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BIBLE ADVENTURES SCRIPT:

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Samson Destroys 3000 Philistines.

Welcome to Bible Adventures. Help for today. Hope for tomorrow. Jesus is Lord of all.

The cycle of payback and revenge killing still happens in various cultures in the world today. What is revenge? *Revenge* is a violent and destructive response to anger, injury or humiliation suffered at the unkindness or cruelty of another. Often members of the family of a murdered person seek to avenge the *murder* by *killing* the guilty person or a relative as payback.

In Samson's time, he destroyed the crops of the Philistines in the neighbourhood because his father-in-law had given his wife to someone else. Then the Philistines retaliated by burning down the father-in-law's house, killing both the father and Samson's wife. Samson then went on a revenge trip by killing many Philistines. Samson had surely forgotten the Lord's words in Deuteronomy, Chapter 32: "The Lord remembers what their enemies have done; He waits for the right time to punish them."

We cannot admire Samson for his behaviour, because he was acting as brutally and cruelly as the Philistines did. But without Samson realising it, he was being used by God to inflict punishment on the Philistines. How would this cycle of revenge ever stop? The Philistines went deep into the territory of Judah looking for Samson. The men of Judah were alarmed at the risk of war occurring with the Philistines and agreed to hand Samson over to them. The men of Judah should have come to Samson's defence against their common enemy but instead, they led him to the Philistines.

Again the Spirit of the Lord came upon Samson on his capture; he broke the new ropes he was tied with and using a donkey's jawbone, he struck down a 1,000 Philistines. Any survivors undoubtedly fled. In spite of Samson's sins and weaknesses, the Lord continued to be with him, meeting his needs and hearing him when he cried out for help. After these victories gained over the Philistines, Samson was judge over Israel for the next 20 years.

One of Samson's weaknesses was women, particularly Philistine women. And near the end of his 20-year rule, Samson again became involved with a Philistine woman; this time, one with low morals living in the Philistine city of Gaza. When Samson visited her, the town's people shut the city's gate, thinking that they'd trapped Samson inside. They set up an ambush to catch and kill him in the morning when he was about to leave the town. But Samson left in the middle of the night and escaped. Finding the gate locked, he picked up the whole gate along with its posts and he carried it away to the top of a hill. Samson was a man of great physical strength but one of little moral strength. He'd been ruling Israel but he couldn't rule himself.

A while later Samson fell in love with another Philistine woman named Delilah. The Philistines hadn't forgotten Samson's deeds against them and thought that they'd try once more to get even with him. They wanted to know the source of Samson's great strength so they could defeat him. When the Philistines found out about the relationship between Samson and Delilah, they promised a vast amount of money if she could help them defeat Samson.

Delilah played treacherously with Samson for gaining lots of money. Her loyalty was to her own financial security. Each time Delilah asked Samson the source of his strength, he gave her a false answer. Men were hidden in her house each time to seize Samson once he 'lost' his strength. Each time Samson allowed Delilah to bind him in a certain way and he easily broke free in front of the men. The men finally gave up and left. Samson couldn't see that his relationship with Delilah wasn't a good one. Delilah didn't love him in return and without a proper marriage, she didn't remain loyal to him.

Loyalty is the foundation of true love. When you show your loyalty, your marriage partner will feel safe and secure with you and your marriage. Loyal marriage partners respect each other, both in private and in person, and enjoy speaking highly of each other. Loyal partners keep their dealings with members of the opposite sex appropriate and distant to avoid entering into sexual temptation or adultery. A godly marriage partner won't do anything that would cause them to be unfaithful to their spouse in either their heart or their mind.

Marriage changes the relationship between mother and daughter, and father and son. Loyalty for your marriage partner means that some things become private and are to be shared between just the two of you; not around the family. This privacy builds a strong bond of trust. If only Samson had realized that he couldn't trust Delilah with any information that he gave her. She proved her disloyalty to him a number of times but he blindly kept playing the game, each time getting a little closer to the truth.

After Samson's hair was shaved off for the first time in his life, Delilah called out the same warning as she'd done in times past. He jumped up, thinking that he would do the same thing as he'd done before, but this time, he didn't know that the Lord had left him. The Lord, through His Spirit, had been the sole source of Samson's strength. With Samson's strength gone, he was easily bound, blinded and led away by the Philistines as their slave.

There are many Christians who have had the same experience as Samson of not knowing that the Lord has left them. Through a gradual slide into sin and worldliness, they've lost the presence and power of God in their lives and they're scarcely aware of this. They've provoked God to withdraw from them and yet they don't sense His absence. These people persist in thinking all is well when in fact, it's not. Something dramatic or tragic in their lives may be what it takes to shake up their life and cause these people to examine their lifestyle and goals before their living Lord.

Sometime later, the Philistines held a great celebration to honour their god Dagon, because they said he had delivered Samson into their hands. How wrong they were! The God of Israel had delivered Samson into their hands for the purpose of demonstrating that He alone is God. This was shown by Samson pushing over Dagon's 2 temple pillars and roof onto the heads of 3,000 Philistines celebrating underneath. Although God had temporarily left Samson because of his sinfulness, God returned to Samson in time for Samson to fulfil God's plan of bringing deliverance to the Israelites from the hands of the Philistines.

More battles with the Philistines were yet to come, but today's Bible Adventure is an important demonstration of Israel's God laying the foundation for Israel's final victory over the Philistines during the reign of King David 100 years later.

What can we learn from Samson? It's easy to condemn his obvious weaknesses: his self-centredness, lust, anger and revenge, lack of self-control and pride. He was a man who started out so well in life. Not many people have had their mother given a birth announcement by an angel! Samson's parents were so concerned about how to bring him up correctly that they asked the angel to appear to them again so they could do everything right for this special child. Samson was a man of great potential but he failed to live up to it. In spite of this, though, God was still pleased to use him. Even with such a list of character flaws that Samson possessed, Samson's name is still included in the New Testament book of Hebrews, Chapter 11, as part of the Bible's hall of faith.

The remaining 5 chapters of the book of Judges deal with incidents that are not directly related to Israel's leaders or judges. These chapters give a further picture of the worsening condition of Israel's national and religious life during this period. When we look at our own times, we see the fulfilment of the prophecies of apostasy in the Scriptures just before the Lord Jesus returns to call His own faithful followers to Himself. As there are many verses that tell us not to allow ourselves to be deceived into believing lies that some preachers teach, what is apostasy?

Apostates are people who have made professions of faith in Jesus Christ but have never genuinely received Him as their Saviour and Lord. They are in essence 'pretend' believers. In any church, there are those who truly know Christ and those who are just going through the motions. Wearing the label 'Christian' doesn't guarantee someone a change of heart. It's possible to hear the Word of God, and even agree with its truth, without taking it fully to heart. It's possible to attend a church, serve in a ministry and call yourself a Christian – and still be unsaved. God warns the pretender who sits in church and hears the gospel Sunday after Sunday that they're playing with fire. Eventually, a pretender will fall away from the faith they once professed if first they don't repent.

The Bible warnings against apostasy serve two purposes: 1st, they exhort everyone to be **sure** of their salvation. One's eternal destiny isn't a trivial matter. Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians, Chapter 13, to examine ourselves to see whether we are 'in the faith'.

Tests of true faith are love for Jesus, others, good works and paying the price of discipleship through commitment. Anyone can claim to be a Christian, but those who are truly saved will bear godly 'fruit'. A true Christian will show through words, actions and doctrine, that he or she follows the Lord.

The 2nd purpose for the Bible's warnings against apostasy is to equip the church to identify apostates. They can be recognised by their rejection of Christ's supremacy, acceptance of false doctrine and immoral living.

The Lord Jesus taught in Matthew, Chapter 7, that those 'pretend believers' whom the Lord will reject on Judgment Day are rejected not because they 'lost faith', but because the Lord never knew them. They never had a relationship with Him in the first place. Apostasy is not loss of salvation but evidence of false pretending.

In 1 John, Chapter 4, verses 19 and 21, it says: “We love (God) because God first loved us. If we say we love God, but hate others, we are liars. The command that Christ has given us is this: whoever loves God must love others also.”

The drama is from The Bible In Living Sound.

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