

JERUSALEM'S UNPARDONABLE SINS

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Saul, David, and Solomon were the only three kings that reigned over all twelve tribes of Israel. After Solomon's death, the kingdom was divided, with ten tribes following King Jeroboam I, and the tribes of Judah and Benjamin following Solomon's son Rehoboam (1 Kgs 12:1-24; 2 Chr 10). Jeroboam I turned to wickedness, and all of his successors on the throne of the Northern Kingdom of Israel departed not from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat who made Israel to sin. The Southern Kingdom of Judah had a few righteous kings, who served the Lord like David. Among these were Asa, Jehoshaphat, and Hezekiah. The fifteenth king of the divided Kingdom of Judah was a man named Josiah. King Josiah *"did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, and walked in all the way of David his father, and turned not aside to the right hand or to the left"* (2 Kgs 22:2; 2 Chr 34:2). In spite of Josiah's righteousness, even in his days the Lord pronounced utter destruction upon Judah and the city of Jerusalem.

King Manasseh's sins

God had sworn that He would not pardon the sins committed in Judah during the reign of Josiah's grandfather Manasseh. In 2 Kings 23:25-27, the Lord said of Josiah, *"And like unto him was there no king before him, that turned to the Lord with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses; neither after him arose there any like him. Notwithstanding the Lord turned not from the fierceness of his great wrath, wherewith his anger was kindled against Judah, because of all the provocations that Manasseh had provoked him withal. And the Lord said, I will remove Judah also out of my sight, as I have removed Israel, and will cast off this city Jerusalem which I have chosen, and the house of which I said, My name shall be there."* Though Manasseh was the son of righteous Hezekiah, he did much wickedness and provoked God to anger (2 Kgs 21:1-16). He turned the nation of Judah to idolatry. He made his son pass through the fire and even brought idol worship into the Lord's temple in Jerusalem. And Manasseh

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(continued)

filled Jerusalem with innocent blood (2 Kgs 21:16). Of Judah, God said in 2 Kings 21:9: "Manasseh seduced them to do more evil than did the nations whom the Lord destroyed before the children of Israel." God then said through His prophets that He was going to wipe Jerusalem like a dish and turn it upside down because of their wickedness and Judah would be sent into captivity (2 Kgs 21:10-16). God finally humbled Manasseh and he repented, cleaned up the land and turned the people back to God and God heard him (2 Chr 33:11-16).

Jerusalem would not be spared for Josiah

Manasseh's grandson was righteous Josiah. But even though Manasseh had repented, and Josiah turned to God unlike any other king of Judah, God still would not pardon the innocent blood that Manasseh had shed. After fulfilling the prophecies of Jerusalem's destruction, God said, "*Surely at the commandment of the Lord came this upon Judah, to remove them out of his sight, for the sins of Manasseh, according to all that he did; and also for the innocent blood that he shed: for he filled Jerusalem with innocent blood, which the Lord would not pardon*" (2 Kgs 24:34). Another reason that God would not spare Judah and Jerusalem for Josiah's sake was that the people turned to God only feignedly during the days of Josiah. They were insincere and hypocritical. Josiah read the entire law of Moses to all the people of Judah and brought them under a covenant with God to obey all the words of the law with all their heart, mind and soul and all the people stood to the covenant (2 Kgs 23:1-3). But God later said that "*Judah has not turned unto me with her whole heart, but feignedly*" (Jer 3:6-10). Therefore, God would not hold the hypocrites innocent even though they had a sincere, righteous king. God even said that if Noah, Daniel, and Job were in Jerusalem during that time, "they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness, saith the Lord God" (Ezek 14:14,20). At that point, Jerusalem's sins had become unpardonable.