

V. 3. *He built again the high places.* The worship of false gods at the village and town altars, usually built on mounds or hills, was revived. Hezekiah had attempted to abolish this, but age-long custom among the people was too strong. It was only the exile that put an end to idol worship. *Altars for Baalim*; plural of "Baal", the name, meaning "owner" or "lord", given to various heathen deities. *Made Asheroth* (Rev. Ver.); plural of "Asherah". The Asherah seems to have been originally a sacred tree, then a sacred pole beside the altar, and later perhaps a symbol or image of the goddess Asherah or Astarte, the female counterpart of Baal. *Worshipped all the host of heaven*; the sun, moon and stars, regarded by the Assyrians as the abodes of mighty deities. We are to think, then, of Manasseh's recognizing in some form the worship of the sun god, the moon god, Venus, Mars, etc. A relic of such worship survives in the names "Sunday", "Monday" (moon's day), etc. *He built altars in the house of the Lord*; evidently for heathen deities, the Baals and the sun, moon and stars.

Vs. 4, 5. *The Lord had said, In Jerusalem shall my name be for ever*; a main thought of Deuteronomy (see Deut., ch. 12). Here two thoughts are combined: "Jehovah shall be there *only*" (not at the village altars), and "Jehovah *alone* shall be there" (no other deity). Both thoughts are urged in Deuteronomy.

Vs. 6-9. *Pass through the fire* (Rev. Ver.). He sacrificed them to Molech by placing them, as a gift, in the brazen arms of the god, whence they rolled down into the consuming flames. This ancient practice of Canaan had been revived in Ahaz' time, ch. 28: 3. *In the valley of the son of Hinnom*; the great ravine that runs round the west and south flanks of the city. (See Geography Lesson.) *Practised augury, enchantments, sorcery* (Rev. Ver.); superstitious arts of reading the future or controlling it. *Familiar spirits* (Rev. Ver.); spiritualistic mediums, like the witch of Endor (see 1 Sam., ch. 28). The six offences of v. 6 are proscribed in Deut. 18: 10, 11. (See Light from the East.) *The graven image* (Rev. Ver.); "the graven image of Asherah", 2 Kgs. 21: 7, Rev. Ver. This

was a specially grand image of the goddess (see on v. 3) in silver or stone.

II. Manasseh's Punishment, 10, 11.

Vs. 10, 11. *The Lord spake to Manasseh*, as recorded in 2 Kgs. 21: 10-16. *Host of the king of Assyria*; Assurbanipal, the grandson of Sennacherib. *Carried him to Babylon*; for the Assyrian king, whose capital was Nineveh, was king in Babylon too.

III. Manasseh's Repentance, 12, 13.

Vs. 12, 13. *In affliction*; like the prodigal in the far country, Luke 15: 14-16. *Besought the Lord his God*; realizing now that no heathen gods could help him. *Humbled himself greatly*; making a clean breast of his sin. *Intreated of him, and heard*; forgave him, as He is always eager to forgive the penitent. *Brought him again to Jerusalem*; with a clean slate and a new chance. *Knew*, etc.; the dramatic conclusion. The king was a changed man.

How real and radical was the change is seen in vs. 14-20.

Light from the East

WITCHCRAFT—Was the power by which supernatural beings, mostly demons, were constrained by magical spells and formulas to do the bidding of men and women in producing or averting evil effects upon persons. Certain names rightly used, incantation rituals, magical ceremonies, and the use of certain roots and drugs, were among the means used. Any striking personal peculiarity, such as a squint, or a dwarfed figure, was supposed to give its possessor the power of the evil eye, which blighted those who fell under its influence. Any special keenness of intellect or shrewd cunning was supposed to come from demoniac sources. Women were supposed to be more susceptible to the gift than men. Divination was the forecasting of future events, or the discovery of things lost or stolen, by the help of demons or a knowledge of the powers of nature. This was commonly done by the teraphim, such as Rachel stole, and which were once mummied human heads, but later were small images. Soothsaying was the communicating of superhuman knowledge gained from a familiar spirit. Necromancy was compelling the spirits of the dead to foretell events