

2 Kings 21-22

Manasseh in league with the Empire

Manasseh is the son of Hezekiah – but that is where the similarities end. He begins to reign probably in a co-regency with his father but when he takes over, he reverses all of the reforms of Hezekiah and restores Jerusalem on its path of idolatry. He rules for 55 years so his influence is long and strong. He desecrated the temple of the LORD with additional altars to foreign gods and Asherah poles – all of which were an abomination to the LORD. This may sound a little “pop culture” but when I think of Manasseh, I think of the Star Wars character Darth Vader. He should have been good but he went to become the most evil. He submitted to the evil empire – the Assyrians where his father had resisted. He led the people away from freedom and into destruction. But he was powerful and used his evil and connection with Assyria to strengthen the nation and draw it into the world empire.

The LORD sent prophets to speak against this king and to declare to the people that their destruction was not sure. In verse 13, a series of metaphors are used. Jerusalem will be measured by the sins of Samaria and the house of Ahab. They had just been destroyed by the Assyrians and now God had sealed the fate of Judah. God will wipe out Jerusalem like someone wipes out a dish and turns it upside down. In other words the city will be turned upside down as the wealthy and powerful will be carried off first into captivity and all of the sins and filth of their idolatry will be cleaned away and set to drain until God decided to pick up the dish again.

Amon is a 2-year extension of Manasseh's reign of evil. He is insignificant except for the fact that “the people of the land” conspired against him and killed him. These seem to be some of the nobles that were the party aligned with the reforms of Hezekiah and were listening to the prophets of the LORD. They place Amon's 8 year old son on the throne who will be a person they can bring up in the way of the Lord instead of that of the evil of Manasseh and the Assyrians. Interestingly, both Manasseh and Amon are buried in the garden of Uzzah – which is probably a pagan worship site for the starry hosts. They are not buried in the traditional tombs of the Davidic line.

Chapter 22 – Josiah, A New Hope

Josiah becomes king at 8 years old and his mother is Jedidah. He is described as following in the ways of his father David – even more so than his great grandfather Hezekiah. Much like Joash, the other righteous boy-king, he begins repairs on the temple that had been neglected for many years. It is in the process of the repairs that the book of the Law (most probably Deuteronomy) is found and brought to the king. This must have been hidden away by the priests during the time of Manasseh. The king reads the book and immediately goes into mourning realizing just how far the people of God had strayed from the Law of Moses and the consequences of that sin. The king sends his representatives to “inquire of the LORD” through a prophet to find out what God wants them to do.

Back to our illustration of Star Wars, Josiah is like the character Luke Skywalker. He is young and inexperienced but he desired to do what is right and listens to the older-wiser people of the past who resist the evil of the world empire. He will not follow the

evil of his father but bring the city back into alignment with the ways of the LORD from time past. Although strong in the Lord, however, he will show weakness and his legacy – in his death and the evil of his children – will not last and will not change the destiny of Jerusalem.

The prophet who comes to speak to the king is Huldah – the only female prophetess in the period of the kings. Scholars believe that she belongs to priestly circles and her husband is the uncle of the prophet Jeremiah (Jer. 32:7). Her prophesy is not what they wanted to hear. God will not relent in bringing disaster upon the nation of Judah. It will be utterly destroyed. But because Josiah responded correctly with humility and true repentance, the calamity that will befall the city will not come during his reign. In other words, both he and the people of Jerusalem will have a time of peace and security before the great destruction comes. It will come in the form of Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian Empire. The prophesy says that Josiah will be buried in peace – but we learn later that he will die in battle against the Egyptians when he foolishly tried to insert himself into the events of world politics. He was, however, buried in his family tombs and he did not see the foreign manipulation and ultimate destruction of Jerusalem that would befall the city immediately after his death.