like Manasseh, Amon’s reign began in idolatry. Unlike Manasseh, Amon did not humble himself but increased his guilt (v 23; unique to 2Ch). For this, Amon is assassinated (v 24). (TLSB)