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BIBLE ADVENTURES SCRIPT:
A1859 ~ Saul Anointed.

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

A good-looking young man called Saul was sent by his father, Kish, to look for some family donkeys that had strayed away. Saul's family belonged to Benjamin, the smallest Israelite tribe out of the 12. A lengthy search for the donkeys didn't find them. As Saul and his servant ventured close to where the prophet Samuel lived, the servant suggested that they ask Samuel where they could find the donkeys.

The Israelite elders had already asked Samuel to give them a king who would lead them out into battle the same way as other nations' kings did. The Israelites had rejected God's protection and His covenant with them. So God told Samuel to give the people a king, but first to tell them that they'd become slaves to their king. Worse still, when they cried out to the Lord for help against their king, the Lord was not going to listen to them. Such dire warnings didn't dampen the elders' desire for a king to rule over them.

God chose Saul to be Israel's first king. Samuel was about to go to a sacrifice outside his town when Saul and his servant arrived to see him. Before Saul said a word, Samuel told Saul that his donkeys had been found and that Saul should eat with him at the meal after the sacrifice. Although Saul would rather have gone home to his family, he accompanied Samuel as requested. Saul was given the place of honour at the meal table and that evening, Saul and his servant also stayed at Samuel's house. Samuel and Saul spent a long time talking into the night on the roof of the house before Saul settled down and slept there. Early the next morning, Samuel called up to Saul to get ready to leave.

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The first step in establishing Saul as king over Israel was for Samuel to anoint him with oil as the Lord had commanded. This was done privately and without anyone else's knowledge. Saul's anointing was as leader over God's inheritance, which included both the promised land of Israel and the Israelite people. God had chosen the nation of Israel out of all the nations of the world to be His treasured possession. As Saul was God's choice of king, Saul would be answerable to God, just like a servant is answerable to his master. May Saul never suppose that Israel ever belonged to him!

After anointing Saul, Samuel told him of three signs that day that would confirm that he was indeed God's chosen king and that all Samuel had told him was true. The first sign was that Saul would meet two men at Rachel's tomb, who would tell him that his father's donkeys had been found. This would mean that from then on, Saul was to stop looking after donkeys and begin looking after Israel.

The second sign was that Saul would meet three men bringing an offering to God's altar at Bethel. They would give Saul part of their offering, as recognition that Saul was an important person; if Saul was an ordinary passer-by, they wouldn't give any of their offering to him.

The third sign was that Saul would go to his home town of Gibeah and meet a procession of prophets. At that time, the Holy Spirit would come upon Saul, just as the Spirit had come upon many of Israel's judges in times past. Saul would prophesy with them and through the Spirit, Saul would be changing into a different person. This transformation would reassure Saul that God was going to equip him with everything he needed to be king, just as God had equipped the judges before him.

No one at that time knew that Saul had been chosen by God to be Israel's king. This was important, as the people needed to believe that Saul had been chosen by God through the drawing of lots and not by Samuel. In this way, the people would be more likely to support Saul. Saul knew the lot would fall to him and as he was reluctant to become king, he hid amongst the equipment. When Saul couldn't be found, Samuel and the people enquired of the Lord and He told them where Saul was. Saul was brought out and acclaimed king of Israel. His official reign as king started at this public ceremony.

After this, Samuel explained to both Saul and the people the regulations of kingship. Samuel wrote down God's instructions to serve as a witness in case either side, Saul or the people, failed in their duties to each other. Saul was to serve under God and the people were to obey Saul as God's representative. Only in this way could Israel have a king and still maintain its covenant relationship with the Lord. Samuel then sent the people away to their own homes. The people responded in two ways to Saul's new leadership – some were inspired by God to join him but a few were inclined to oppose him.

Sometime after Saul was made king, an Ammonite ruler attacked an Israelite city on the eastern side of the Jordan River, called Jabesh Gilead, as listed in Chapter 11 of 1st Samuel. To save their lives, the men of Jabesh offered to submit themselves to the Ammonites. But the Ammonite king would agree to this only on the condition that he gouged out the right eye of everyone in Jabesh. This the elders of Jabesh would not agree to. However, they told the attacking king that if no help came within seven days, he could take the city without a fight. Surprisingly, the king agreed to wait the seven days, as he evidently assumed that no one would come to rescue the town.

The Jabesh elders sent messengers throughout Israel. They were either unaware that Saul was king or they thought he wouldn't be able to help them. They knew, however, that Israel wasn't united at the time. The tribes and even some cities, looked out mainly for themselves. When the messengers from Jabesh arrived at Gibeah, Saul's hometown, he was out working in the fields. Although he had been made king, he hadn't yet received instructions from Samuel concerning what to do next.

When the people heard the news, they wept loudly. Saul was coming in from the field behind the herd and asked what was troubling the people. The people had a special reason for their weeping. Two-thirds of them were descended from the 400 young women brought from Jabesh to be wives for the 600 surviving Benjamites, as listed in Judges, Chapter 21. Some of these families may have returned to Jabesh and rebuilt the city. Thus the people of both cities were related. This was extra reason for Saul to rise up and go to the besieged town's rescue.

The Spirit of God came upon Saul in power temporarily, just as the Spirit had come on Samson. The first thing that Saul did was to cut up two oxen and send the pieces all over Israel with the warning that if the Israelites didn't send men to fight the Ammonites, their own oxen would suffer a similar fate. The threat worked. The Israelites sensed that God was behind Saul and that they had better respond. So a huge army of Israelites gathered.

When the men of Jabesh heard that help was on the way, they tricked the Ammonites into thinking no help was coming. But early the next morning, Saul attacked the enemy camp and the Lord enabled him to win a great victory. This battle confirmed to the people that Saul had truly been chosen by God to be their king and after that, all Israel were united behind him.

The Israelites supported Saul to such an extent that they wanted to put to death any troublemakers who didn't accept Saul's leadership. Saul wouldn't permit this, and especially on the day that the Lord's victory over the Ammonites was to be celebrated. Saul gave credit for the victory to the Lord. Then Samuel suggested to the fighting men that they go to Gilgal near Jericho and renew the kingdom there. Once at Gilgal, they made Saul king before the Lord under God's authority. They also reaffirmed their covenant relationship with God.

What can Christians learn from this important piece of Jewish history? God always has our best interests at His heart. Since the Lord Jesus' ascension into heaven 40 days after His resurrection from the grave, Jesus sends the Holy Spirit to indwell His faithful followers, not just when most needed, but for all the days of their lives. This enables Christians to reach out to those still travelling on the broad road to destruction. Here is a story about one dedicated young man's endeavours to help those in need to find their Saviour.

William Whiting Borden, the millionaire heir to his parents' estate, received a trip around the world as a gift from his parents when he was 16 years old. As Bill Borden, a Christian, travelled through Asia, the Middle East and Europe, he felt a growing burden for lost people. Finally, he wrote home and informed his parents that he was going to give his life in preparation for the mission field. One friend expressed disbelief that Bill was "throwing himself away as a missionary."

On returning home, he entered Yale University. Borden lamented that what he saw as the end result of an empty, humanistic philosophy taught there was moral weakness and sin-ruined lives. He started a prayer group with other students and this continued to grow until 77% of the university students attended a group each week.

Borden's outreach ministry was not confined to the Yale campus: he made every effort to help the widows, orphans and disabled living in the neighbourhoods around Yale. He rescued drunks from the streets and tried to rehabilitate them, founding the Yale Hope Mission. One of Bill Borden's friends wrote that he "might often be found in the lower parts of the city at night in some restaurant to which he had taken a poor hungry fellow to feed him, seeking to lead him to Christ."

During his college years, Bill Borden made an entry in his personal journal which simply said: "Say 'no' to self and 'yes' to Jesus every time."

Upon graduation from Yale in 1909, Borden turned down some very high-paying job offers while determined to fulfil the call that God had placed upon his life. After graduating from Princeton Seminary, he went to Egypt to study Arabic on his way to a Chinese Muslim community. While living in Egypt for only a few months, Bill contracted a deadly disease and passed away a month later, at the age of 25. Some would think, "Oh, what a waste of a life!" But no life is ever wasted when it is invested in bringing people to Jesus. And no life is ever wasted when it is lived for the glory of God. Life is wasted when it is lived for selfish ambition.

In the end, God will look at your motives in your heart. It will be not so much a judgment about quantity, as it will be about quality and purity. Why did you do what you did? If you have been faithful and served God with what He had set before you under instruction and empowered by His Holy Spirit, you will be rewarded for your faithfulness. But if you have been unfaithful or have done things with the wrong motives, you will not receive this reward. As Alan Redpath once put it, "You can have a saved soul and a lost life." It's not enough just to get to heaven. We want to get to heaven having done something with our lives for God's glory.

Jesus said in John's Gospel, Chapter 9, Verse 4: "I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work."

The drama is from The Bible In Living Sound.

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