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BIBLE ADVENTURES SCRIPT:

A1892 ~ Sad Days for Israel.

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

From the time that the 10 northern tribes of Israel and the 2 southern tribes, Judah and Benjamin, split from one another, constant strife remained between the two kingdoms. Both the northern and southern kings allowed idol worship of foreign gods and by doing so, they didn't keep the laws of the One True God of heaven in ruling over the people.

Starting from Chapter 15 in the Bible book, 1st Kings, the historical account of what happened for both kingdoms starts with the focus on one kingdom, then moves to the other kingdom, and then back again. To keep track, remembering the names of the kings is a little more necessary. To complicate matters, both kings had a son named Abijah. In the book of 1st Kings, Judah's king Rehoboam, had a son called Abijam but in 2nd Chronicles, Chapter 13, the son is now called 'Abijah'.

Regardless of which name Rehoboam's son is called, he was a bad king and he rebelled against following Almighty God's laws. He ruled in Jerusalem for only three years before he died. His son Asa, spelt A-S-A, ruled after him, but he sought to worship the God of His ancestor King David. In today's *Bible Adventure*, King Asa has called for his general to stand before him.

Asa was a good king: he taught the people by his own example how they must turn from worshipping lifeless idols and return to the living God of their fathers, the Holy One who had brought their ancestors out of Egypt and set them apart from other nations to be God's own special people. Asa destroyed all the pagan worship shrines and he removed the prostitutes and sodomites involved in those pagan religious practices. He even deposed his own grandmother, the daughter of Absalom, who was the son of David, for her involvement in the pagan worship too.

Once the land was cleansed of all the foreign gods and their pagan worship centres, God gave King Asa peace in his land of Judah for many years. Asa was loyal to the Lord God, as shown in 2nd Chronicles, Chapter 14, when Judah faced the threat of being defeated in battle by a much larger army under the command of Zerah, an Ethiopian. Asa had faith that God could win the battle for Judah, whether they had many or only a few soldiers to fight. God was pleased with Asa's faith in Him and He brought a resounding victory for the people in the southern tribes of Judah and Benjamin. The people collected much spoil from the battle, which occurred in the 15th year of Asa's reign.

As Asa returned from this battle, a prophet of God went out to meet him and encourage him to persevere with his spiritual reformation of the people. The prophet's words spoken are still true for all of us, even today, for he said: "The Lord is with you while you are with Him. If you seek Him, He will be found by you; but if you forsake Him, He will forsake you." So Asa removed the detestable idols from the cities that he'd conquered in Ephraim too.

Great numbers of people from Ephraim and other parts of the northern kingdom of Israel came to Asa, because they saw that the Lord his God was with him. Together, they gathered in Jerusalem to make a covenant to seek out the Lord themselves with all their hearts and souls. Anyone who refused to participate was to be put to death, regardless of their age or standing in society. The people pledged to serve only the Lord. The Lord gave them peace until the 35th year of Asa's reign.

Change happened the next year when King Baasha of northern Israel came against Judah and started to build a city called 'Ramah' for the purpose of preventing his people from going south to Judah to worship God in Jerusalem. Northerners already in Judah were no longer able to return home either. What a problem! Although Asa should have called on the Lord and waited for His guidance on such matters, Asa thought up a scheme to fix the situation himself. He took the gold and silver from the Temple of God's treasury and from his own palace and sent it all to King Ben-hadad of Syria, in Damascus.

Asa asked the king of Syria to break his treaty with the king of Israel and then attack Israel, so that Asa could be free of Baasha's hindrance to the people worshipping God in Judah. The king of Syria complied and sent his soldiers to fight the northern cities of Israel. When Baasha heard that his kingdom was being attacked in the north, he immediately stopped the building work at Ramah and he rushed back to fight. As soon as he was gone, Asa and all the people of Judah raced to Ramah and took away all of Baasha's building materials, which, they used to build another two other cities elsewhere.

Yet a prophet named Hanani, visited King Asa of Judah and told him that because he'd relied on the king of Syria and not on the Lord God, the army of Syria had now escaped him. The prophet reminded Asa about the huge Ethiopian army that God had defeated for him earlier and that God could still be trusted. Then the prophet spoke a very comforting word for all those who love the Lord. He said: "For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him." The prophet told Asa that because he'd acted foolishly, from then on, his country would have wars.

In response, Asa spoke very angrily with the prophet and put him in prison. He also started to oppress some of his own people. In the 39th year of Asa's reign, he became severely diseased in his feet but again, he refused to ask the Lord for help. He died two years later and was succeeded by his son Jehoshaphat.

What can we learn from the life of a good king who started out so well but finished poorly? For older people, there often seems to be a pattern of them coming to a stage in life where they don't particular care what anyone else thinks – they'll do whatever pleases themselves. How can this tendency be avoided? Believers in Christ are told in the Bible that they must walk humbly with Him **all** the days of their lives; not just when we're young and inexperienced. Each day, we must crucify the signs of any self-centredness or lack of trust in the Lord that can emerge very subtly.

Let's now review the events that took place in the northern kingdom of Israel while King Asa was king in Judah: Bible writers condemn all the kings of Israel who reigned after King Jeroboam. None of them tried to lead the people back to true worship of the Lord; instead, each and every one continued the pattern of pagan worship that Jeroboam had established. Some even went further and introduced new foreign gods as well, in spite of the efforts of God's prophets to turn the people back to their covenant creator God.

The 5th king in Israel after King Jeroboam was Ahab and he came to the throne in the 38th year of Asa's reign in Judah. Ahab married Jezebel, the daughter of a heathen king of the city of Sidon in Phoenicia, now known as Lebanon. At the time, Phoenicia was a narrow strip of land between Israel's border and the Mediterranean Sea, and Ahab thought that it was in his best interests to be on good terms with the Sidonites.

Jezebel was a high priestess of the worship of Baal, the sun-god of her home country. In time, her Baal worship spread throughout the surrounding nations under many different names. As Ahab, her husband, was a weak character, Jezebel became a driving force behind the spread of Baal worship throughout the land. Under her influence, Ahab made Baal worship the official religion of Israel and built a large temple for Baal in Samaria.

In addition to this, he set up a pagan Asherah pole for the worship of Asherah, the female fertility goddess associated with Baal. Under Jezebel's help, two sets of prophets became established: one set for Baal and another for Asherah. Worse still, Jezebel tried to completely replace the worship of the Lord in Israel with the worship of Baal. Her persecution of God's prophets forced the governor of Ahab's palace, Obadiah, to hide 100 of God's prophets in a cave and supply them with food and water. Ahab knew that Obadiah still worshipped the Creator God.

Jezebel was such a controlling person that her name has passed into the English language to indicate the spirit of a controller over others. Anyone, man or woman, who manipulates other people to gain their own goals, power and sense of self-importance, can be referred to as a 'Jezebel'.

When a person sincerely trusts in the Lord Jesus Christ to release them from the power of sin, they in return receive the Holy Spirit of God to live within them to destroy all forms of self-centredness and selfishness over time. The Holy Spirit will not empower the life of a believer with God's nature and strength if controlling evil spirits like fear, hate, lying tongues, manipulation and many more, are still fostered as a pattern for living within the person. But they will be removed if a new believer seeks out daily the Holy Spirit to rule over their lives. It's God the Father's purpose to de-throne all evil spirits in each new believer's life.

All Christians must realise that their real battle is spiritual and needs fighting daily in their minds and hearts. Although Christ has won the victory for our souls, our old sinful desires are tempted to strive for independence against God's calling and authority over our lives. Satan and his dark spiritual powers and principalities work to deceive, kill and destroy Christ's goodness in unsuspecting believers' lives.

How easy it can be to go to church and worship God, to only return home and watch some depraved program on TV. For any believer to mature in Christ's likeness, our new saved nature must be ruled by God's Spirit and remain submitted to His kingship. Is Jesus Lord of your life? God has called all believers to victory over sin and temptation under Christ Jesus' protection. And it's Jesus's victory over sin and death on the cross that gives all believers the freedom to make Godly choices under the Holy Spirit's direction.

Believers must develop and strengthen their God-given inner freedom and holiness by spending time alone with God in prayer and meditating on the truths that He reveals in His book, the Bible. It's very necessary to forgive your parents and every person whom you believe has wronged you somehow in your life. This step is a major one if you need healing from wounds from your past or protection from the devil's spiritual attacks.

In Romans, Chapter 6, Verses 12-14, it says: "Do not let sin control the way you live; do not give in to sinful desires. Do not let any part of your body become an instrument of evil to serve sin. Instead, give yourselves completely to God, for you were dead, but now you have new life. So use your whole body as an instrument to do what is right for the glory of God. Sin is no longer your master, for you no longer live under the requirements of the law. Instead, you live under the freedom of God's grace."

The drama is from The Bible In Living Sound.

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