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BIBLE ADVENTURES SCRIPT:

A2333 ~ Elisha and King Joash.

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

Elisha, the prophet and servant of God, had travelled throughout Israel for around 50 years (from 848 BC to 797 BC). While doing this, he'd helped people in distress and given guidance to the various schools of prophets and kings of Israel. In 2nd Kings, Chapter 8, Elisha visited Damascus while King Ben-Hadad of Syria was sick. When the King of Syria heard that the great prophet Elisha was in the city, Ben-Hadad sent one of his officials, Hazael, to Elisha to inquire if he would recover from his illness. The king sent Elisha forty camel-loads of the best things of Damascus as a gift.

At the time, Hazael didn't know that Elisha had come to Damascus for the very purpose of making Hazael king of Syria, as per the Lord's earlier instructions to Elisha's predecessor, Elijah. When Hazael asked Elisha about Ben-Hadad's recovery, Elisha told him the Lord had revealed that the king would recover from his illness if nothing else happened to him. Elisha knew that Ben-Hadad would be murdered and at that moment, Elisha was selecting Hazael as both the murderer and Syria's next king.

Elisha must have known that becoming king was something Hazael had thought about, because Elisha stared at him until Hazael felt ashamed. Elisha also knew what Hazael was going to do after he'd become king and the thought of it made Elisha weep. As king of Syria, Hazael was going to be used by God in a most brutal way to punish the Israelites for their disobedience and apostasy to God. When Elisha mentioned this, Hazael protested that he'd never be able to carry out such acts; he was only an official of the king.

But Elisha told Hazael that he soon would be king, and this was all the encouragement Hazael needed. After telling Ben-Hadad he would recover, the very next day Hazael murdered him and succeeded him as king, just as Elisha had indicated. God's selection of Hazael to punish Israel didn't mean that Hazael was justified in murdering Ben-Hadad or later, carrying out the atrocities against the Israelites. Hazael did these things because of the evil desires that were in his heart; yet God used this evil man to further His greater purposes.

As Elisha had now become elderly, he sent a young prophet to Jehu, the commander of the Israelite army, to be the successor of King Joram of Israel. Jehu's task was to destroy all of King Ahab's living relatives as the Lord's punishment on Queen Jezebel, Ahab's wife, for killing the Lord's prophets. Jehu did this, and also killed all the worshippers of Baal in the northern kingdom. However, Hazael king of Syria continued to capture Israelite territory until he'd taken all the land that was east of the Jordan River.

Jehu' son, Jehoahaz, became king after Jehu and the Lord allowed the Syrians to continue to destroy Israel's army because their leaders continued using the policies of Jeroboam, the very first and evil king of the northern kingdom of Israel. Jehoahaz's son, Joash, succeeded his father. It was during Joash's reign that Elisha became sick with a disease, from which he later died. In today's *Bible Adventure,* King Joash decided to visit Elisha one day before he died.

DRAMA - The Bible In Living Sound.

When Elisha died, the Israelites buried him in a tomb. Raiding parties from Moab had started coming in springtime to invade the land. As the local people were burying another man, they saw a party of Moabite raiders in the distance and hastily threw the dead man's body into the tomb of Elisha. When the body touched Elisha's bones, the dead man revived and stood on his feet. This is recorded in 2nd Kings, Chapter 13. Sadly, this period in the history of the northern kingdom of Israel saw much bloodshed.

Elisha's assistant had also been with him for many years. He pondered how life works out differently for different people. The prophet Elijah hadn't tasted death but he'd been taken straight to heaven. Elisha, on the other hand, with his many years of faithful service, had been struck down with a disease, which eventually led to his death. God has a purpose and plan for each human being but these plans aren't all the same.

For some people, they gradually grow older and weaker until they're unable to help themselves do anything at all. But for others, death can come with lightning swiftness and there isn't any time to say goodbye to loved ones.

This is why it's so important to settle the matter of where you want to spend eternity in the here and now. No one can count on being able to live another year or even another day before they die. When the Lord Jesus was arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane late at night, He alone knew that His time on earth was very short. But His disciples didn't grasp this or understand what was going on. They were devastated when Jesus was so cruelly treated and finally nailed to a Roman cross to die. They must have experienced great outrage in their hearts at the injustice of it all. Jesus who had helped so many people with their troubles, was condemned to die by religious leaders and Jewish people alike who hated Him and His message of truth from God.

Was this God’s plan for Jesus’ life? In John’s Gospel, Chapter 10, Jesus said: “The Father loves me because I sacrifice my life so I may take it back again. No one can take my life from me. I sacrifice it voluntarily. For I have the authority to lay it down when I want to and also to take it up again. For this is what my Father has commanded.” Jesus had the power over death and proved this when He miraculously raised Lazarus from the grave after being dead for four days.

At the time, Jesus wept at Lazarus’ tomb, because He knew that death was not part of God's original plan. Humanity was not meant to grow old, suffer with disease or die. But because of the sin of Adam and Eve, sin entered the human race, the death of human bodies followed it. We all have inherited this physical death from our sinful parents. Jesus also wept, because it broke His heart that death caused so much pain. But standing there at Lazarus' tomb, Jesus also delivered these hope-filled words: "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live." Death on earth is not the end for any person. And the Resurrection of Jesus Christ proves it.

In the matter of Jesus’ death, God was fully in charge. The religious leaders thought that they were in charge. And so did Pilate, Herod and the Roman executioners too. But really, God was in charge. How do we know this? When Jesus was on trial before Pilate, Pilate said to Jesus: “Do you not know that I have power to crucify You and power to release You?” Jesus replied: “You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from above.”

Seven hundred years before Jesus’ trial, the prophet Isaiah wrote regarding Jesus: "He is despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with griefs ... Surely He has borne our grief and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed."

Was this suffering part of God's plan for Jesus? God's love for people is beyond belief or imagination. God's plan for Jesus to die for all the sins of all people was so that people could be reconciled back to a fellowship relationship with Himself and His Father God. God's love cared so deeply for sinful humans, that while we were all still sinners, Christ died for us. God suffered more deeply than anyone could ever imagine when His Son died for the sins of the world. Some people think of the cross as defeat and the resurrection as victory. But the cross was the victory, and the bodily resurrection of Jesus the declaration of that victory.

In recent years, there've been attempts to conceal these truths about God and the part Jesus Christ played in bringing sinners back to walking daily with Him. This happened when attempts were made to fuse all the world religions together into a single faith. But Christianity isn't one religion among many others; the Christian faith is unique and unparalleled. No other world faith can claim that its founder was God Himself coming to earth in human form as Jesus Christ our Saviour did. We claim such a truth for sinless Christ alone. In Colossians, Chapter 1, it says: Christ is supreme – "He existed before anything else and he holds all creation together."

When trying to mix all religions together didn't work, another plan was to teach all religions as being of equal value. Around the world, there've been services where representatives of all the major faiths have taken part. But adding in Christianity to this is a betrayal of the Christian faith and the Lord Jesus Himself. In the Bible book, The Acts of the Apostles, in Chapter 4, Peter addressed the crowd, "There is salvation in no one else! God has given no other name under heaven by which we must be saved." Jesus Himself said in John's Gospel, Chapter 14: "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me."

No one who puts their faith in Jesus is excluded from the Kingdom of God. The best that the world has learnt about God is centred in the person of the Lord Jesus. He is not only the best the world has ever seen but the best it will ever see. Those who love Jesus want to share Him with all those who will listen. To have this wonderful knowledge about Him and not share it with others is a failure to love our neighbours as we should. Jesus commanded His people to go into all the world and preach the Gospel because of people's great needs. A man who travelled to different countries in his studies of different world religions said: "People in all parts of the world are crying out for the release of the sense of guilt and for a need to feel divine forgiveness." Only Jesus can do that.

Some people also want to ask what difference does it make whether Jesus was raised from the dead or not? In 1st Corinthians, Chapter 15, the Apostle Paul says: "If Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith … And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins." Our sins were atoned for on the cross because God raised Christ from the dead.

More than that, God was so pleased with Jesus' sacrifice for the world that in Philippians, Chapter 2, it says: "Jesus humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross. Therefore, God elevated him to the place of highest honour and gave him the name above all other names, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Jesus is now King of kings and Lord of lords, who sits at God our Father's right hand until the time comes for Him to take up rulership of the whole earth.

We can trust ourselves to God, knowing that He will guide and take care of us if we ask Jesus to take away all of our sins. Don't let another day slip by without speaking to Jesus about this. Because Jesus lives, we will live in eternity with Him too, when our life on earth is done.

The drama is from The Bible In Living Sound.

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