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BIBLE ADVENTURES SCRIPT:

A1858 ~ Israel Desires a King.

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

Following a major defeat in battle by the Philistines, the humbled Israelites listened to their judge, Samuel, and followed his instructions on how to get right with their heavenly God. The people were to return to their Lord with all their hearts and serve Him only; they had to get rid of all the idols they'd been worshipping instead of their Lord. Samuel said that God would then deliver them from their enemies, the warring Philistines. Afterwards Samuel called an assembly of the representatives of all Israel together so he could pray to the Lord and intercede on their behalf.

When the Israelites came together, they took water and poured it out before the Lord to symbolise that they had repented of their wrongdoing. They fasted and confessed that they had sinned against the Lord. While the Israelites were assembled in that place with Samuel, the Philistines came over to attack them again. The Israelites weren't ready for another war and were very much afraid. Samuel cried out to God and God answered in a remarkable way. He sent loud thunder, which threw the Philistines into panic and caused them to flee home again. By doing this, God proved that **He** was the Lord of nature and not the gods of the Philistines.

Samuel then set up a memorial stone to remind the Israelites that without God's help, victory was impossible. For a number of years after that, Samuel continued as judge over Israel and Israel was at peace during that time. Samuel brought peace by prayer and by turning the Israelites back to God. But as Samuel grew older, he appointed his two sons to serve as judges in the far south of Israel. However, like Eli's sons, these men didn't follow in their father's footsteps. They corrupted truth in justice by accepting bribes, something that the law prohibited.

Although parents' influence over their children is strong, each child is an independent person and must make his or her own choice whether to follow the Lord fully or not. Because of Samuel's age and his sons' evil behaviour, the elders of Israel asked Samuel to appoint a king to rule over them instead.

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The elders of Israel believed that if Israel was going to survive as a nation, it needed a military leader, as well as the tribal unification of a strong political leader. After being in the Promised Land of Canaan for nearly 350 years, the Israelites rejected God as their leader and Samuel as their judge. Instead, the Israelite elders wanted to be like the other nations around them, with a person who could be seen leading them into battle. The motive for such a request was wrong, as the people of Israel wanted to be like all the other nations around them and no longer be known as God's chosen nation. The other nations should have wanted to conform to Israel's God's leadership, and not the other way around. The elders should also have remembered that their situation had only come about by their own disobedience and lack of faith in the Lord their God. The Lord Himself had never failed them but **they** had failed Him many times!

Naturally, Samuel was displeased with this request. The people were also rejecting him after a lifetime of faithful service. It must have been a bitter disappointment for Samuel to bring the people's request to God in prayer. God told Samuel that it was He Himself as ruler that the people had rejected. They had also rejected their covenant relationship with God as their protector and deliverer.

God told Samuel to give the people a king but first, to forewarn them what a king would cost to their livelihoods and lifestyles. Basically, the Israelites would become slaves to their earthly king. But the people thought only of the good things a king might bring, and not the negatives. Samuel further warned them that when they cried out to God for relief from the king's demands, God wouldn't listen to them. When we bring ourselves into distress by our own wrong desires and projects, we justly forfeit the comfort of prayer and the benefit of God's immediate help.

Even after these heavy warnings, the elders of Israel wouldn't reconsider their request. So God granted them a king. God clearly didn't want the Israelites to have the type of king that they were asking for. The elders were really asking for a king who would replace God and that certainly wasn't in God's plan for them. However, God had long before decided that one day, Israel would have a king. In Genesis, Chapter 49, elderly Jacob called his sons together to tell them what their future tribes would do. Jacob said that the kingship of Israel would never leave the tribe of Judah.

God also set out the rules by which a king of Israel should live by, in Deuteronomy, Chapter 17. Such kings were to write out their own copy of the Law of Moses and read it all the days of their lives. This was to keep a king humble, and someone who feared and obeyed the Lord. A king was always to rule under God's final authority. The Israelites' wellbeing had always depended on their obedience to God, and not on human kings or military power.

There's a warning here for Christians today too. Satan cannot overcome us by a direct attack; but if he can tempt us to become like the world around us, he can neutralise our witness, our power and our faith. We too, will then become weak and disobedient in God's fight for the souls of people for His kingdom.

Chapter 9 of the 1st book of Samuel introduces us to a very tall handsome young man named Saul, from the tribe of Benjamin, which was the smallest of all of Israel's tribes. Saul's father, Kish, had lost some donkeys and he had sent Saul and a servant to look for them. The two travelled westward a long way through a number of districts until they were close to the town where Samuel lived. Saul's servant said that Samuel was a prophet and everything he said came to pass. They agreed to ask Samuel where to find the lost donkeys.

Samuel and Saul had never met each other before, but God told Samuel that he would meet Saul the next day and that Samuel was to anoint him as the king of Israel. Did God make a mistake appointing Saul as king? He wasn't from the right tribe and was a farmer without military training. Not at all! God deliberately gave the Israelites the kind of king they had asked for, one who would go out before them and fight their battles by depending on God's military might above his own.

As Saul and his servant entered Samuel's town, they learned that Samuel was about to go up to the high place near the town to bless a sacrifice that was about to be offered. The Canaanites had customarily built altars and worshipped their gods on hills known as 'high places'. When the Israelites occupied the land, they often worshipped the Lord at these same locations. However, as time went on, the Israelite worship became corrupted, and it gradually came to resemble pagan Canaanite worship. Therefore, these high places were later condemned by God, and the Israelites were forbidden to worship Him there.

When Samuel met Saul and his servant, Samuel told them not to worry about the donkeys, as they had already been found. Samuel then told Saul that he must eat with him that day and so took Saul and his servant with him to the festival. They were given seats of honour in a room where there were about 30 other guests. Saul had no ambitions to be king of Israel and so hadn't any idea why Samuel was treating him so specially. Saul would have preferred to skip the sacrificial feast and just rush off home to be with his family.

What can we learn from this? Samuel was the last of the judges, the first of the prophets and the founder of the monarchy of Israel. Besides all that, Samuel also started a school of prophets. The record of this great man is beyond reproach. It's hard to find a single mistake that Samuel made, apart from his sons' failure to administer justice fairly. God always gives us the best we're prepared to take, but we are free human agents and must choose God's best or our own way.

Like Saul, we can have knowledge of God but leave Him at a distance. The story was told of a funeral at a country church in the United States. The preacher pounded on the pulpit and looked over at the coffin. He said, "It's too late for Joe. He might have wanted to get his life together. He might have wanted to spend more time with his family. He may have wanted to do that, but he's dead now. It's too late for him, but it's not too late for you. There is still time for you. You still can decide. You still are alive. It's not too late for you. Today is the day of decision."

Then the preacher told the mourners about a bus colliding with a funeral procession on the way to a cemetery. He said, "That could happen today. Today is the day to get your life together. Too late for old Joe but it's not too late for you."

One of the out-of-town visitors for the funeral became very angry about the way the preacher handled the service. On the way home, he told his wife, "Have you ever seen anything as manipulative and as insensitive to that poor family? I found it disgusting."

His wife agreed and she said that she'd never heard anything like that. "It was manipulative. It was disgusting. It was insensitive. Worst of all, it was also true."

People don't always want to hear what's true. Everyone needs to understand that there's no repentance time on the 'other side' of death that will cancel out the judgment awaiting those who have already trampled underfoot the precious blood of Jesus in this life. God's word will never change for any reason, and certainly not to accommodate our pet beliefs. He is the same today as He was when His words were penned in the book we call the Bible. His way is still the only way. In Hebrews, Chapter 13, it says: "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, and forever."

For our part, we should give God the glory He deserves. Glorifying God means acknowledging His greatness and giving Him honour by praising and worshipping Him; for He, and He alone, deserves to be glorified. He is preeminent above all others; and a life lived for God glorifies God. Therefore, we act like Him by loving others in the same way God loves us. In doing so, we bring glory to God's name and enjoy the close relationship with Him for which we were originally created. In John's Gospel, Chapter 14, Verse 15, Jesus said, "If you love me, you will obey what I command."

The drama is from The Bible In Living Sound.

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