



BIBLE RADIO PRODUCTIONS

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BIBLE ADVENTURES SCRIPT:

A1881 ~ David Numbers Israel.

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

As King David of Israel crossed the Jordan River, while he and his household returned to Jerusalem following his son Absalom's failed attempt to claim the throne, the men of the northern tribes of Israel quarrelled with the southern men of Judah about who had the right to escort David back to his palace. As a result, a descendant of Saul, called Sheba, denounced David and sent the men of the northern tribes back home.

When David returned to Jerusalem, he appointed his relative Amasa, the leader of the defeated army, as his next army commander for all Israel and sent him out to put down Sheba's rebellion. Although Amasa deserved death as a traitor, David did this in an attempt to gain support from the 10 northern tribes who claimed that David had favoured his own tribe of Judah to be his escort.

However, when Amasa didn't return within the three days David had set, David sent Abishai to take the men who were already in Jerusalem and go after Sheba before he had time to establish himself somewhere with his soldiers. Joab and his company of soldiers went with Abishai and met Amasa around 11 km north-west of Jerusalem. Joab greeted Amasa and as he did so, he stabbed him to death. Obviously Joab would have killed Amasa if they had met during Absalom's war against his father.

Sheba had taken himself and his clan to a fortified city in the very far north of Galilee, so when Joab caught up, he and his men besieged it. They battered the wall in an effort to make it fall down. A wise woman living within that city called out over the wall to speak with Joab. She claimed that the city was known for peacefulness and loyalty in Israel and she wanted to know why he would destroy it. When Joab told her, the people in the city agreed to have Sheba's head thrown over the wall so that Joab could withdraw. And this is what happened. The people threw Sheba's head over the wall and Joab and his army returned to Jerusalem.

Sometime later, David called for Joab with orders that he wanted carried out.

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In 2nd Samuel, Chapter 24, the Bible tells us that David was enticed to sin, which resulted in Israel as a whole being punished. The Scriptures don't tell us why God was angry with Israel – it could have been following Absalom in his attempt to overthrow God's choice of king; or perhaps, the Israelites had become overconfident and had stopped depending on God. David, however, sent a team throughout Israel and Judah to see how many men were of military age that he had. Joab's protest to this was correct. In the past, God had used as little as 300 men who had been led by Gideon to defeat a huge Midianite army at Mount Gilead. But it was the Lord's doing at that time, as the people trusted in their God. David should always have relied on God to protect His people. Having an exact number of men in his army was an open invitation to David to be boastful, proud or even self-reliant.

Spiritual decline in every generation can be traced to our human longing for independence and control. God's glory must be the point of everything we do and say. If we don't know what it means to sacrifice self-interest in our lives day-by-day, then in reality, we aren't living fully for God's glory. If we make ourselves the focal point in our lives, we lose sight of the importance of God and the real importance of everything. To get things the right way around, we need to put God's glory first, and humanity's wellbeing second. If we turn our priority to the other way around, we demean God and also ourselves. We are what we are because of what we've received from Him.

King David ordered this census of all his fighting men, but God certainly didn't ask for it. David was starting to put his trust in his military might and not in Almighty God. David knew that he was disobeying God with this deliberate sin, as Joab had warned him not to do when he first raised the order.

Satan tempts us to sin but the choice of whether to sin or not is up to us. No one can say, "Satan made me do it." We are always responsible for our own behaviour. Yes, we are influenced by evil, we are tempted by evil, but God always gives us the means to avoid sinning. In 1st Corinthians, Chapter 10, it says: "No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it." When we accept responsibility for our sin, as David did at the end of this *Bible Adventure*, we open the way for God to forgive us, cleanse us and restore us to fellowship with Himself again.

The census counting lasted 10 months. And when the numbers were in, David was conscience stricken. It's a common experience that once the anticipated pleasure of a sin has passed, then regret sets in. David was actually overcome with guilt and asked God to take his guilt away. Although David confessed his sin to the Lord, there was still a consequence to be paid for his sin. One of the frequent hopes we humans experience after we have sinned, is that there should be no unpleasant consequences for us after we've confessed our wrongdoing. However, the motives of our thoughts and actions should be based on values and not on personal gain.

The next day, the prophet Gad visited David with three choices of punishment that he had to choose. David chose the plague, the severest but quickest punishment, and one that would come directly from God and not through men. David knew God to be merciful, but men weren't. Seventy thousand Israelites from all over the nation died in those three days. God used an angel to deliver the fatal plague to the Israelites. As the angel was about to strike Jerusalem, starting near the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite, the Lord stopped the angel from going any further.

The prophet Gad came to David that day and told him to erect an altar to the Lord on that threshing floor. David went with his officials to meet Araunah, who offered everything David needed. But David said he'd pay for them and so he did. David knew that the Lord took no pleasure in the offering of any sacrifice or any service that entailed no cost to the person presenting it. Whenever we offer something to the Lord, the greater the cost to us, the greater will be the Lord's pleasure in accepting what we offer.

The threshing floor was located on a well-known area just outside Jerusalem, and owned by one of the original inhabitants of the city. This was also the same place (previously called Mount Moriah) that Abraham was told to offer his son Isaac as a sacrifice. According to 1st Chronicles, Chapter 21, David paid 600 shekels of gold for the entire summit of Mount Moriah. It was at this very site that Solomon would later build the Lord's temple. Today, the ownership of this land is disputed but it's prophesied in Revelation Chapter 11, that one day God's 3rd temple will be built there in the not-too-distant future.

How can we make wise decisions that honour God? There are Biblical principles that help us make the best decisions. As Christians, our overall direction in life is determined by our commitment to God, and we must remember to ask Him to direct our lives. In Proverbs, Chapter 3, it says: "Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths."

How does God direct us? It's through the wisdom He gives us in the Bible and the wise biblical counsel of His servants. Start reading the Bible book of Proverbs, because it's designed to teach us caution, understanding and wisdom in making good decisions. The process of becoming wise starts with understanding how much greater God is than we are. This reverence for God is known as the 'fear of the LORD'. When a Christian recognises a bad habit or faces a moral choice, he or she can apply God's commandments to always choose His way.

There's a story about an older man who applied for a position on a company board. His references, work experience and interaction with people all seemed very good and he was shortlisted for the job. However, when background checks were done, it was found out that early in his adult life, the man had been charged with fraud. This meant that he could never be accepted for the position that he sought. The results of some sinful action we did many years ago may need to be faced all throughout our life. At every stage of life we need to be careful what we do.

However, we thank and praise God for the beauty and blessing of His forgiveness. In Psalm 103, it says: "As far as the east is from the west, so far has God removed our transgressions from us." They're gone! He's forgotten them and we must forget them too. The person who says, "I can forgive, but I cannot forget," is only saying: "I cannot forgive."

There is a condition God places on granting us forgiveness. In Matthew's Gospel, Chapter 6, it says in the Lord's Prayer: "Forgive us the wrongs we have done, as we forgive the wrongs that others have done to us." In Ephesians, Chapter 4, it says: "Be kind and tender-hearted to one another, and forgive one another, as God has forgiven you through Christ." We as Christians aren't perfect but we're forgiven followers of Jesus Christ.

In Hebrews, Chapter 4, Verse 13, it says: "There is nothing that can be hidden from God; everything in all creation is exposed and lies open before His eyes. And it is to Him that we must all give an account of ourselves."

The drama is from The Bible In Living Sound.

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