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BIBLE ADVENTURES SCRIPT:

A2332 ~ Samaria Besieged by Syria.

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Following Elisha's capture of the Syrian army and the soldiers' safe return to their own country again, Israel enjoyed peace from anymore Syrian raids for some time. But the Syrians respect for Israel's God didn't last very long. This is mainly because King Joram and the Israelite people didn't show any repentance from their idol-worshipping ways, so God permitted King Ben-Hadad of Syria to advance right into the heart of Israel, and besiege its capital city of Samaria.

As a result of Ben-Hadad's siege, supplies of food to the city of Samaria had been cut off and inside the city gates, the Israelite people were starving.

DRAMA - The Bible In Living Sound.

God's ways are amazing; for all the time that everyone inside the city of Samaria was starving, Elisha was living with them too. At the end of Chapter 7 in 2nd Kings, there is a distressing story of two women who were eating their children to stay alive themselves. But one woman hid her child so that he couldn't be eaten, even though she had helped eat the other woman's child the day before. When the king heard this story, he was greatly distressed. He tore his royal robes and the people could see that he was wearing sackcloth underneath.

Wearing sackcloth in Old Testament times was a Jewish sign of great sorrow and repentance. Joram may have worn sackcloth in the hope of gaining God's favour, but we cannot know Joram's motives for wearing sackcloth, as only God knows each person's heart. That's why it's wrong for us to give motives to other people's deeds. But we do have to ask: "Why hadn't Joram consulted Elisha about the food problem much earlier?

King Joram blamed Elisha, God's prophet, for the city's disaster. He knew that Elisha could have miraculously provided food for the people, but he hadn't. Elisha could have blinded the army of Syria a 2nd time, but he hadn't. Joram swore an oath that he would have Elisha's head cut off that very day of hearing the women's tragic story.

Once more, Elisha knew in advance what King Joram was planning to do. The king first sent a messenger to Elisha and the city elders as they were sitting in Elisha's house. Elisha instructed the elders to close the front door to stop the messenger of the king from entering the house. The king himself had been following the messenger and he arrived shortly after.

The king told Elisha that there was no use waiting for the Lord to act any longer, because He wasn't going to help them. The king blamed the Lord for bringing this disaster on Israel in the 1st place. Joram never realised that sin had caused his difficulties. Elisha told the king that he had to wait only one day more before the Lord would provide so much food, that the prices for basic food items like flour and barley would drop dramatically.

Elisha's statement was so unbelievable that the king's personal attendant declared that such a thing was impossible. Elisha told the attendant that he would witness the abundance God provided but not eat any of it. This prediction came true, just as Elisha said. Sometimes our lack of faith or straight-out unbelief keeps God from performing miracles. It did for Jesus in the region of His home town in Nazareth. At times, our lack of faith doesn't prevent the miracle; it only prevents us benefiting from it personally, as happened to the king's attendant.

God often chooses the weak, the lowly and the despised to carry out His plans. This particular time, He used four men with leprosy who'd been staying at the entrance of the city gate, because people with infectious skin diseases weren't allowed inside the city. Thinking that they were about to die anyway and that they had nothing to lose, the four lepers decided to surrender to the Syrians who were besieging the city. But when they reached the Syrian camp, there was no one there.

Although the lepers didn't know it, the Lord had caused the Syrians to hear the sound of a huge army approaching; and they assumed that the Israelites had found some kings from other nations to come to their rescue. The Syrians fled in such haste that they left everything behind in their camp as it was. The lepers entered a tent and they ate their fill of the food sitting there, waiting for them. They found valuables of silver, gold and expensive clothing. So the lepers hid some of these things before coming to their senses. They should share their good fortune with the starving people inside the city too; otherwise divine punishment might overtake them.

When King Joram heard that the Syrian camp had been abandoned, he suspected that this might be a trap set up to break the siege. So he sent out a few men to confirm the report given by the lepers. When the king's men returned and they confirmed that the report was true, the people rushed out through the city gate to plunder the Syrian camp. In doing so, they trampled to death the disbelieving king's attendant as he guarded the gate. In this way, everything that Elisha had prophesied came true, and exactly as he said it would.

God demonstrated once again that Israel's deliverance was a gift of His grace; He was giving the Israelites yet another chance to repent and turn back from their idols to be His obedient people. The Bible tells us that we can know what type of belief a person has by the fruit of that person's life. There was no evidence that Joram had truly repented and set himself to worship God alone. If he had, then the fruit of repentance would be evident in how he managed the siege crisis. In Matthew's Gospel, Chapter 3, John the Baptist told the Jews that they must bring forth fruit worthy of repentance. What are the fruits of repentance?

Repentance involves more than mere sorrow, regret or remorse for a wrong action or past misconduct. It involves a resolve to stop the wrongful conduct and replace it with godly living. In 2nd Corinthians, Chapter 7, the Apostle Paul said: "For the kind of sorrow God wants us to experience leads us away from sin and results in salvation. There's no regret for that kind of sorrow. But worldly sorrow, which lacks repentance, results in spiritual death."

What is the actual fruit required in genuine repentance? If sin has been against another person individually, a correction must be made to that person. Far too many people live with the idea that they can make a general confession at a church service, without ever making things right personally with the victims of their sin.

Wherever it's possible, an attempt at restitution should be made. The guilty person must never think: "Because I cannot repair *all* my sins, I will make no attempt to remedy *any* of them."

In the Scriptures again and again, the love of money and the abuse of sexual relations are reproved, because these are deeply rooted powers in the human heart and are the hardest to transform. Yet they must be transformed, because such desires aren't the fruit of repentance.

John the Baptist gave the crowd three examples of showing the kind of fruit or lifestyle that inevitably grows on a tree of repentance. The crowds were told to give away part of what they have: if you have clothing and food and someone you can help doesn't, share it. But the tax collectors and soldiers were told not to take more than what they are supposed to. Be content with what you have. Genuine repentance produces these kinds of attitudes and actions. The fruit of repentance refuses to exploit anyone to get more money or things.

What is repentance? It's when a person turns away from relying on human traits and works, such as their own, to relying fully on God's mercy for their security, hope and joy. Faith in God, relying constantly on His mercy, and hope in His promises *changes* how we handle our money and possessions. There's one good reason for that, as it says in Luke, Chapter 12 – "Where your treasure is there will your heart be also." You can tell where a person's heart is resting by the way he or she handles personal finances and by the attitude they show toward private possessions. If trust in the mercy of our all-sufficient God is evident, then the person will have the fruits of repentance lifestyle.

If we really trust in God's mercy to save us and help us at all times, then we'll *value* His mercy towards us and others, and we'll *cherish* it. If we really love God's mercy, then we'll live merciful lives. In Micah, Chapter 6, Verse 8b, it says: "This is what the Lord requires of you: to do what is right, to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God."

The drama is from The Bible In Living Sound.

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