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BIBLE ADVENTURES SCRIPT:

A1924 ~ The Future Revealed to Daniel.

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

One of the major Old Testament prophets in the Bible was named Jeremiah, and he lived in the days just prior to the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple of God by Nebuchadnezzar's armies. Jeremiah wrote the Bible books of Kings, Jeremiah and Lamentations. In Chapter 25 of Jeremiah, he predicted that the entire land of Israel would become a wasteland while the Jewish people would be exiled to serve the king of Babylon for 70 years. In 539 BC, Babylon fell to the Medes and Persians under Cyrus the Great, but then Darius the Mede ruled the Babylonian part of the empire.

In the book of Ezra, Chapter 1, there is a proclamation of Cyrus, which says: "Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom and also put it in writing: "Thus says Cyrus king of Persia, 'The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever is among you of all His people, may the LORD his God be with him. Let him go up.' " This decree was issued in 536 BC.

When Daniel had been a Jewish slave in Babylon for nearly 70 years, he remembered Jeremiah's words in Chapter 29 that the Lord said He would bring the Jewish exiles home again after 70 years. Daniel turned to the Lord in prayer and fasting, confessing the sinfulness of his people. He said that God had done right in punishing them as He had done. Daniel could see that what had happened to his people was just what God had told Moses would happen if they were unfaithful to Him.

In the 1st year that Darius the Mede ruled over Babylon, Daniel had a vision, as recorded in his book, Daniel, in Chapter 9. Daniel prayed to God that He would be merciful to them and allow His Temple and Jerusalem to be rebuilt again, and His people be restored. Then all the nations again would recognise and honour Him as God. Daniel was praying these prayers at the time when the evening sacrifice should have been offered in the Temple back in his homeland. He saw in his vision the angel Gabriel as the form of a man flying down to him. Gabriel assured Daniel of God's high esteem for him and said that God had sent Gabriel to explain the vision that Daniel had but didn't record in his book.

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At Daniel's urging that God's prophecies could be trusted, excitement now grew among the Jewish exiles as they planned and prepared to travel the long distance back to Jerusalem.

In Chapter 9 of Daniel's book, he gave a long prayer that he prayed to God on behalf of all the exiled Jewish people. Daniel was expecting the Lord to act soon to free His people and restore them back to their land. Daniel's prayer can serve as a model for our own prayers: throughout it, Daniel included words of praise for God and recalled God's mighty works from the past. Above all, Daniel was concerned that God received the glory in everything, so he put God's interests ahead of the interests of his people and himself. He prayed that God's people might be set free so that God will be seen by the nations as a powerful, righteous and faithful God, who keeps His covenant of love with His people.

As Daniel knew that he was praying according to God's will, he knew that he could come with confidence to God with his requests. He never based his prayer on his own or his people's merits but rather, on God's grace and mercy. God answers prayer because of His goodness towards people and not because of our own righteousness.

Daniel ended his prayer by saying: "For Your sake, O Lord." It was God's sanctuary now lying desolate. It was God's Name that was being dishonoured because of the nations looking at the destroyed city of Jerusalem and Temple of God and they said that God couldn't protect them. Daniel wanted God to act to redeem His own glory so God sent the angel Gabriel to explain the vision even before Daniel had finished praying.

While Daniel was thinking about the 70 years of exile, Gabriel was extending Daniel's vision to a period of 70 'sevens', or 490 years. Between the issuing of the decree for the exiles to the return to Jerusalem, there would be a time of seven 'sevens', or 49 years; then a further 62 'sevens' or 434 years before God's Messiah would start his ministry on the earth. Altogether that made only 483 years. This timescale left only one period of seven years to be fulfilled from the prophecy.

Cyrus issued his decree to let the people return in 536 BC and a small number of Jewish exiles went back to rebuild the Temple of God. After some time, the foundation of the Temple was laid, but enemies came and stopped the work. The governor of the region and his officials came and asked the Jewish workers by whose authority did they do what they were doing. The workers referred them back to the decree of Cyrus issued 6 years before his death. So the governor wrote to King Darius I to find out if this was true. Darius made a search and found that the decree had indeed been made.

Darius told the governor to allow the work to proceed on the Temple and to give the workers money and anything else that they needed! This is thought to have happened in 520 BC, in the 2nd year of Darius' reign, and so the Temple was completed in the 6th year of his reign.

King Artaxerxes, in the 7th year of his reign, in 457 BC, authorised Ezra the priest and scribe, and all who wished to join him, to go back to Jerusalem. In the decree of Artaxerxes, which is recorded in Ezra, Chapter 7, provision was made for the complete restoration of the Jewish state, including the right to appoint magistrates and judges, hold trials, and pass and execute sentence upon violators of their own national laws. This was clearly understood to be an authorisation for the full reestablishment of Jerusalem and the Jewish nation.

It was also Ezra's desire to instruct the Jews in the laws of God. Artaxerxes granted him large amounts of silver and gold to furnish the Temple, and gave instruction to the king's treasurers on that side of the river to provide whatever was needed to beautify the Lord's house. In his decree, Artaxerxes told the people to be careful to provide whatever the God of heaven demanded for his Temple, for why should they risk bringing God's anger against the empire of the king and his sons?

Sometime after the work of rebuilding Jerusalem had started, officials from the surrounding nations to the Jews sent a letter to Artaxerxes warning him that Jerusalem was a rebellious city and that's why it had been destroyed. They predicted that Artaxerxes would have the same problem when Jerusalem was completed. Artaxerxes checked the records, and discovered that old Jerusalem had indeed rebelled, rioted and committed treason against kings. So he issued a new command (recorded in Ezra, Chapter 4) that the work of building the city should stop until he gave further word.

In the 20th year of Artaxerxes' reign, a Jew named Nehemiah was the king's cupbearer. One day, some Jews from Judah arrived at the king's palace. Nehemiah inquired of them about the condition of things in Jerusalem. They told him that things weren't going well for those who'd returned to the province of Judah. They were in great trouble and disgrace. The wall of Jerusalem had been torn down and the gates had been destroyed by fire.

Nehemiah sat down and wept at such bad news. For several days, he mourned, fasted and prayed. His prayer in the book of Nehemiah, Chapter 1, is remarkably similar to that of Daniel in Daniel 9. He prayed that somehow, God would "grant him mercy in the sight of" the king. God did and Artaxerxes authorised Nehemiah to take charge of the rebuilding project in 444 BC.

As there were many different but quite similar decrees to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem, as well as the city itself, which date do we count from for the prophesied 483 years before the Messiah came? In Daniel, Chapter 9, it clearly states that from the time of the decree to *restore and build Jerusalem* to the time of the Messiah. This is an important verse to understand. It's the only prophecy in the Bible which tells us precisely when the Messiah would arrive. It is extremely vital therefore to know exactly when that time period began, for if we use the wrong starting date, the whole prophecy will be off.

As always, it's essential to pay close attention to the words of the text. We are looking for a command to "*restore and to build Jerusalem.*"

Considering all the options, the decree which most correctly answers the specifications of Daniel, Chapter 9, Verse 25, was the decree of Artaxerxes to Ezra, recorded in Ezra, Chapter 7. We should, therefore, date the beginning of the 70-week prophecy of Daniel, Chapter 9, from the time of that command given in 457 BC. If one counts 483 years from that date, one arrives at 27 AD, the date of the beginning of Christ's ministry when He was anointed by the Holy Spirit at His baptism.

If you find it a bit hard to follow all these dates, just remember that the Jewish people had been told how many years it would be until the Messiah, or the Lord Jesus Christ, would be with them. The high priests and teachers of the law who lived in Jesus' time had no excuse not to know when the Messiah had come. They had to have known the timing was correct, but they rejected Him because He wasn't a political leader who would throw off the yoke of the Roman Empire from the Jewish people. Instead, Jesus came as a humble servant to die for the sins of the world. Often other people want us to do what they want but not what God wants, but Jesus came to obey His Father in all things.

Gabriel told Daniel that Jerusalem would be rebuilt in 49 years during difficult times. After the 62 'sevens', or 434 years, the Messiah would be killed and appear to have accomplished nothing. Then a ruler would arise whose armies would destroy the city and the Temple of God. This all happened in 70 AD, when a new king of the Roman Empire sent his son, Titus, to take charge of the Jewish rebellion. Titus captured and completely destroyed Jerusalem and the 2nd Temple. Over a million people, mostly Jews, lost their lives in this battle. From then on, no Jew was allowed in the new city that was built to replace Jerusalem. This started the 1,900 years of Jewish people living outside the land promised to them forever by God, and it wasn't until 1948 that the Jewish people had a state that they could claim as their own again.

Daniel's last recorded vision, in chapters 10 to 12 of his book, cover the period from the 5th king of the Persian Empire to his defeat by Alexander the Great of Greece, in 333 BC, to the time of Antiochus IV Epiphanes in 168 BC. That period of world history was covered with many wars between different nations. The tribulation of the final seven years that would occur before the Lord Jesus Christ will come again to rule and reign over all the people on earth.

Daniel didn't understand the meaning of the words he heard. But he was told to keep these things secret until the end times. The angel gave Daniel a final word of reassurance that he would die and be resurrected to receive eternal life with God in heaven. Those, today, who remain faithful to Jesus Christ until the end of their lives, will also one day, reign with Christ. Is Jesus in your life? Make Him your top priority every single day!

The drama is from The Bible In Living Sound.

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