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BIBLE ADVENTURES SCRIPT:

A1562 ~ Manasseh Rules Over Judah.

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

A Sunday School teacher faithfully prepared her lessons and prayed for the group of children she taught at church each week. One young boy was very difficult to teach. Although he was always causing disruptions, the teacher persevered. When that child became a teenager, he committed himself to live for the Lord Jesus every day for the rest of his life. He became a well-known preacher, not just in the area he lived but in other countries too.

We don't know for sure how each child is going to turn out in life. Some seem to have a poor start but finish very well. Others seem to have a lot of potential in the early years but get lost in their troubles later on in life. It just goes to show that each person has a choice about what they will do in their life. Will they praise God, be indifferent or actively work against God's faithful people?

In the nation of Judah, the wicked King Ahaz had been succeeded by his son, the godly King Hezekiah. After Hezekiah's death, 12-year-old King Manasseh began his fifty-five year reign. Manasseh became the most wicked king ever to sit on the throne of Judah. He built up all the idols and altars to other gods that his father had torn down. He even put idols in God's Temple and this greatly angered God. Such evil actions demoted God to being only one of many gods that the people of Judah now worshipped. Manasseh was worse than even the other pagan kings, for he sacrificed his own son to an idol god.

Many of the people of Judah wanted to continue on with the worship of the One and Only True God. But Manasseh persecuted these people and forced them to accept all the other gods he wanted to worship too. Some were killed for refusing to do what the king demanded. To protect themselves from confrontation with the king's soldiers, these people withdrew to live in isolated places such as caves.

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The history of these times seems a little sketchy. We don't know how long Isaiah lived into the reign of Manasseh or how many years of kingship Manasseh had after returning from being taken as a captive to Babylon. Through the centuries, the wars between Assyria and Babylon seemed to go each way. When Assyria was at the height of its power, the army stormed Jerusalem.

The Assyrians also controlled Babylon at the time and the king made his palace there. The Assyrians were known as a cruel military nation but they didn't slay Manasseh. Later on, the Babylonians along with the help of the Medes, captured the Assyrian capital of Ninevah and brought the Assyrian world dominance to an end.

Manasseh didn't learn from the past or listen to the prophets God sent him in warning of the punishment ahead. Some people learn only from bitter experience.

While in prison as an exile in Babylon, Manasseh finally humbled himself before God. His personal repentance brought him to a true knowledge of God. From this, God restored Manasseh to his kingdom and he destroyed all the idols that he'd made. In 2nd Kings, Chapter 21, Manasseh's life was recorded as grossly wicked. But in 2nd Chronicles, Chapter 33, his prayer for forgiveness was recorded despite his previous life of sin.

How gracious it was of God to see Manasseh's repentance, hear his prayer and restore him to his own country. However, God's forgiveness did not cancel out the king's bad example to his people or undo the terrible damage he had done across the nation. Sometimes God permits evil men to rule so that He may test His people or indeed punish them.

Sin has consequences long after the sinners are forgiven. God is ready and willing to forgive and we should seek that forgiveness the moment we realize that we've done wrong. The longer we delay, the more damage we do; the more damage we do, the more we and others will suffer because of our sin.

A girl had been badly abused by her father. When she grew up, she became a Christian and learnt how to forgive her father and leave the revenge to God. But some years later, the woman's dad became a Christian too. She cried out to God: "It's not fair! After all he did to me! He should be punished!"

We tend to think of Manasseh in the same way. After all the truly awful things he did, we know he doesn't deserve God's forgiveness. Mistakenly, we have the idea that many sins are like common garden-variety sins and people do them repeatedly. But there are some sins which we consider to be grossly wicked and the person who has done them should be made to suffer at least as much as they have caused suffering to others.

But listen, God's view of sin is different. All sin separates us from Him, not just the ones we think are the big ones or those that are terribly wicked. Although Jesus Christ died for the sins of the whole world, not everyone has their sins forgiven. Why is this? God's forgiveness is strictly limited to those people who believe in Him and repent.

God answered the Christian woman who cried out how unfair it is that her formerly abusive father was forgiven. In a vision she saw herself and her father both received a robe of righteousness after they repented and asked for forgiveness. She then understood that Christ's forgiveness covers all sin and at last, was at peace.

What is repentance? Repentance is a change of mind.

In Ezekiel, Chapter 18, God says: “If a wicked man turns away from all the sins he has committed and keeps all my decrees and does what is just and right, he will surely live; he will not die. None of the offenses he has committed will be remembered against him.”

The Lord Jesus said in Luke’s Gospel, Chapter 5: “I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.” Before a person can repent, they have to humble themselves and agree with God that they have sinned against Him.

In the 2nd New Testament letter to the Corinthians, Chapter 7, it says: “Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death.” Regret is being sorry mentally but only that. King Saul was an example of this. Remorse is being sorry mentally and emotionally, as Judas Iscariot was. Repentance, however, is being sorry mentally, emotionally and through one’s own choice.

An infamous robber attended an evangelistic meeting. He expressed interest in the message and talked with some of the organisers afterwards. Later a friend urged him to invite Jesus Christ into his life. This he professed to do but his life from then on showed no evidence of repentance or a mighty change of mind, heart and life.

He rebuked his friend saying, “You didn’t tell me that I would have to give up my work!” He meant all his methods of obtaining illegal money. He said, “You didn’t tell me I would have to give up my friends!” He meant his bandit associates. He had heard of Christian cowboys, Christian truck drivers and Christian shopkeepers. So he thought he could be a Christian robber. Evangelistic meetings must emphasize repentance and turning away from the old life of sin. In the Apostle Paul’s 1st letter to the Corinthians in Chapter 6, he said: “Don’t you know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God?”

Manasseh tried to force his people to worship idols. Just because doing such a thing was *legally* right at the time, it didn't make it *morally* right. God's standards don't change. Only when Manasseh turned to God did God bring blessings for the nation, including a successful building program, a strong army and a cleaned-up national religion.

We sometimes can do very little about the world's affairs, but we can pray for leaders in authority without doubting and be faithful obeying God in our own lives.

The drama is from The Bible In Living Sound.

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