BIBLE RADIO PRODUCTIONS

www.bibleradio.org.au

BIBLE ADVENTURES SCRIPT:

A2341 ~ Jeremiah the Prophet.

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

Jeremiah served as one of God's important prophets during the rule of the last five kings of Judah. These kings were Josiah, Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin and Zedekiah. Jeremiah was the son of the priest, Hilkiah, who lived in a small town just north of Jerusalem. He was set apart by God before his birth to take a message to the nations, urging from people everywhere a change of heart that turned to worshipping and honouring the one true God. Jeremiah's message from those days still applies to the world today. God began grooming Jeremiah for his prophetic role from his childhood days of training for holy service in the priesthood.

God gave Jeremiah an overview of his prophetic ministry, as recorded in Chapter 1 of his book, Jeremiah. God said: "Behold, I have put My words in your mouth. See, I have this day set you over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out and to pull down, to destroy and to throw down, to build and to plant." This meant that God had appointed Jeremiah to proclaim the destruction and building of nations that would eventually lead to the Kingdom of God coming to earth through God's Son, Jesus Christ. Jeremiah's prophetic ministry extended for more than 40 years, from 626 BC to 585 BC, during which time he wrote two books: Jeremiah and Lamentations. Other prophets who also lived during the time of Jeremiah included Zephaniah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Daniel and Ezekiel.

Following the death of good King Josiah from battle wounds, the people of Judah made his 4th son, Jehoahaz, king but he reigned for only three months. Jehoahaz did evil in the Lord's sight before being captured in the north of Israel by Neco, the king of Egypt. He was carried off to Egypt where he died, as predicted by Jeremiah. Neco then placed Josiah's 2nd son on the throne of Judah and changed his name to 'Jehoiakim'. But Jehoiakim also continued the evils that his brother had begun in his brief reign and although the prophet Jeremiah severely condemned him for this, he refused to listen. As Neco now controlled Judah, this meant that Judah had to pay a large tribute to Egypt, which Jehoiakim paid by taxing the people heavily.

DRAMA - The Bible In Living Sound.

Not even God's priests were being faithful to God in their worship practices. Jeremiah continually urged the kings of Judah and the surrounding nations, including Egypt, not to listen to their evil advisers. Instead, he said they should submit to Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian king, who was going to conquer the whole region. Otherwise, he warned, these nations would suffer defeat and their people would be killed or taken into exile for 70 years. As a result of his messages, Jeremiah wasn't popular with anyone; for even his relatives plotted against him. God further told Jeremiah not to marry because of the terrible things that were yet to happen to the children of Jerusalem.

Judah remained subject to Neco, king of Egypt, for only a few years. Early in Jehoiakim's reign, the Babylonians decisively defeated the Egyptians in 605 BC. Soon after, Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, invaded Judah and drove out the Egyptians. Judah then became subject to Babylon. Some of the young nobility of Judah (such as Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego) were taken to Babylon at the time. Nebuchadnezzar also took some of the treasures from God's Temple and put them in his own palace.

After three years under Babylonian rule, Jehoiakim rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar, but Jeremiah prophesied that the Lord would one day bring Nebuchadnezzar back to destroy Jerusalem and the Temple of God. In response, the priests and court prophets were angry and offended to hear this and wanted Jeremiah to be put to death. However, the people and their leaders reminded the religious priests about Micah's the prophet's prophecy: by honouring the Lord, Hezekiah had stopped a disaster from coming that Micah had previously prophesied about.

One of the leaders supported Jeremiah and saved him from death. However, the officials wouldn't allow him to enter the Temple anymore. So the Lord told Jeremiah to get a man called Baruch to write down all the things that He told Jeremiah and for Baruch to then read these words out to the people when they gathered in the temple. When Baruch read them out, one of the leaders went and reported to the officials what he was reading. So the officials sent for Baruch and asked him to read the scroll to them. They were alarmed when they heard it and they went to tell the king. But first, they warned Baruch and Jeremiah to go and hide.

King Jehoiakim wanted to hear what was written on the scroll. In Jeremiah, Chapter 36, it says that the king was sitting in his winter house, and when he heard a section of the scroll, he would then cut it off and throw it into the fire. Some of his officials begged him not to do so, but he kept doing so until the whole scroll was completely destroyed. He then ordered the officials to go and arrest Jeremiah and Baruch, but by now, the Lord had hidden them. The Lord then told Jeremiah to get Baruch and rewrite everything down again on a new scroll. But this time, God also said for Baruch to tell Jehoiakim that because he and his officials took no notice of what was written on the 1st scroll, Jehoiakim would now have no descendants who would sit on the throne of David after him.

Nebuchadnezzar's army now returned, as Jeremiah had said it would. Jehoiakim was captured and before being taken to Babylon, he died in the siege of Jerusalem and his body dragged out of the city and left unburied, as Jeremiah had also predicted would happen. Jehoiakim's son, Jehoiachin ruled for only three months as well. When the city of Jerusalem fell in 597 BC, Nebuchadnezzar violently seized goods from Jerusalem and the Temple of God. He also took back to Babylon with him Jehoiachin, his court and other prominent citizens (including the prophet Ezekiel and Mordecai, who was the cousin of Esther, the future queen of the Persian Empire).

Jehoiachin was released after spending 37 years in a Babylonian prison and he remained in Babylon for the rest of his life. His father's brother, Zedekiah, was appointed king by Nebuchadnezzar in Jehoiachin's place, but the exiles in Babylon continued to consider Jehoiachin as their only rightful ruler. Jehoiachin was the last of the kings of Judah from David's family line and an ancestor of Jesus Christ. His grandson, Zerubbabel, became governor of Judah after the exile in Babylon was ended by the Persian ruler Cyrus. However, David's descendants never again became kings of Judah or of Israel, until Christ Jesus was born on earth.

Zedekiah reigned for 11 years, from 597 BC to 586 BC. Jeremiah told Zedekiah not to listen to his advisors but instead, to submit to Nebuchadnezzar, if he wanted to remain in the land. Jeremiah also sent the same message in the Lord's name, to the kings of neighbouring nations. At that time, the Lord showed Jeremiah a vision of two baskets of figs. He said that the good figs represented the exiles in Babylon, who God would watch over. The bad figs represented Zedekiah, those people still left in Jerusalem and those who'd fled to Egypt, for the Lord would destroy them for their disobedience in not submitting to His directives and discipline.

Sadly, King Zedekiah didn't listen to Jeremiah's warnings either and he rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar and made an alliance with the new king of Egypt. Nebuchadnezzar in turn, defeated the Egyptians and in the 9th year of Zedekiah's reign, Nebuchadnezzar's army again attacked Jerusalem and kept it under siege for about 19 months. Zedekiah sent Pashhur the priest, the same priest who had once beaten Jeremiah for his discouraging prophecies earlier, to go to Jeremiah, asking him to pray to the Lord for them. Zedekiah hoped that God would make the Babylonians leave.

However, the Lord replied that the Babylonians would capture the city, burn it down and kill its inhabitants. The army would capture Zedekiah himself and he would be taken to Babylon and die there in peace. The Lord also told them that whoever surrendered to the Babylonians would live, but all who stayed in the city would die.

And as God had said, the Babylonian army broke through the wall of Jerusalem and stripped the Temple of its valuables; then they burned it down in 586 BC. Zedekiah and his family, with their officials, escaped through a passage between the walls in the king's garden out of the city, but the army caught up with them in the plains of Jericho. Nebuchadnezzar judged them at a city in the north of Israel, where Zedekiah's sons and officials were killed in front of Zedekiah, and then he himself was blinded and taken to Babylon with many others.

Nebuchadnezzar's army destroyed the city wall and the Temple, together with the houses of the most important citizens. Judah now became a Babylonian province, which put an end to the independent kingdom of Judah. This brief overview of the history of those 20 turbulent years in the Middle East shows how God eventually exiled His chosen people and punished their idolatry and disobedience to Him for so many years beforehand.

What can we learn from all this history? God's plan for sending a Saviour to pay for the sins of all the people of the world was still on track, even though His own chosen people had failed to play their part in telling the world about Him. It also shows that God doesn't overlook sin; not then, not now, not ever. When each person stands before God at Judgment Day, no excuses will be accepted for not loving Him or thanking and worshipping Him for all the good things that He's done for each one of us. If you're trying to live your life without any input from God, you're on a broad road that will lead to destruction when God's final judgment on all people will one day take place.

But it's not too late yet for you to start calling on the Lord Jesus in faith to save your invisible soul. Spiritual things are invisible and we read the Bible to learn more about them. The gravity of a person's sin, when it weighs down on them, will be the start of calling out to God in despair for His mercy and forgiveness to be extended to them. For in Joel, Chapter 2, Verse 32, it says: "Whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

The drama is from The Bible In Living Sound.

< END OF SCRIPT >