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BIBLE ADVENTURES SCRIPT:

A1582 ~ Ezra comes to Jerusalem.

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

Over 15 years ago, a beautiful young woman from a South American country won a world beauty contest. After her victory, the winner told reporters that she was going to eat a lot of food after having such a restricted diet before the contest. She did so and soon gained more weight than her modelling contracts allowed for. To get herself back to a reasonable size, the woman had to hire a personal trainer to help her work off the extra weight that she'd put on. However, when motivated, the woman achieved her goal in a few short months.

Without ongoing self-discipline, we can quickly waste our achievements. Self-control must be a lifestyle, not a short-term event.

In today's Bible Adventure from the book of Ezra, we have found a very sorry lesson to share about some of the returned exile people who didn't keep a long-term commitment to their Creator God.

Ezra was a scribe. It was his job to make perfect copies of the Law of God and teach the law to the people. Many of the ordinary people were unable to read and only a few scrolls were ever available. The making of handwritten scrolls was very slow and expensive. Ezra had spent his life studying God's Law so he could obey it himself and teach others to do as well. Ezra was also a godly priest and depended on God for His guidance.

A second group of exiles returned to Judah under the leadership of Ezra some fifty-seven years after the completion and dedication of the Temple in Jerusalem. Ezra visited the reigning Persian king Artaxerxes for permission to depart for Jerusalem.

DRAMA - [The Bible In Living Sound](#).

King Artaxerxes of Persia made a decree that any of the Jewish people who wanted to go to Jerusalem could do so. Not many did and so Ezra only led a small group of two thousand people back to their promised land.

The Persian king also provided a very great sum of money for the temple and commanded the rulers in other countries to give Ezra whatever he needed.

Ezra soon found he had no Levites in the crowd ready to leave for Jerusalem. He wanted some Levites to go back with him to help with the temple worship, so he asked some to join the group.

Ezra then called a fast so that the people might humble themselves before God and seek His guidance for the best route to take across the desert. There was a great danger from robbers, who might cause harm and steal their money.

Ezra was ashamed to ask the king for soldiers to escort the group. Earlier, he had told the king, “The hand of our God is upon all those for good who seek Him, but His power and His wrath are against all those who forsake Him.”

The second group of exiles took a shorter route across the desert than the first, but it still took four months for them to reach Jerusalem. Once they arrived, all valuables were handed over to the temple officials for the temple.

A few days later, Ezra found out just how badly his teaching was needed. He discovered to his dismay that many of those who had come back with Zerubbabel some eighty years earlier had married people already living in the land! Even the priests, Levites and other leaders had taken wives from the idol worshippers around them. Ezra could hardly believe it! He was so upset that he tore his clothes and sat down without speaking for the rest of the day.

Then bowing before the Lord in tears, Ezra confessed the Israelites' sins and begged for His mercy. As he prayed, a large group gathered around him, weeping and admitting that they had sinned too. With Ezra's help, they left their pagan wives. It was a very sad time for those who had children. But disobeying God always brings pain. The people then made a new covenant to serve the Lord with all their hearts.

Ezra persuaded the people of Judah to return to a strict observance of Old Testament Mosaic Law. In the book of Deuteronomy, Chapter 7, Moses had instructed the people not marry any of the pagan people living around them. Neither were they to let their children marry any either, because they would lead the people away from the Lord to worship other gods. Had they already forgotten that Solomon's heart was turned away from God by the influence of his foreign wives?

Ezra's efforts led to a restoration of traditional worship in the rebuilt Temple of Jerusalem and the dissolution of all mixed marriages. By creating a Jewish community based on Mosaic Law, which could exist without a political statehood, Ezra today is often considered the founder of modern Judaism.

Ezra also wrote the books of Chronicles and Ezra and had a role to play in the book of Nehemiah. The book of Ezra finishes on a very sad note, with the breaking up of mixed marriages and families. The people had done wrong before God. And it was very painful for them to put the matter right. It is absolutely necessary for people, including us, to part with their sins.

God is so rich in mercy towards sinners, that there is hope for even the worst sinner who hears the Gospel of the Lord Jesus and is willing to reject all their sins and habits to accept God's free gift of salvation.

The Jewish people in Ezra's time didn't have a copy of the Law of Moses to study. How much greater will be God's condemnation of those who have a Bible but don't read it or take it to heart. Those who do have a Bible need to read it and apply it. Learn to let Jesus live His life in you and you will then live a life of self-discipline and self-control.

Is there a difference between self-discipline and self-control? Yes there is. With regard to personal development, self-discipline is the control of your conscious decisions to do or not to do, speak or not to speak, and think this way or that. Self-discipline refers to the mind as it gives commands to the body.

Self-control, however, refers to the emotions, and the actions and reactions, which we have learnt during our lives. True self-control begins with God taking control over our minds; then He can work in us if we surrender ourselves into His hands. Ask God to lead you out of temptation. In His Name, fight against the desires that you know are wrong.

One famous writer said: "There are many Christians who are afraid of making an unreserved surrender to God. They are afraid that God will ask some hard thing of them. They are unwilling to let God do all He wishes to do for them and what He wills with them. It is true that often God completely changes around our plans for our lives. His way is wisest and best for us. Don't let Satan deceive you into being afraid of God's plans for your life.

In Proverbs, Chapter 3, it says: "Trust in the Lord with all your heart. Never rely on what you think you know. Remember the Lord in everything you do, and He will show you the right way. Never let yourself think that you are wiser than you are; simply obey the Lord and refuse to do wrong."

The drama is from The Bible In Living Sound.

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