



BIBLE RADIO PRODUCTIONS

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BIBLE ADVENTURES SCRIPT:

A1715 ~ Stephen Answers Accusations.

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

What is justice? It's the process of showing fairness. But in life, often what one person thinks is fair and just, another will consider the very same is unfair. Two brothers stole the hat of another boy as they walked home from school and refused to give it back. The matter was reported to the school, the hat was recovered and the boys punished by the school.

A couple of months later, the mother of those two boys saw the other boy's mother outside a shop. She went up to her and reproachfully said that she thought the punishment handed out by the school principal on her boys was too harsh. The other mother waited in silence for her to admit that her boys had done wrong. But when she didn't and receiving no reply back, she walked off, a rather unhappy person.

The same is true of what people think about God's justice. Some people in Old Testament times thought God's punishments were too harsh. They didn't look at them from God's side or even the victim's, but only their own. Basically they said that there should be no punishment for wrongdoing and some people still think that today. This is what's known as the 'law of the jungle' – the strongest and fittest can take what they want off the other weaker people and shouldn't be called to account. In contrast, civilized societies take care of the weakest and the most defenceless of its people.

The reason for punishment is that our holy God cannot allow sinful people into His presence. All sin has to be paid for, one way or the other. Since Adam and Eve, all people have been born with a sin nature. Sinning, selfishness and doing wrong things come naturally. Jesus Christ paid for the sins of the whole world; all those who call on Him to save them, He will pardon. But those who refuse to accept that His death is a full substitution for their sins, will ultimately have to pay for their own sin, which of course is impossible. That's why the Bible warns of the misery in hell for ever, for no one can pardon their own sin.

In today's *Bible Adventure*, Stephen the deacon answered the Jewish council about the false accusations made against him. Before he spoke, those present noticed that his face was shining and looked like the face of an angel.

DRAMA - [The Bible In Living Sound](#).

After the ruling council heard testimony from false witnesses against Stephen, Caiaphas the high priest asked Stephen if he'd done the things the witnesses said. In his long reply recorded in Acts, Chapter 7, Stephen didn't speak in his own defense but instead, defended the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the new Christian religion the Jewish rulers so strongly opposed.

In his speech, Stephen tried to show the rulers that it was never God's intention to live among people of one nation only. God's true people, those who believe in His Son Jesus Christ, can be from any nation of the world. Stephen started with the history of God's call to Abraham. In Genesis, Chapter 17, God told Abraham to leave his country of present-day Iraq, and go to a place that God would lead him to. Abraham obeyed God and was led to Canaan, a land that God promised to him and his descendants forever.

But while alive, Abraham never took any possession of Canaan. Abraham's true inheritance was actually in heaven. However, God made a covenant with Abraham. God said that He would make a great nation from Abraham and all the nations of the world would be blessed through him. The reference here is about the day when his descendent, God's own Son Jesus Christ, would be born.

Stephen told the Council further how Abraham's grandson, Jacob and his family, moved to Egypt in a severe drought. Jacob's name was changed by God to 'Israel', as God had previously prophesied that the Israelite people would live in Egypt for 400 years.

When the time came for the Israelites to leave Egypt, their number had greatly increased. So much so, that the new king, Pharaoh, thought that there were far too many Israelites in his country. He ordered all their newborn boys to be thrown into the Nile River and killed. If such terrible persecution hadn't come upon the Israelites, they would never have wanted to leave Egypt and go to the land God had promised them. God's purposes could only be fulfilled when God allowed the necessary amount of persecution to come upon His people at the right time.

Moses was born at this very difficult time. Because he was a beautiful baby, his parents hid him at home as long as they could. Then they placed him in a specially made basket of reeds and tar and floated on the Nile River at the edge among the reeds. Moses' parents hoped that Pharaoh's daughter would see him and take him in. She heard the crying boy and had compassion for him and she took him in. For the next 40 years, Moses was raised in the court of the Pharaoh and trained to be a ruler. He himself knew that he was an Israelite and one fateful day, when he went out to watch the Israelite people at work, he was shocked at what he saw.

Moses saw an Egyptian taskmaster mistreating an Israelite slave. Moses became angry and killed the Egyptian. He somehow knew that he'd been appointed by God to deliver the Israelites from persecution. But his fellow Israelites didn't accept him. Not only that, the news quickly spread that Moses was an Israelite and he had killed an Egyptian. Moses fled from Egypt and went to live on the east side of the Sinai desert in a place called Midian, for the next 40 years.

It took God 80 years to train Moses for the work God wanted him to do. This is a lesson for us in itself. We can't learn everything God wants us to know in a week. Life is more like a long-distance marathon than a short sprint race. So we have to learn to pace ourselves, not to be running ahead of God, nor lagging behind.

God spoke to Moses from a burning bush in Midian. God told him that the place where he was standing was holy ground. The ruling council believed that there was only one 'holy ground' and that was the site of their Temple in Jerusalem. Stephen was telling them in whatever place God is present, that place is 'holy.' God told Moses to go back to Egypt for it was His plan to appoint Moses as the leader who would free His people from their bondage in Egypt.

Stephen's speech had gone well so far. But then Stephen started to compare Moses with Jesus Christ, without mentioning Christ by name. The Israelites had at first rejected Moses. But God sent him back to them to be their ruler and deliverer. In the same way, the Jews had rejected Christ, whom God had sent to be their Lord and Saviour.

Stephen then told the council that Moses said God would raise up a prophet just like himself from among the Israelite people. In Acts, Chapter 3, Peter had already told the rulers that Christ was the very prophet whom Moses spoke about. In John, Chapter 5, Jesus had told the rulers: "If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me."

Stephen was trying to get the leaders in the ruling council or Sanhedrin to recognize Jesus. Jesus had been chosen and anointed by God to be their Saviour; He was the One who would deliver them from the bondage of sin, just as Moses delivered their ancestors from the bondage in Egypt.

How ironic it was that these council members listening to Stephen thought that they were custodians of the law of Moses. Yet they were prepared to break the 9th of the Ten Commandments written by God Himself. In Exodus, Chapter 20, God says: “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour.” Yet the rulers had received stories from false witnesses in the attempt to condemn Stephen to death.

Stephen continued to quote from the Old Testament Scriptures to show that he could not be accused of speaking against the Temple. The verses showed that the true temple of God consists of His faithful and obedient people.

Stephen then started to accuse the Jews of the ruling council. He said that they had resisted God and His Holy Spirit, through whom the Old Testament prophets had spoken. They were just like their ancestors who repeatedly disobeyed Moses and the other prophets, many of whom they persecuted and killed. But, worst of all, these same ruling Jews had betrayed and murdered Jesus Christ. These people thought that they were righteous because they had received the law. But in fact, they had disobeyed it. The rulers became very angry with Stephen, even though he hadn't said anything worthy of the death penalty.

Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God. Jesus stood at God's right hand. As it was normally understood that Jesus was seated at God's right hand, it is thought that Jesus rose to honour Stephen and welcome him into heaven.

When Stephen told the council what he saw, they cried out loudly and put their hands over their ears. They rushed at him and without waiting to get permission from the Roman governor, they dragged him out to the place where criminals were stoned and began throwing rocks at him. The members of the council hurriedly laid their outer clothing at the feet of a man called Saul of Tarsus, as though Saul was responsible for proceedings.

As the stoning took place Stephen asked the Lord Jesus to receive his spirit. Then, just like the Lord Jesus, Stephen prayed for forgiveness for his tormentors before he died: “Lord, do not hold this sin against them.” And then he was gone.

On that day, persecution broke out against the new church and people were scattered. Saul of Tarsus was now seen as the authority figure leading this wave of persecution.

We often want to ask why God allowed this to happen. Did it matter that many lies were told to make Stephen look guilty of blasphemy? God knew the truth. Stephen was by then dead and that was the purpose of His arrest and false accusations. But for Christians, just as Stephen did, we must always do things in God’s way without telling any lies.

God has a plan for each person’s life. He brings into our lives those who’ll help us, even by their hostility, to grow godly character. Not everyone’s life goes the same way or as quickly as Stephen’s.

Years ago, a Zambian man was convicted of crimes and sentenced to death. In prison, he found out about the Lord Jesus. He became a Christian and filled his mind with Scripture. He was then able to help fellow prisoners condemned to die for their crimes too. The years passed and his death sentence was changed to life in prison. God has since moved him to another part of the prison to continue to spread the Good News about the Lord Jesus.

The Lord Jesus said in Revelation, Chapter 2, Verse 10: “Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.”

The drama is from The Bible In Living Sound.

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