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BIBLE ADVENTURES SCRIPT:

A1730 ~ Peter Arrested.

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

One of the best known leaders of the Chinese house church movement, Pastor Samuel Lamb, died in 2013 at the age of 88. This man was the son of a preacher, who gave his first sermon when aged 19. When the Communist Party took control of China in 1949, Christians were forced underground. Those who refused to submit to the Communist Party's control were given a terrible time. Pastor Lamb ministered to those persecuted and he himself too, suffered for his Christian beliefs.

When Pastor Lamb first went to prison for his faith in 1955 for 18 months, then in 1958, he was imprisoned again, this time for a 20-year sentence. Part of his sentence was spent serving as forced labour in coal mines, where working conditions were dreadful and many prisoners died. Pastor Lamb later shared about how God had preserved his life, even when doing such dangerous work.

When visitors from the West came to his church, Pastor Lamb explained how the church in China had grown despite persecution. He said: "Before I was arrested, my church had only 200 members. After I was released from prison the first time, I found the church had grown to 900 members. Then came the confiscation of books and equipment in the church. After that the church had grown to 2,000 members! Persecution is good for the church!"

Pastor Lamb believed that persecution in China and the government's efforts to close down churches only fuelled the growth of the church. "More persecution, more growing," he said.

In today's *Bible Adventure*, persecution against the apostles in Jerusalem caused much concern amongst the Christians that the church would be left leaderless. This persecution was led by King Herod, the grandson of Herod who reigned over Judea at the time of Christ's birth.

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

Herod was given the title 'king' by the Roman emperor and he ruled in the emperor's name over Israel and part of Syria. When Peter and the other apostles began to accept the new Gentile converts as brothers and sisters in Christ, the non-Christian Jews living in Jerusalem and Judea raised an outcry against this breaking of traditions.

Wanting to preserve the peace, Herod looked for a way to pacify the Jews. He found the best way to keep them happy was to arrest and execute the apostles. He set out to do this by having James, the son of Zebedee and brother of John, killed. You may not have realised that there were two apostles by the name of James – James the son of Zebedee, who was also called James the Greater or Elder, and James the son of Alphaeus. Peter, James the Elder and his brother John were in Jesus' innermost circle.

James was the first apostle martyr and was the only one recorded in the New Testament, in Acts Chapter 12. When Herod saw how pleased the Jews were by James' death, Herod had Peter arrested with the intent of having him killed also.

But the Passover fell just at that time and Herod couldn't hold Peter's trial until after the feast. As Peter had escaped once before from prison by the hand of an angel sent by God, Herod was taking no chances this time. He ordered that Peter be guarded around the clock by four squads of four soldiers each.

Concerned that the church would be dealt a severe blow if Peter was also executed, the church prayed earnestly for Peter. If the church hadn't prayed, it's likely that Peter's life would have ended then too. God can work without our prayers but often He waits to hear our prayers before He acts.

The trial for Peter had a foregone conclusion. Just as the Lord Jesus had been brought before the rulers for judgment but found guilty of nothing, so Peter too would have his trial misrepresented so he could be found guilty of something worthy of death. What sort of justice system is this? If the king or someone else in the favour of the king doesn't like a person, it didn't matter what that accused person had or hadn't done, their life was in danger. In Leviticus, Chapter 19, it says: "Be honest and just when you make decisions in legal cases; do not show favouritism to the poor or fear the rich."

There's such a difference between human justice and God's justice. Man-made laws may be legal in a country but still unjust, yet injustice grieves the heart of God. In Isaiah, Chapter 10, it says: "Woe to those who make unjust laws, to those who issue oppressive decrees, to deprive the poor of their rights and withhold justice from the oppressed of my people, making widows their prey and robbing the fatherless."

When a robber is caught, tried through the justice system of his country and sent to jail, he may come out at the end of his time with the same attitude and intention of robbing people all over again. His restricted time from normal society hasn't altered him for the better.

With God's justice, there is a built-in restitution system to make things right, whereby the robber would have to pay back what he stole plus some more to his victims. He didn't pay the government or another third party. In Exodus, Chapter 22, and Leviticus, Chapter 6, there are a variety of circumstances that indicate the level of compensation payment ordered by the judges for a person who had done an offence.

Such would make any would-be robber think twice if he knew that the cow he wanted to steal would require him to pay back five cows once caught. That's not getting ahead in the criminal world. As far back as 2,000 BC, the dominant world nation had a system of restoration through its justice system, whereby the guilty party had to give back or pay for what was stolen. This measure was aimed at stopping paybacks by the families of victims.

But in the West over the centuries, the courts have operated more so on fines, with this money paid to the government of the day and the poor victim left forgotten. In recent decades, however, the principle of restitution has been revived in most areas of the world, but there is a long way to go before it is guaranteed that a victim will be compensated.

Restitution is a vital part of forgiveness. Some jail inmates are so burdened with guilt that they want to say "Sorry" to their victims for the bad things that they've done. The counsellors in such cases talk through a face-to-face meeting with both the offender and the victims of his offence. Only if both parties fully agree to have such a meeting will it take place.

One lady had her computer stolen by a drug addict and desperately wanted to have it back. All the more so as her daughter was killed in a car accident and there were many photos of her on the computer stolen. But the drug addict had sold the computer to buy more drugs. The lady and the drug addict agreed to meet, and the drug addict was very shocked when he was told about the lady's daughter's death. He in turn told her about his teenage son taking his own life. The sharing of such deeply tragic situations built a bond between the two and the lady learnt to forgive and kept in touch with him after the drug addict's release.

Another man, named Jason, was sentenced to five years in prison after admitting to more than 50 unsolved burglaries. Shortly after sentencing, Jason expressed his wish to start afresh and make amends. He was asked if he'd like to take part in a Restorative Justice program.

Although understandably nervous, Jason was keen to participate. He said: "My personal resolve wasn't enough to stop me from returning to prison last time. I knew I needed to fully engage my emotions by meeting my victims and I knew that hearing directly from them would be a powerful experience."

Full assessments were completed to make sure that everyone was 100% committed to the process. In the end, five of Jason's victims from three different crimes, agreed to meet with him. The three men and two women had all been affected in different ways and had different motivations for wanting to take part. One in particular found that the conference stirred up more emotions than she'd expected and over the course of three meetings, there were tears, anger, apologies, acceptance and even forgiveness between them.

The consistent message from the victims was that they wanted Jason to accept the help and support available to him and to turn his life around so that he wouldn't re-offend when released.

Meeting his victims had a huge impact on Jason and he took it on himself to commit to compensating his victims for the things that he had stolen. He saw this as an important step in continuing to make amends for the harm that he had caused. He's now using the money he makes from his job in prison to pay back his victims in instalments.

Jason said: "This was real, not just theory. For these people, I was an ever remembered injustice and because I have a conscience, the meetings were hard. Restorative justice is powerful stuff. It was something I needed to do and I'm glad I did it."

However, there are some types of crimes that it is better not to have the criminal and families of the victims meet, as in the case of murder. In Old Testament times, the criminal would have received a death sentence. If victims of such circumstances met the offender, their lives would have been filled with fear, anger and rejection. Sometimes it's better to let the courts deal with the matter and pray for the strength to forgive the offender.

In the New Testament, the tax collector Zacchaeus in Luke, Chapter 19, admitted he'd been guilty of defrauding people. He was remorseful over his past actions and now committed to making restitution. From Jesus' words, we understand that Zacchaeus was saved that day and his sin forgiven; the evidence of his salvation was both his public confession and his giving away all his ill-gotten gains. Zacchaeus repented, and his sincerity was evident in his immediate desire to make restitution to those he'd defrauded.

The same holds true for anyone who wants to truly know Christ today. Genuine repentance leads to a desire to redress wrongs. When someone becomes a Christian, he'll have a desire born of deep conviction to do good, and that includes making restoration whenever possible.

The idea of 'whenever possible' is very important to remember. There are some crimes and sins for which there is no adequate restitution. In such instances, a Christian should make some form of restitution that demonstrates repentance, but at the same time, not feel guilty about their inability to make full restitution. Restitution is to be a result of our salvation – it's not a requirement for salvation. If you have received forgiveness of sins through faith in Jesus Christ, then all of your sins are forgiven, whether or not you have or can make restitution for them.

In Amos, Chapter 5, Verse 24, it says: 'Let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream! May our lives be full of God's justice and mercy as we walk humbly with Him!

The drama is from The Bible In Living Sound.

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