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BIBLE ADVENTURES SCRIPT:

A1559 ~ Jerusalem Defended.

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

Planning for some big event depends on a whole team of people doing their jobs at the right time. And sometimes, no matter how much preparation is done, someone in the team will fail their duty. When this happens, even the help of complete strangers is gratefully accepted to get the program back on track. Such is particularly true of weddings. Each bride wants her day to turn out just right. Nevertheless, a few wedding days have problems with sickness in the family or unfavourable weather or shortages at the wedding feast.

In today's Bible Adventure found in 2nd Chronicles, Chapter 32, and 2nd Kings, Chapter 18, King Hezekiah had instructed all the inhabitants of Jerusalem to make preparations to defend the city from the invading Assyrian army. After Uzziah's death, the Assyrians conquered both Damascus in Syria and Samaria in the northern kingdom of Israel. The Assyrians wanted to go to war with the Egyptians so now they had to overcome the nation of Judah which was in their path to the south. The Assyrians captured 46 walled cities in Judah before trying to persuade Jerusalem to surrender without a fight. Hezekiah paid tribute to the Assyrian king to give Judah time to prepare for a battle as much as possible.

After all the preparations in Jerusalem were complete, King Hezekiah encouraged the people to trust in God and rely on Him. A delegation from the King of Assyria came to visit Jerusalem and told the people to surrender. The Assyrians tried to convince the citizens of Jerusalem that their God would be no help to them, just as the other pagan gods hadn't been able to in all the other cities the Assyrians had captured.

Sennacherib the Assyrian king sent letters to King Hezekiah, insulting the Lord God of Israel. King Hezekiah and Isaiah the prophet took these letters to God, and prayed and cried out to Him for help.

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What a big mistake it was for Sennacherib and his servants to mock the Almighty God! Their boasting and insults were heard by God and He delivered a crushing blow. Without warning, God killed off 185,000 soldiers from the Assyrian army in a single night. Sennacherib fled back to his own city. How the people of Jerusalem and King Hezekiah must have thanked God for such a stunning victory over a most powerful king who wanted to be a world ruler!

We have to ask ourselves, did the king and people of Jerusalem do all those battle preparations needlessly? Should they have just prayed to God and expected Him to deliver them?

God always expects us to do all we can and leave the rest to Him. A famous preacher said it this way: “When I pray, I pray like it all depends on God, but when I get through praying, I get up and work like it all depends on me.”

God has put people on this earth for a short time so they can prepare for eternity, thus, it should be the business of our every day to prepare for the next life. But how can a person prepare for the unforeseen and the unknown of the life after death?

Some people answer this by saying they have tried to live a good life and been helpful to others. Yes, they admit they have made many mistakes but nobody's perfect. They try to do their best. What more can God ask for? They assume that all good people go to heaven. Their thinking goes like this: There is a good God who lives in a good place for good people. The way to get to this good place is to be good.

Apart from this appealing to common sense, it is good for society. It keeps everyone on their best behaviour. This is known as the herd instinct. Just as we can be self-centred, we can also be herd-centred. Some people are so controlled by the herd instinct, that they'll never go against it, even in the interests of truth and righteousness.

Let's see then if we can find out just how good is good enough to gain entrance to heaven? Some hope that God has a giant set of scales. All the good things are put on one side and all the bad on the other. If the good outweighs the bad, then the person is right to get into heaven. But how can a person know if they have done more good things than bad ones? There is no way for us to be really positively sure.

A Christian lady visited her 90-year old grandmother. The old lady had been a model citizen in her community and family all her years. The lady asked her, "Gran, are you sure that when you die that you will go to heaven?" She replied, "I hope so." If this Gran wasn't sure, nobody could be sure!

That uncertainty raises another possibility. Maybe Gran would go to that real place called hell. Most people don't want to think about that or the chance they could end up there. They prefer to think that all good people will go to a good place like heaven. Isn't that fair? All through life, we are rewarded for working hard at doing good things. So it seems only right that if we do well in life, we should go to heaven in the next life too.

Where does this idea come undone? People don't listen to God's words on how to get into heaven. God is the just creator of heaven. It is He who has the right to say who can get in and who can't. Some people won't accept that the Almighty God is the final judge of this. So they hold onto the belief that all religions are basically the same and all will deliver a faithful follower to heaven. But this is a lie of the devil.

All other gods are false gods with no power at all. And all their followers who have rejected our Creator God will find out to their sorrow what hell is really like.

There is only one type of 'good' that is really good and acceptable to God. This is God's goodness itself. People can do society good but still have a heart full of sin and be separated from God. Only God Almighty is good in every way. He alone is holy. He knew that sinful people couldn't pay for all their wrongdoing so He made a way back to Himself.

This amazing way was the sending of God's only sinless Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, from heaven to earth. Jesus taught the people that God wants full loyalty and obedience to His ways. The Lord Jesus Himself met bitter opposition from the religious leaders of the day, who thought that they were good enough to go to heaven by their own good deeds. When Jesus told the temple leaders they weren't good enough for heaven, they were furious.

Yet Jesus welcomed sinners seeking God's help and forgiveness to Himself. Many experienced the goodness of God the first time through healings and truthful teachings. Finally, the religious rulers became so jealous of Jesus that they arranged for Him to be killed. Jesus knew this but still chose to die to make amends for the sin committed by the people of the whole world. To prove though that Jesus was truly God, God raised Him back to life three days later, and Jesus is never to die again.

Jesus' apostles and followers saw Him alive afterwards and told everyone. For this testimony, most of these people were killed. Would they have died if the story of Jesus' resurrection was untrue? When under pressure, they would have admitted that it was only a story. But not one of these apostles and followers did. They saw with their own eyes the risen Lord and believed in Him wholeheartedly. Jesus said in John's Gospel, Chapter 20: "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

These days, most world religions have good things to say about Jesus and blend part of His teaching into their own religion. Jesus said in John's Gospel, Chapter 14: "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

Jesus didn't claim to be one of many ways to get to God and heaven. No, He said that He was the only way. Those who surrender their lives to Jesus find Him to be a compassionate and loving God. They also expect struggles and sacrifices in their journey of preparation for heaven. Have you started your preparations for the next life yet? Ask Jesus to forgive you and be your Saviour for eternity. He'll certainly then prepare you for heaven.

The drama is from The Bible In Living Sound.

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