

## 2nd Kings Chapters 21-22 – John Karmelich

1. My lesson title is "The God of Second Chances". That is a common nickname associated with the God that we worship. In this lesson we're going to read of two of the worst kings in the history of Israel and a third king that desires to seek God. It's a great lesson on the inevitability of God's judgment on this world and what we can do to repent and delay that judgment.
2. Let me tell the story of these two chapters and that will explain how I got to this title. In Chapter 21 we are going to read about the worse king in the history of the Israelite Southern Kingdom.
  - a) This king was born during the 15 years of "bonus life" given to the previous king that we read about in the last lesson. To recall, God told the last king Hezekiah, it's time for you to die. Hezekiah prayed for more time and God gave him 15 more years to live. I don't know what Hezekiah did in those last 15 years, but raising well the next king of Israel did not seem to be his priority. I say that because the next king, named Manasseh, turned out to be the most evil king in the history of that kingdom. It was far more than rejecting God as this king worshipped anything and everything. I suspect he had the "If it feels good do it" mentality without thinking about the consequences of living that way. We'll get some pretty graphic details in this chapter about the long-term consequences of his choices and how it permanently damaged the Israelite kingdom. To state this from God's perspective, "You (the king) have rejected Me and turned My people away from Me. Now you'll see the consequences of your decisions and the price of rejecting Me."
    - i) However, like I said, God is a God of second chances. In 2nd Chronicles 32 we learn that late in this king's life he was taken prisoner hundreds of miles away to the Assyrian Empire. There he repented and turned to God. However, Israel still had to suffer the consequences of the damage this guy did, just as we still have to suffer the consequences of whatever sin we have to deal with. God's forgiveness and consequences are two different matters. To use a simple example, we may repent from years of alcohol or drug abuse, and God will forgive us, but we still have to live with the damage caused to our bodies of the years of that abuse. We don't get a "get out of jail free" card if we are for example sent to prison for a crime just because we now correctly believe God has forgiven us of our sins.
    - b) In the meantime, after a long reign of one bad king, his son takes over late in Chapter 21 and he is no better than his father. In fact, some officials in the palace have this second king killed as in effect they can't stand his sinful lifestyle just as they probably could not stand his father's lifestyle. Yes the people who killed the king are killed themselves. The point is there are consequences for turning from God. Both the father-king and the son-king suffered those consequences both in this lifetime and I suspect eternally.
    - c) That leads us to Chapter 22. We get the grandson of Manasseh. We don't know how or why, but despite being a descendant of the last two kings, this young boy-king literally seeks God. It's like he thinks at a young age, "I don't know what to do right, I just know that my father was killed in office and it had something to do with rejecting God, so I'm going to do what is right as to not receive the same fate. To quote Dennis Prager: "If we can avoid repeating half of our parents mistakes we will do well in life" That is the story of this young king in Chapter 22 as he study's God's word and does His best to seek Him.
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3. OK John, we get a couple of bad kings in Chapter 21 and a good one in Chapter 22. We get that and we get the idea that God will forgive us when we mess up. For most of us, that's old news. Why should we read this lesson? The short version is to remind ourselves that when we mess up and do what we know is wrong, God is STILL a God of second chances and still willing to use us for His glory despite the mistakes we make. Yes we still have to suffer for those mistakes but He is willing to use us again, if and only if we're willing to humble ourselves before Him. With that said, it's time to start reading about these kings and see how that impacts our own lives.

4. Verse 1: Manasseh was twelve years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem fifty-five years. His mother's name was Hephzibah. <sup>2</sup> He did evil in the eyes of the LORD, following the detestable practices of the nations the LORD had driven out before the Israelites.
- a) The chapter opens with an introduction to a new king named Manasseh. To explain what is going on, let's recap a little of the last chapter:
    - i) The previous king was named Hezekiah. The text said he was a good king and then listing of bunch of things he did wrong. When he was sick and was told by God through a prophet it's time for him to die, that king asked for more years to live. God gave him 15 more years. During that 15-year period, a son was born to him named Manasseh.
    - ii) That leads us to Verse 1. It says Manasseh was 12 years old when he began to reign. Some have argued he was actually a little older and co-reigned with his father during the first few years. However, I like to take the text at face value, and assume he was a boy king when his father's 15 extra years were up.
  - b) That leads me to Verse 2. In effect that is a key verse of the whole chapter. It says that he did evil in the sight of the Lord (the holy name of "Jehovah" is used here.) That leads me to a key question of this lesson: Why was this king such a bad one and how does that tie to the idea of a God of second chances?
    - i) A great danger we face as Christians is if we fail to pass on our values to the next generation. That is what happened to the World War II generation, as they did not pass on their values to their children. A large majority of "baby boomers", turned their backs on God and tried just about everything else to find happiness. I can't pin the cause, I just see the results of my generation that collectively turned their backs on God and what it has produced.
    - ii) That thought leads me back to this Manasseh fellow. His father was a good king and sought God all of his life. For whatever reason, the father's values were not passed on to the son. We get a clue of that in Verse 2 and we'll get the details in the next set of verses. Yes it's common for children to test their parent's values to try to live their way. There's a little rebellion and then there is the idea of thinking that one is wiser than one's parents.
    - iii) I know of many baby boomers who are convinced that they are the smartest group that has ever lived. They think that just because we have more information at our fingertips than any previous generation that makes them wiser than their parents. Never mix up "wisdom" and knowledge". Knowledge is what we learn. Wisdom is the application of knowledge. I don't know if there has been a generation in the history Western civilization that has collectively rejected God more than this one. It is mainly a case of children simply rejecting their parent's values. Either way, it has lead to a low percentage of people seeking God in the Western World. In fact, that is one reason for the rise of Radical Islam. They see the corruption of our way of living via "Hollywood" and want no part of it.
    - iv) As radio commentator Dennis Prager correctly put it, there are three sets of values trying to dominate the world today: Islam, secularism and Judeo-Christianity. Of those three, the greatest growth in the Western World has been secularism, which is essentially "do whatever feels good and ignore the long term cost to society".
  - c) OK and what does all of that, have to do with the current king of the Israelites? In effect he adopted that "if it feels good do" mentality. This king rejected God and it also shows that the desire to corrupt our lives never goes away even when a good man is in charge like the previous king of Israel.
    - i) One thing to notice as we read through this chapter is the writer mixes in his own commentary with the facts. The short version is the writer states how the king did act like non-Israelites who lived in that land before God kicked them out of there.

- d) As we study through the rest of this chapter, don't think of it in terms, "OK, here is a bad king." Think of it in terms of the danger of the failure to pass on one's values to the next generation and what that cost is. This king was "pure evil" as we'll see in the next set of verses. As I was thinking about this king, I kept thinking about a conversation I had with my sister in law a few years back about evil people. She was reading a book about those of the last century who did horrible evil. I remember thinking that, one can't explain evil. One just has to accept that evil exists and fight it the best that we can. I've also now lived long enough to know that despite all the damage an evil person does in the end they don't win. Speaking of bad people, let's get back to King Manasseh.
5. Verse 3: He rebuilt the high places his father Hezekiah had destroyed; he also erected altars to Baal and made an Asherah pole, as Ahab king of Israel had done. He bowed down to all the starry hosts and worshiped them. <sup>4</sup> He built altars in the temple of the LORD, of which the LORD had said, "In Jerusalem I will put my Name." <sup>5</sup> In both courts of the temple of the LORD, he built altars to all the starry hosts. <sup>6</sup> He sacrificed his own son in the fire, practiced sorcery and divination, and consulted mediums and spiritists. He did much evil in the eyes of the LORD, provoking him to anger.
- a) I was debating whether or not to give the gory details or just say that this was a really bad guy. The last sentence pretty much says it all in that he did much evil in God's sight and that made God angry. With that said, let me explain "God and anger". I always held the view that God knows all things. Therefore the concept of "His anger" is when we see bad things happening and we realize it is the consequences of turning from Him.
- b) So if God knows all things, why did He allow this guy to rule in the first place? While I'm asking that type of question, why did God allow a Stalin or Hitler to rise in the first place? Part of the answer is free will. Part of the answer is as I told my sister in law, "Evil exists" and part of the duty of mankind is to fight such evil the best we can.
- c) Let me ask as related question about this king. Verse 1 said that he ruled 55 years. Why let him reign so long if he was such a bad king? We'll discover in a matter of verses, that God had sent prophets to warn the Israelites during this time, but truthfully, sometimes people would rather accept what "is", then trying to change it or stop it.
- d) One last quick story and I'll move on. A reporter once asked Stalin (leader of Russia in the 1940's who killed millions of his own people) how he could be so cruel. Stalin then asked someone to bring him a live chicken. He then held that bird tightly and pulled out all its feathers. Then he let go of the chicken and put some breadcrumbs on the floor. That bird followed him to eat the breadcrumbs. His point is that humans were like that bird. They are willing to put up with evil so they can survive. That's a little how I see the Israelites living under this king. (This story was told via a conference given by Dr. Ravi Zacharius.)
- e) With all of that in mind, let me now come back to the details of this king. The point is he worshipped just about anything other than God Himself. He made altars and statues to all the gods that existed in the area for the last thousand years. He even sacrificed some of his own children to these gods to show his loyalty to them. This king spent time with those who seek false gods such as "spiritualists" and sorcerers. In summary this king wanted to try anything and everything in order to find spiritual happiness and did whatever he felt like doing no matter how much it angered God. To quote Ravi Zacharius again, "Nature abhors a vacuum and those who willfully choose to ignore God with their lives don't do nothing, but try anything and everything." That's Manasseh in a nutshell.
- f) Coming back to these verses, I believe all the things listed in these verses that the king did is strictly prohibited in the law given by Moses. I could explain why these things are bad, and some are more obvious than others. Let's just say that all of them get our focus off of God and onto ourselves. They are all sinful things that in the end harm our own lives. It is not so much about offending God as much as it is about wasting our lives. It's like God saying to us, "avoid these things as they will harm you and others around you."

6. Verse 7: He took the carved Asherah pole he had made and put it in the temple, of which the LORD had said to David and to his son Solomon, "In this temple and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, I will put my Name forever. <sup>8</sup> I will not again make the feet of the Israelites wander from the land I gave their forefathers, if only they will be careful to do everything I commanded them and will keep the whole Law that my servant Moses gave them. <sup>9</sup>"But the people did not listen. Manasseh led them astray, so that they did more evil than the nations the LORD had destroyed before the Israelites.
- a) The short version is things get worse in these verses, which is always the case when one starts to flirt with thing that God forbids us to do. This king even put a statue dedicated to a false god in the Temple dedicated to God. It shows that the worship of God was not mixed with false religion, God was ignored for the sake of worshipping everything else.
  - b) It's almost as if this king was testing God to see, "OK, is this bad enough? What are you going to do about it? I am the king and I can do what I want. Besides the Assyrian army was wiped out when my father was alive so I'm free to do what I want.
    - i) When we get to a point in life where we start to think, "Who cares what I do, it's my life and I can do what I want with it" is when one knows one is in trouble. We fail to see the eternal consequences of turning from God. This leads me back to the issue of being a good witness for God. As Christians we are held to a higher set of values than nonbelievers. That's because people know we represent Him and He can't tolerate us being a bad witness for Him. For example, think of the guilt we feel when we mess up. That guilt's about knowing right from wrong and what He desires of us as Christians. The point is there is a price to be paid for turning from Him and this king is messing with that responsibility.
    - ii) If all of this was not bad enough, remember that the Northern Kingdom of Israel was just destroyed within recent memory. It was if God was saying to the king of the Southern Kingdom (Manasseh), learn from the mistakes that were made in the Northern Kingdom or you too will suffer the same fate.
  - c) Notice in Verse 9 the phrase "the people didn't listen". The point being that it was not just the king who was doing evil, but the Israelites living under him turned that way too. It's almost as if God was thinking, "What do I have to do to get these people to turn to Me?" In one generation this nation went from a truly God fearing group to one where just about everyone has turned away from Him. I don't know if it was the king's leadership that turned away the country or the king was following the trend. Either way, it is bad news.
7. Verse 10: The LORD said through his servants the prophets: <sup>11</sup> "Manasseh king of Judah has committed these detestable sins. He has done more evil than the Amorites who preceded him and has led Judah into sin with his idols.
- a) The point here is that God was not just sitting by and watching all of this occur. Prophets lived at this time that tried to warn the Israelites. The chapter mentions prophets there at that time pretty much announcing judgment. That's because God was saying that He has had enough of this and judgment is coming. The reason God didn't strike this king dead during this long time period, is that God was doing what He could to lead Israelites back to Him. This reminds me of the classic question, "If God is real, why doesn't He just show Himself to us in some dramatic fashion?" Suppose there was a giant visual sign of God in the sky everyone could see. Eventually we'll forget about that sign and return to doing what we want. If God had just struck this king dead, Israelites would have continued to turn from Him as that is what they were used to doing at this point in history. The best thing God could do was send prophets to warn the Israelites of the consequences of those sins and the great judgment that's coming.
  - b) Think of it this way: The reason God had the Israelites drive out the original inhabitants of that land (Amorites) was based on how they lived. What makes those Israelites living under Manasseh think their fate would be any better (or our fate today)?

8. Verse 12: Therefore this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: I am going to bring such disaster on Jerusalem and Judah that the ears of everyone who hears of it will tingle. <sup>13</sup> I will stretch out over Jerusalem the measuring line used against Samaria and the plumb line used against the house of Ahab. I will wipe out Jerusalem as one wipes a dish, wiping it and turning it upside down. <sup>14</sup> I will forsake the remnant of my inheritance and hand them over to their enemies. They will be looted and plundered by all their foes, <sup>15</sup> because they have done evil in my eyes and have provoked me to anger from the day their forefathers came out of Egypt until this day."
- a) The funny thing is in a sense, we should know what Verse 12 is going to say without even reading it. We know by now that God holds people that are supposed to be a witness for Him to a higher standard than nonbelievers. In other words, God holds us accountable for what we should know as well as what we do know. God commanded the kings living at that time to keep and study a copy of the Mosaic Law while they were kings. I suspect that Manasseh's father did that as he trusted in God. Without the chapter saying so, I'm guessing that Manasseh banned the reading of God's word or at the least ignored it.
  - b) Now stop and think about you and me with access to the internet and all the information we have at hand. What excuse do we have before God for not knowing what it is that God requires of us as His followers? What if you think, "I'm saved by grace alone, I don't have to do anything." Technically that is correct. As I love to say, I'm not impressed with those who say they believe in Jesus. I'm impressed with those who have done something with that belief. God gives each of us time. The question is how are we using the time He gives us to make a difference for His kingdom? The scary part of that judgment awaits us as it awaits the Israelites living under Manasseh at that time.
  - c) That scary warning leads us back to these verses. Notice the phrase "ears...will tingle". It is colorful way of saying that the punishment God has planned against Israel is so bad, it will shock everyone who hears about it. The text is effectively saying that just as God did allow the Northern Kingdom of Samaria to be wiped out, so God will allow the Southern Kingdom of Judah (Manasseh's kingdom) to be destroyed."
    - i) Let me explain it this way: By the time the last of the great prophets came on the scene (Jeremiah and Ezekiel) around the time of the next generation, the Israelites were thinking, "No matter how bad we get, God can't wipe us out as He made the unconditional promise to David that the Southern Kingdom will always exist by a descendant of David as the their king." What the Israelites failed to realize is that this promise was both conditional and unconditional. The unconditional promise was that the Messiah would be a descendant of David. Jesus was a descendant of David from both his mother's and father's side. (That's requires a long story that I won't get into here.) The conditional promise is that the Southern Kingdom will exist only if they continue to trust God to guide their lives.
    - ii) The point being that this king was so bad and the Israelites had sunk so low, God had "had it" with them. To use another of my favorite illustrations, it is like when one has to shoot a horse, because the pain of letting that horse continue to live is greater than just killing the horse due to the pain it's in. The reason God decided to wipe out the Southern Kingdom (coming up in a few chapters) was that they got to a point where it was more painful to let them continue as is, then to wipe them out as a witness for Him.
    - iii) However, there is good news coming up. To put all of this in our vocabulary, our sins that we commit (past, present and future) are forgiven, only because we trust in Jesus as complete payment for our sins, not based in any way, shape or form on how good of a person we are. That is in effect, why the ancient kingdom of Israel had to be completely destroyed to make the visual point that we can't cut it before God based on our own merits. Yes it is painful, and many Israelites died at that time due to their sins, but it makes the point quite well.

- d) Coming back to the literalness of this text, the point God is saying is that He will wipe out completely the Nation of Israel (i.e., "The Southern Kingdom") because they've gotten to a point where they are acting no better than the inhabitants of the land of Israel before the Israelites even stepped foot in that land. I admit that I love the fact that whoever wrote this section of kings mixes in their own commentary on the king with the facts of what he did do as the king. To put it simply, this was a bad guy, and God is about to lay a strong judgment on him and those living in that kingdom as a whole they were failing to be a witness for Him. Yes that scares me as a "baby boomer". To quote Billy Graham, If God does not judge the United States of America, He owes Sodom and Gomorrah an apology and God does not apologize."
9. Verse 16: Moreover, Manasseh also shed so much innocent blood that he filled Jerusalem from end to end--besides the sin that he had caused Judah to commit, so that they did evil in the eyes of the LORD.
- a) There is some speculation as to what is meant by Manasseh spilling a lot of blood. Some argue it refers to the innocent children sacrificed to the false gods. Others say it refers to innocent people being killed who refuse to follow the king's lead. Some others will say it refers to those who trust in God here being killed for opposing the king. No matter what the circumstances, the point is many innocent people died due to the king's actions.
- b) If you ever want a reason to pray for one's government leaders, these verses are excellent examples of why God calls us to do so. Yes they will be judged for their leadership. At the same time we still have to live under their leadership. That is why Romans 13:1 tells us to pray for those in authority so that we may live peaceful lives.
10. Verse 17: As for the other events of Manasseh's reign, and all he did, including the sin he committed, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Judah? <sup>18</sup> Manasseh rested with his fathers and was buried in his palace garden, the garden of Uzza. And Amon his son succeeded him as king.
- a) The good news is that is all we have to read about this bad king. The text states that the public records that exist at that time give more details about his life. The text may also be referring to the book of Chronicles as we don't know which book was organized first.
- i) Speaking of 2nd Chronicles, we get interesting details about this king in Chapter 32 that we don't get here. To say it briefly the Assyrians later in Manasseh's life took him prisoner to Babylon. There he repented of his sins and went back to worshipping God. That answers the question why God allowed him to live so long. Because he did repent of his sins later in life. That story alone shows how long God is willing to wait to forgive us of our sins.
- ii) So if Manasseh did repent later in life, why not mention that here in 2nd Kings? I suspect it is because the writer of Kings wanted to show why God's judgment was necessary against the Southern Kingdom of Judah. It would be like God thinking, whether or not we repent later in life, the country has grown so corrupt and they have not learned from the past, there is nothing I (God) can do to end this pattern of having them turn from Me. That is why I fear for God's judgment on the United States. There are always individuals who have repented. As a whole, this nation has turned from God and I do fear the consequences have to come one day. In a sense, I feel a little like Isaiah or Jeremiah warning of what is going to come.
- iii) Meanwhile, back in ancient Israel, in the Southern Kingdom of Judah the next king is coming up. His name is Amon. A lot more on him coming up in a bit.
- iv) I'd like you to notice something before we move on. The text says Manasseh was buried in his palace garden. What that means is that he was not buried with the other kings of Judah, but in a separate location. It's God's little way of saying he didn't act like God desired him to act as a leader and when he died he was buried accordingly. Now it's time to talk about his son, Amon.

11. Verse 19: Amon was twenty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem two years. His mother's name was Meshullemeth daughter of Haruz; she was from Jotbah.<sup>20</sup> He did evil in the eyes of the LORD, as his father Manasseh had done.<sup>21</sup> He walked in all the ways of his father; he worshiped the idols his father had worshiped, and bowed down to them.<sup>22</sup> He forsook the LORD, the God of his fathers, and did not walk in the way of the LORD.
- a) To keep it simple, "like father, like son". The latest king was named Amon, and he was as bad as his father. One thing to catch here is that the king's mother is always listed around the text stating who is now the king. Let's be honest, it is usually the mother who shapes the life of young children. It makes me wonder if Manasseh's mother and Amon's mother deserve some blame for how their children turned out. I've personally seen great children come from bad homes and vice versa, so I'm convinced there is always an issue of luck in the issue of how our children come out. At the same time, who the king picks as his wife is an issue in terms of how the next generation turns out, and the queen mothers are listed near the announcement of the next king throughout this book.
  - b) This leads me back to thinking about the last good king, Hezekiah. Remember that his son Manasseh was born during the 15 extra years God gave him. It makes me think that the mother of Manasseh taught him about some of the practices that the previous wicked kings of Israel had done and that influenced both Manasseh and now his son Amon. For those of us who are married to someone dedicated to serving God, it is important to show gratitude for our spouses, faults and all. I've learned over and over again what a waste of time it is to criticize my wife when I know that God wants to bless her and guide her to make good decisions for our family. My point is I read about these kings and the mom's who raised them and it makes me grateful for my own mother as well as my own wife.
  - c) In the meantime, let's read what happens to the latest bad king of the moment.
12. Verse 23: Amon's officials conspired against him and assassinated the king in his palace.<sup>24</sup> Then the people of the land killed all who had plotted against King Amon, and they made Josiah his son king in his place.
- a) Time for one of my loose translations: The Israelites living under this king thought, "We just spent 55 years dealing with the last bad king. We're not going to let that occur again so we're wiping out this king before history repeats itself.
  - b) So does that mean God say, wants us to wipe out our political leaders? No. In the next verse, the ones who killed the king get killed themselves. I suppose the point is that if we pray about dealing with evil, God will in His way and on His time deal with that evil.
    - i) Yes there are times God calls us to get involved. Many wars have been fought in order to end an evil man's rule over part of the world. This comes back to the idea that evil does exist and we have to do what we have to do to combat it. We still have to remember that killing a political leader, good or bad, does come with a high cost, as the one's who killed the king are killed in the next verse.
    - ii) Before I discuss that, notice that the king's son was made the next king. It amazes me to consider how David's descendants stay in power despite assassinations like that occur. It shows the desire to have "THE" Messiah rule over the world and that means keeping the family line in power.
13. Verse 25: As for the other events of Amon's reign, and what he did, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Judah?<sup>26</sup> He was buried in his grave in the garden of Uzza. And Josiah his son succeeded him as king.
- a) The reign of the next king Josiah, is discussed over the next few chapters. One of which I'll cover in the rest of this lesson. First we get the standard comment effectively saying, "If you want to know more about this king go to the library or "Google" him." Also note that like his father, he was not buried next to the other kings but was buried in a separate spot as if to say, "We didn't like this guy, so we are burying him elsewhere".

14. Chapter 22, Verse 1: Josiah was eight years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem thirty-one years. His mother's name was Jedidah daughter of Adaiah; she was from Bozkath. <sup>2</sup> He did what was right in the eyes of the LORD and walked in all the ways of his father David, not turning aside to the right or to the left.
- a) Now we have an eight year old boy as king. Coming back to the topic of having a good mother as a role model, I suspect that she ran the kingdom until the boy was old enough to know better. Let's face it, 8 year old boys are more interested in playing with toys than they are as being kings. Therefore, the mom gets a lot of credit here for raising this boy in a good manner so that he was thought of as a good king. I also suspect that those who are in the palace saw something good in this kid and that's why they made him king.
  - b) It also amazes me how a good king can come from bad parents and vice versa. It comes back to the idea that one never knows how one's children turn out in life. Yes raising kids well has eternal benefits and increases the odds of one's children turning out well. Still we never know how children will turn out and here's an example of a good boy-king that came from a bad father and a bad grandfather. Give the mom some credit and I'm also guessing this is the answer to a lot of ancient prayer by those Israelites after they had to deal with two bad kings in a row. If one has any doubt that prayer makes a difference, imagine living under a king that fears God after 57 years of being forced to live under two kings who essentially ignored God all their lives.
15. Verse 3: In the eighteenth year of his reign, King Josiah sent the secretary, Shaphan son of Azaliah, the son of Meshullam, to the temple of the LORD. He said: <sup>4</sup> "Go up to Hilkiyah the high priest and have him get ready the money that has been brought into the temple of the LORD, which the doorkeepers have collected from the people. <sup>5</sup> Have them entrust it to the men appointed to supervise the work on the temple. And have these men pay the workers who repair the temple of the LORD-- <sup>6</sup> the carpenters, the builders and the masons. Also have them purchase timber and dressed stone to repair the temple. <sup>7</sup> But they need not account for the money entrusted to them, because they are acting faithfully."
- a) As one starts to read about this boy king, one should have a sense of deja-vu if one has now read most of the book of Kings. That's because there was another boy king about 100 to 200 years ago in the history of this kingdom, who did something similar. To recall, there was a boy king named Joash back in 2nd Kings Chapter 12. Both these kings made the effort to restore the temple after a long time of neglect. In both cases the king got honest men who were trusted to oversee the work.
  - b) The main purpose of these verses show that those in charge of repairing the temple were honest men who did their job faithfully. Here were people trained as carpenters, builders and workers of stone (masons). I doubt they saw themselves as anything special. Yet God used these honest hard working men to restore the temple. My point is if you ever think nobody is noticing the job you are doing, first of all God is well aware of whatever it is we are called to do. I'm convinced the greatest rewards to be given out in heaven won't be to great leaders, but to those who did what God called them to do honestly and fairly and we have examples of that here in this paragraph.
  - c) The other positive thing that comes out of these verses is that the king made the effort to seek God and we'll see He reward that desire to grow the king's faith. This leads me to the concept of how does one grow in faith? It usually starts by taking on some sort of simple project for God and letting Him work from there. It never ceases to amaze me to watch people willing to humble themselves before God and then He works with whatever faith we start with to grow in that faith. It's the concept of God desiring to be in control of all aspects of our lives. When we do something for him like this project here, He'll reward our efforts and in a wonderful way, draw us closer to Him. If you don't believe Me, try to take on a project for God and watch what happens. In this case here in this text, they find a copy of God's laws in the next verse and it changes the course of history coming up.



16. Verse 8: Hilkiyah the high priest said to Shaphan the secretary, "I have found the Book of the Law in the temple of the LORD." He gave it to Shaphan, who read it.<sup>9</sup> Then Shaphan the secretary went to the king and reported to him: "Your officials have paid out the money that was in the temple of the LORD and have entrusted it to the workers and supervisors at the temple."<sup>10</sup> Then Shaphan the secretary informed the king, "Hilkiyah the priest has given me a book." And Shaphan read from it in the presence of the king.

- a) The first question I have here is "What is the book of the law?" Some people will argue it refers to all five of the first five books of the bible written by Moses, called the "Torah" in Hebrew or the Pentateuch (which is based on the original Greek translation). However, I'll argue it only refers to the Book of Deuteronomy. In fact 28:61 and 29:21 in that book both refer that book as the "Book of the Law". In English, it is called Deuteronomy as it refers to the second time God's laws are laid out, with the first time being in the Book of Exodus with additional commentary in the book of Leviticus.
- b) Remember that for the most part, God has been ignored for about 60 years. I don't know if the reading of God's word was banned, but at the least it was ignored. I give the high priest some credit as he recognized what it was and read it to the king's secretary.
- c) I was also thinking, how long does it take to read Deuteronomy in one sitting? There are 34 chapters in the modern translation. Even if one figures 10-15 minutes per chapter, it is going to take a while to read through the book. The point is the high priest took the time to read the book to the king's secretary in Verse 8 and the secretary read the book to the king in Verse 10. This leads me back to how does one grow as a believer? The greatest thing one can do is take some time to study God's word. That is what inspires me to take on this ministry in the first place. But John, isn't Deuteronomy a boring place to start for reading one's bible? Not if one understands the implications behind it. Let me put it this way, I don't think the reader just read it non stop. I think the reader also commented on what it meant as he read it, or at least God made the reader understand the implications.
  - i) As one who has now spent a good part of his life studying the bible, I want to say that it has never ceased to inspire me, convict me and get me to strive to be a better person based on what it teaches. That's what all of God's word does, even books like Deuteronomy.
  - ii) The bottom line here is that the bible has been ignored by the last two kings that caused a lot of damage to Israel and caused God to put a curse on that kingdom to effectively say, "You guys are not listening to Me, so I will destroy this place".
  - iii) Even with that curse hanging over them, the one thing one can do to improve our relationship with Him is get back to reading His word. When I mess up, I find the best cure for my feeling sorry for me attitude is to get back to studying His word. It reminds me of that it is not by our willpower than we can make a difference for Him, but only by His power that we can make that difference.
  - iv) My point is simply that studying God's word is convicting to anyone who believes that He exists and rules over our lives. That is the case with us and that is also the case with the current king of Israel that we are reading about here.
- d) This text also lets us know that the workers in charge of fixing the temple, did their job faithfully and the money spent for it's repairs was well spent. It just means the king was aware that the workers did their job and we're rewarded for it. For us that just means if we are doing something for service of God, not only is He watching us, but I find that the bosses take careful note of who is a hard worker and did their job well.
  - i) That reminds me of the secret of getting involved in say a church. Start off by just being willing to do anything. I guarantee people will watch you work and notice who is doing their jobs well. I've seen way too many college graduates think, "I'm here, I've studied hard, now pay me a lot". The secret of success in any walk of life is to take the time to humble oneself and overtime, that hard work does pay off.

17. Verse 11: When the king heard the words of the Book of the Law, he tore his robes.<sup>12</sup> He gave these orders to Hilkiah the priest, Ahikam son of Shaphan, Acbor son of Micaiah, Shaphan the secretary and Asaiah the king's attendant:<sup>13</sup> "Go and inquire of the LORD for me and for the people and for all Judah about what is written in this book that has been found. Great is the LORD's anger that burns against us because our fathers have not obeyed the words of this book; they have not acted in accordance with all that is written there concerning us."
- a) While I was talking about the benefits of humbling oneself before God, here is the king of the Israelites, hearing God's word probably for the first time in life and being humbled by what it said. To put it simply, Deuteronomy explains well what will happen to those who trust in God, if they collectively make a decision to turn from Him. A good part of that book gets very specific about how a nation will suffer if they collectively turn from Him. I believe it was those specific's that caused the king to tear his robes as stated in Verse 11. To say it in plain English, the king heard how God would punish a nation that turned from Him, and as the king realized that this has and will literally come true, the king did tear his robe as a public sign of remorse for what his father and grandfather did wrong.
  - b) The king, not knowing what to do next, then said to the High Priest, "Go inquire on My behalf what I have to do as the king to change things." In other words, the king is asking, "Is it too late for me and the Israelites, and what do we have to do to repent?"
    - i) Speaking of learning things from one's bible, let me come back to my lesson theme of a "God of Second Chances". Despite the fact that the kings mentioned in the last chapter were some pretty bad people and He had pronounced some pretty serious irrevocable judgment on this kingdom, know that any person willing to repent of those sins can avoid having to deal with the eternal suffering.
    - ii) Let me put it this way: Our world suffers from an incurable disease called sin. No matter how hard we try, we can't make this world a better place because evil exists due to that incurable disease. That doesn't mean we don't fight evil or do our best to stomp it out. It just means we have to remember that it is incurable and that sin will always exist in our world no matter how hard we try.
    - iii) The "God of Second Chances" is saying to us, we can make a difference for Him not by trying harder, but by relying upon His power to make that difference. That just means doing what it is we believe God has called us to do and then letting Him work through us to make that difference. That is what the workers did who fixed the temple and that is what the king did by being convicted by God's word and taking the steps to draw closer to Him. I'm not saying, try harder. I'm just saying the secret to a second chance begins with humbling ourselves before Him and asking, "OK God, You're in charge here, not me. Let me know what it is You want me to do with my life right now". Personally I find that God can't resist a prayer like that and in His way and on His timing answers that prayer.
    - iv) Speaking of answering prayers of those who humble themselves before God, I do present the next several verses of this chapter.
18. Verse 14: Hilkiah the priest, Ahikam, Acbor, Shaphan and Asaiah went to speak to the prophetess Huldah, who was the wife of Shallum son of Tikvah, the son of Harhas, keeper of the wardrobe. She lived in Jerusalem, in the Second District.
- a) I admit, I find it fascinating to the priest did not seek out the more famous prophets in the history of Israel at that time. Jeremiah was around and so was the prophet Zephaniah but a woman named Huldah who had the reputation as a prophetess of God. For starters this verse shows us that God can use anyone, man or woman to speak on His behalf. For all I know, maybe this woman was around while the other more famous prophets were not.
  - b) The text says her job was the "keeper of the wardrobe" and lived in the "Second District" of Jerusalem. That city to this day is divided into four districts. The second one is mostly a residential community. Here is this "average worker" being called to see the king.

- c) If you want proof that God can and does use anyone willing to humble themselves before Him, consider this woman. You don't think of "keeper of the wardrobe" as being high up on the government payroll. Considering the status of woman in those days, it's amazing to consider how she had the reputation of being a prophet of God and being consulted to find out God's will for the king. So how does one become a prophet anyway? The short answer is that one has to be chosen by God for that role. Given the history of Israel and the kings who have turned against Him, I would say it is a life threatening title to have. When I think of a prophet today, I think of anyone willing to take the time to study God's word and be willing to share what it means with others. The reason there are no "official" prophets of God around today, is simply that God's word is available to us and those who spend the time to study what Jesus has taught us and are willing to teach others are also prophets of God whether they realize it or not.
- d) Meanwhile, back to the woman Huldah and her role as a prophet here:
19. Verse 15: She said to them, "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: Tell the man who sent you to me, <sup>16</sup> 'This is what the LORD says: I am going to bring disaster on this place and its people, according to everything written in the book the king of Judah has read. <sup>17</sup> Because they have forsaken me and burned incense to other gods and provoked me to anger by all the idols their hands have made, my anger will burn against this place and will not be quenched.' <sup>18</sup> Tell the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of the LORD, 'This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says concerning the words you heard: <sup>19</sup> Because your heart was responsive and you humbled yourself before the LORD when you heard what I have spoken against this place and its people, that they would become accursed and laid waste, and because you tore your robes and wept in my presence, I have heard you, declares the LORD. <sup>20</sup> Therefore I will gather you to your fathers, and you will be buried in peace. Your eyes will not see all the disaster I am going to bring on this place.' " So they took her answer back to the king.
- a) Let me try to paraphrase this woman in a few quick thoughts, "You know all the damage done by the last two kings of Israel? In effect it is irreversible. I (God) have now watched for hundreds of years as this nation gave Me "lip service" about serving Me and still too many leaders have come on the scene who have turned their backs on Me. Therefore I need to bring this kingdom to an end as it is the most merciful thing I can do. However, because the current king of Israel is trying to seek Me, I'll delay that judgment until after he dies so he won't have to witness the horrible things that will happen in the future".
- b) OK, good for that king and too bad for those people who lived thousands of years ago. How does any of this affect you or me? It comes back to God's nickname of the "God of Second Chances". Like that kingdom, our present world is cursed due to sin and He has announced that one day He'll destroy this world as we know it. That idea is stated in the books of Isaiah (65:17), 2nd Peter (3:13) and Revelation (21:2). It's like saying we're stuck with this incurable disease and there is no known antidote. However, there is a God that wants to rescue us from being in this world struck by that disease and willing to give us that second chance. To say it another way, we can't avoid the fate of this cursed world, but if we're willing to humble ourselves before God like this current king, we'll get that second chance to serve Him and be a witness for Him.
- i) Let me explain this one more way, and then I'll move on. As Christians, we often think that we are not worthy to serve Him because we have messed up. We often try on our own power to make a difference and eventually mess up or fall back in a sin that is an old bad habit. I'm convinced that Satan's forces know well what are our weaknesses and attack them. The issue is then we feel guilty when the attacks come and feel we're not worthy to serve God even if we still believe we're saved. That is when we have to remember God is a God of second chances. The point is if God is willing to forgive us as He forgave Manasseh after what, 55 years, what makes us think He won't forgive us and be willing to use us again for His glory?

- ii) If God is willing to delay His judgment on Israel because the current king of Israel was a good guy, what makes us think God won't delay judgment that our country deserves if those who serve Him (that's you and Me) humble ourselves before Him and are willing to seek Him in order to make a difference for Him in this world?
  - iii) To finish up, my point is we only get one shot at life. We can just sit around and complain about how bad things are, or we can use our lives to make a difference for Him in the world around us. No we can't fix the whole world, but we can fix our little corner of it. My point is we should seek Him, humble ourselves before Him and ask Him what is it You want us to do with our lives today, or right now? As I love to state, God can't resist a prayer like that where we say, You're in charge of my life and lead Me as You desire. Then, spend time studying His word as this king did and go live to make a difference for Him.
  - c) I just reread the text of the last paragraph to see if I went off base, and I concluded that my little lecture on sticking close to God despite the sins of others before is what the text also says. The current king figured, there is nothing he could do about how his father or his grandfather acted, but this king new the right thing to do was to seek God and in effect God gave this king a second chance on behalf of that kingdom to seek Him and make a difference for Him in His life. The results of that second chance will be discussed in the next lesson. Thanks for reading and hopefully we'll all be back for the next lesson as we fare now close to finishing up 2nd Kings.
20. Father, Thank You that You are a God of second chances. Let us be grateful that not only do You forgive us our sins but are still willing to use us just as we are despite what we have done. Help us to do what it is You desire of us. Help us to use the most valuable thing You give us, our time in order to make a difference for You. Make it obvious to us what it is You want us to do today or at this moment in order to be pleasing to You. Help us to rely upon Your power so that we can make that difference for You. We ask is this in Jesus name, amen.