

(a) Judah was invaded. (b) The war was one of exceptional barbarity. (c) The Assyrian king thought he was waging it; (d) he, however, was really a means used by God's providence. (e) The wicked king of Judah was fettered and taken to Babylon.

V. *Repentance* (verses 12, 13).

No one ever stayed from God more willfully, less excusably, or more persistently than did

Manasseh, but (a) God ceased not to love him and to woo him back to righteousness, and (b) affliction led him to pray to Jehovah. (c) Having been a great sinner, he humbled himself greatly. (d) God heard his supplication and pardoned him, and (e) brought him back to his kingdom. (f) He acknowledged Jehovah as God, and tried so far as he could to undo the evil he had done.

The Lesson Word Studies

NOTE.—These Word Studies for this lesson are based on the text of the Revised Version.

Verse 1. Manasseh—King of Judah, son of Hezekiah and father of Amon; 2 Kings 21. 1 gives his mother's name as Hephzibah. He ascended the throne probably about the year B. C. 686, when he was twelve years old. Little is known concerning the actual history of his long reign, though this, on the whole, was probably peaceful and prosperous, except in the matter of religion. The attention of the writer of 2 Kings and also of the Chronicles is centered on the religious aspect of his reign, and the picture unfolded is a dark one indeed. All the superstitious and idolatrous practices of the time of Ahaz were reintroduced and given royal sanction. Foreign worships were blended with the worship of Jehovah, and altars were erected in many parts of the land, and even in the sacred courts of the temple at Jerusalem, unto the gods of the peoples round about Israel. Sorcery, witchcraft, and the dealing with familiar spirits and wizards was resorted to; the shedding of human blood in religious sacrifices was introduced, and gloomy superstition and cruel fanaticism became a constituent part of religious ceremonies everywhere. This awful apostasy of Manasseh brought upon him the dire punishment of Jehovah briefly mentioned in to-day's lesson (verse 11), and only the timely repentance of the wicked king seems to have prevented the utter destruction of the kingdom at this time.

2. After the abominations of the nations—The abominations referred to are specified in the following verses.

Whom Jehovah cast out before the children of Israel—Contrary to the express command of Jehovah, the Israelites on entering Canaan had permitted many of the inhabitants of the land to remain undisturbed among them. These retained their idolatrous religion, and from them as well as from surrounding heathen nations the Israelites learned and copied practices and ceremonies which corrupted and defiled their own religion.

3. High places—Compare Word Studies for Lesson of July 2.

Baalim—The plural of Baal, which meant

literally *lord*, but which was also the title of the supreme god of the Canaanites, worshiped in different places under somewhat different aspects, hence the plural.

Asherah—The plural of Asherah, a sacred tree or pole; placed beside an altar or shrine bearing sometimes an image or other designation or sign of the god or goddess to whom the shrine was sacred.

All the host of heaven—Sun, moon, and stars, the worship of which was expressly forbidden (comp. Deut. 4. 19, and also Zeph. 1. 5).

4. Built altars in the house of Jehovah—The erection of altars to strange gods in the courts of the temple, together with the introduction of human sacrifices mentioned in the next verse, formed the climax of abominations.

6. Pass through the fire—Offer as living burnt sacrifices to the god Molech.

Valley of the son of Hinnom—Literally, the valley of Ben-hinnom, south and southwest of Jerusalem, just outside the city.

Augury—Consisting, possibly, as among the Romans, in the observing of birds in their flight and of various natural phenomena.

Sorcery—Pretended employment of preternatural agencies, magic, witchcraft, etc.

Them that had familiar spirits—Persons not unlike our modern spiritualist mediums, who professed to be in touch with the spirit world. The witch of Endor (1 Sam. 28) was such a person.

Wizards—Not differing greatly from sorcerers and magicians.

7. The house of Jehovah—The temple.
In this house . . . will I put my name—Will I myself dwell—the name representing the person as often. The presence of Jehovah, it is assumed, of necessity excludes all other gods. "I, Jehovah, thy God, am a jealous God" (Exod. 20. 5).

9. Did evil more than the nations—In their apostasy from Jehovah the people under the leadership of their king actually went to greater extremes of idolatry.

11. Brought upon them . . . Assyria—The Assyrian monuments testify to the fact of

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