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BIBLE ADVENTURES SCRIPT:

A1652 ~ Jesus and the Tax Collector.

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

In the year 1888, 150 young men sought entrance into the Gospel ministry of one particular denomination. All these hopefuls had passed their doctrinal studies and now had to present a trial sermon.

Each man was to deliver his trial sermon in a huge building capable of seating more than a thousand people. There were 3 examiners and about 75 other people who'd come to listen. In a way, it looked as though the young men were being set up to fail in such difficult conditions.

When one man stood up to speak, he felt that the listeners were full of critical assessment and not of godly eagerness to hear what he had to say. He was unsettled by the atmosphere and after speaking, didn't feel he had done his best. Two weeks later, his name appeared among another 105 names on the rejection list for that year.

Although disappointed with the result, that young man wrote in his diary that God knows best. Yet for him, this rejection wasn't permanent. He went on to be a world famous preacher in his generation.

In today's Bible Adventure, the Lord Jesus was set up to fail by the Pharisees and religious rulers over what He did or didn't do.

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

These events are listed at the end of Matthew, Chapter 17 and Mark, Chapter 9.

Who was this man Caiaphas that controlled all the Temple priests, scribes and rulers? At the time of today's Bible Adventure, Caiaphas was the high priest of Jerusalem. He maintained that position from 18 AD to 36 AD. He was the son-in-law of Annas, who was the high priest for 9 years before him. This family ruled the Temple for nearly a century. As the high priest and the chief religious authority of the land, Caiaphas had many important duties to do. He controlled the Temple treasury, managed the Temple police, priests and other workers, performed religious ceremonies and was president of the Jewish council called the Sanhedrin. The high priest also had a controversial function in first-century Jerusalem: Caiaphas served as a type of liaison between Roman authority and the Jewish people.

For 10 years, Caiaphas served with Roman prefect Pontius Pilate. The two were presumed to have had a private but close relationship. Many Jews at that time resented this relationship between their high priest and the Roman authorities, as they were suspected of taking bribes or practicing other forms of corruption between each other. In the year 36 AD, both Caiaphas and Pilate were dismissed from office.

Caiaphas was right in saying that Jesus was planning to do away with the Temple's sacrifice system.

Caiaphas must have well thought that Jesus had too much power. Jesus healed people, fed them, raised a number of people from the dead and helped the people in ways that the priests never did or could. But Caiaphas failed to realise that Jesus knew what each person was thinking. This all-knowing attribute belongs to God and Jesus proved that He was divine too. If Jesus paid the Temple tax, would that stop Him from preaching to the crowds? Of course not! Paying a Temple tax was like paying a Licence to Preach, which was required in later centuries before a man could preach in public. Permits and licences provided the religious leaders with an element of control.

In the Christian world, having a piece of paper that says a named person is 'ordained' or a 'pastor is no guarantee that the person is spiritually mature or qualifies in knowing God intimately. During the life of John Bunyan, John was put into prison for not having a licence to preach. Yet that didn't stop him from preaching. Even while he was in jail, a sympathetic old jailor would let him out in the evenings to preach, as John always returned by bedtime.

It's not a piece of paper that qualifies anyone to serve Jesus Christ. Jesus handpicked most of his disciples as uneducated fishermen to represent Him, and with good reason. Proud people who think that they are important in either the world's and God's eyes are not chosen by God to represent Himself. God generally chooses the foolish things of this world to confound those who are wise in their own eyes. God uses humble and meek people for His work, those who know their need to be dependent and trusting of Him.

If Jesus had decided not to pay the Temple tax, would the crowds of people have cared? All those who had been healed or had seen someone else healed believed that Jesus was a teacher and most likely, the long-awaited Messiah. Caiaphas, for his part, had to be seen to be doing something to minimize the effect of Jesus' ministry on Temple activities and authority. All those involved in the whole Temple system were finally organised into a power struggle against the one Preacher of Nazareth.

The Lord Jesus knew what had taken place in the Sanhedrin and that the Temple tax collector had asked Peter for money. Why did Jesus give strange instructions to Peter in getting the Temple tax money for them both? A fish with a gold coin in its mouth was a miracle that Jesus had organised. Who could forget such an answer through such unusual means?

Jesus decided to pay the Temple tax quietly so there'd be no fuss. In life, we have to decide which battles are important and which ones we shouldn't waste time on. Even some of the rulers called Jesus 'rabbi' which is a Jewish name meaning 'teacher'. Nicodemus was one of these rulers who did that; he even went to Jesus secretly at night to ask questions about Jesus' teachings. In Luke, Chapter 10, a lawyer also addressed Jesus as 'teacher' before testing Jesus with questions about how to inherit eternal life.

At the end of today's Bible Adventure story about paying the Temple tax, Caiaphas didn't win a big victory as he might have hoped for. In the book of John, Chapter 11, just after Jesus had raised Lazarus from the grave, the Pharisees and chief priests held a council meeting. They asked themselves what they could do, because Jesus worked so many signs. They said, "If we let Him alone like this, everyone will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and nation."

This is distorted thinking. Did the Romans care about what the Jews believed? At this stage, they didn't! But if Jesus had started a riot, the Romans would have been there straight away. Jesus wasn't interfering with the government of the nation at all, even though this is what the rulers feared.

Caiaphas prophetically replied that it was better for them to have one man die for the people, instead of having the whole nation destroyed. From then on, the Jewish authorities made plans to kill Jesus. And knowing this, Jesus warned His disciples a number of times of what was yet to come, but they couldn't grasp or fully understand what He was saying.

Power struggles can be part of everyday life; some we can avoid while some we have to learn to live with. Parents often find themselves being challenged to power struggles by their children, both young and adolescent, to see who's going to obey whom. It's the same for school teachers who have students looking for extra attention. Young people need to come to an understanding that there are some rules that are for the good of everyone. If such rules are broken, then unpleasant consequences will follow, as surely as day follows night.

Parents can try to appease a child who has a bad temper to avoid an outburst but this approach is not in the best interests of the child. Childhood is the learning stage for living well in adult life. Cooperation and common sense are the hallmarks of emotional maturity and a disciplined mind.

In the family home, power struggles between adults are often based on the belief that says: "I'll give you what you need, if you fill my needs first". Such an expectation causes relationships to wither and be destroyed. Just whose needs are more important than the other's anyway? If one person tries to dominate the relationship by imposing their views and beliefs on the other, it's only a matter of time before the less dominant person wants to withdraw from the relationship. This then feeds a cycle of the dominant person wanting to maintain and deepen their control of the less dominant person.

In the same way in the workplace, if a boss has a habit of exploiting his employees, it doesn't take long for the employees to start quietly looking for other jobs if they can't fight back through unions or withholding their labour.

Power struggles are usually based on selfishness and pride. Jesus defused the power struggle over the Temple tax by quietly complying so that no offence was given to the rulers. We too can defuse power struggles by meeting others' realistic needs. From this, they then might see a new spirit of cooperation and love, and respond positively.

Could things have worked out differently if Caiaphas had submitted to Jesus? Caiaphas was a controller and wielded much power. He'd been in charge of the Temple for 8 years before John the Baptist came along preaching repentance in the wilderness. By this time, Caiaphas had had the time to change things that suited himself in his management role. The longer a controller dominates other people, the harder it is to let go that control and allow others to make their own decisions.

Although Caiaphas was committed to winning against Jesus, he should have realised he couldn't – and wouldn't. If Jesus could raise a dead man back to life, what could Caiaphas do with his crowd of workers to defeat Jesus?

Unlike Nicodemus, Caiaphas wasn't prepared to come to Jesus humbly and talk to Him. It wasn't until Jesus was a prisoner that the two men finally met. In John, Chapter 18, Caiaphas asked Jesus about His disciples and His doctrine. Jesus replied that He had spoken openly and not done anything in secret. If Caiaphas had really wanted to know Jesus' doctrine, He would have asked the Jewish people what Jesus was teaching. But really! Would a high priest talk to the common people about anything? No! Caiaphas was far above the people Jesus spoke to and far too important to be seen doing such a thing. In the end, pride cost Caiaphas his soul, which Jesus died to forgive and save if Caiaphas had been willing to humble Himself before God.

Caiaphas met Jesus, the greatest man ever to walk on earth and yet failed to recognise such greatness. We too can come face-to-face with the greatest Teacher ever who cares for our eternal souls. His words are found in the four Gospel books at the beginning of the New Testament. Are you prepared to spend the time reading what He said to learn His doctrine and become His disciple? Don't be like Caiaphas-type people, who fail to perceive the greatness of Jesus Christ and in so doing, lose their own soul for eternity.

Don't be proud or lazy; instead, study the words of 2 Timothy, Chapter 3, Verse 16: "All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching the truth, rebuking error, correcting faults, and giving instruction for right living, so that the person who serves God may be fully qualified and equipped to do every kind of good deed."

The drama is from The Bible In Living Sound.

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