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BIBLE ADVENTURES SCRIPT:

A2343 ~ Nebuchadnezzar's Dream.

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

The dominant world power at the turn of the 6th Century BC was Babylonia, and its ruler was King Nebuchadnezzar. He'd conquered all the nations about him and because the people of Judah had been so difficult for him to deal with, he'd sent his army to destroy Jerusalem and the Temple of God by burning them down. Three groups of prisoners were taken from Judah to Babylon. Among the 1st group to be taken in 605 BC, were four young royal men by the names of Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah.

In Babylon, the four men were tested in a number of ways by a court official in charge of the prisoners, and they were selected to do further studies. The court official changed the names of the four men to Babylonian names of Belteshazzar, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. While the latter three men are better known by their Babylonian names, Daniel's soon reverted back to being called 'Daniel'. He had been given by God a special gift of understanding and interpreting people's visions and dreams.

From the beginning of their stay in the king’s palace, the four men resolved to follow the Jewish dietary laws they’d grown up with. Daniel respectfully requested that the official allow them to bypass the king’s rich food and drink, to only eat vegetables and have water to drink. They were tested on this diet for 10 days and by God’s kindness, the four men looked better physically than any of those eating at the king’s table. So their food arrangement remained in place.

Soon after the four men had settled into their training in the king’s palace, King Nebuchadnezzar had a dream one night, which disturbed him greatly, but in the morning, he couldn’t remember all the details of it. He called for his wise men and counsellors, whom he also suspected of making things up just to reassure him. So he asked his wise men to tell him what he dreamed and then to interpret it so he could understand it. But the wise men said that this was impossible for them to know another person’s dreams. The king became impatient and angry with his wise men and ordered them all to prison, where they would soon be executed.

Now Daniel and his three friends weren't with the rest of the wise men when this happened. In an act of jealousy and spite, the head wise man made sure that the four men hadn't been informed that the king wanted to see all his wise men and counsellors. When Daniel heard about the wise men's imprisonment, he asked to be taken to the king. He asked the king for time to pray to his God, the God of heaven, and that he would tell the king his dream and its interpretation. With the king's permission granted, Daniel went to his quarters, and he and his friends prayed that God would reveal the dream to them. They had real trust that God would answer them without delay.

During the night, the Lord revealed the dream to Daniel in a vision. Daniel then praised the LORD, the God of heaven, for answering their prayers. In the morning, Daniel went to the chief of the guards and told him not to kill all the king's advisors. Then he was taken before the king. He told Nebuchadnezzar that God had revealed his dream to him, and he gave all the glory to the LORD.

DRAMA - The Bible In Living Sound.

The King Nebuchadnezzar we're speaking about in this *Bible Adventure* was King Nebuchadnezzar II. The 1st king Nebuchadnezzar had lived and died over 100 years before King David of Israel, and the 3rd and 4th king Nebuchadnezzars only had very short reigns around 520 BC and were considered imposters by some historians. King Darius I defeated both of them. The Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel's time was the greatest of the Babylonian kings. He reigned for 43 years and died an old man in the city of Babylon.

Nebuchadnezzar started having dreams and visions in the 2nd year of his reign. But he wasn't the only one receiving messages from God. A younger prisoner named Ezekiel, who came from a priestly family, had been deported to Babylon in the 2nd group of prisoners, in 597 BC. At that time, Jerusalem hadn't yet been destroyed and Jeremiah the prophet was still speaking on God's behalf to the people still living there in Judah. Ezekiel received his call to be a prophet 5 years after arriving in Babylon, and when he had turned 30. Ezekiel had been called to serve as God's prophet to the exiles from Judah who were living in Babylonia. Ezekiel was married and living among other Jewish exiles south of the capital Babylon.

The Bible book of *Ezekiel* records God's appointment of Ezekiel to be His prophet. It then records Ezekiel's prophecies of the LORD's judgment on Judah and Jerusalem for their unfaithfulness to Him as their God. It also tells of the LORD's judgment on Israel's enemies for their wrongdoing as well, and especially in relation to Israel. In the book of *Ezekiel*, the LORD clearly states that each person is responsible for his or her own behaviour before God.

The book emphasises Israel's role as a priestly nation. God frequently stated that His dealings with Israel, both in blessing and in judgment, were so that both they and the surrounding nations would know that He was the Sovereign LORD and should honour Him accordingly.

About a week after Ezekiel's 1st vision from God that called him to be God's prophet, the LORD told Ezekiel that he was being appointed to be a watchman over the Israelites living in exile. Ezekiel must pass onto them God's warnings to do what was right. If Ezekiel failed to warn them, then he would be responsible if they died because of their sins. But if they didn't listen to his warnings, then they themselves would bear the blame of their own sins.

Later on, the LORD told Ezekiel that the exiles liked to go and listen to what he had to say, but they wouldn't obey his messages. To them, Ezekiel was just like an entertainer. However, they soon found out that Ezekiel was a true prophet of God and that what he said came true. God had told Ezekiel to stay home and be quiet until he received the message that he was to speak. His silence was a sign to the people that God was angry with them for rejecting His Word.

It's always a serious matter to be a watchman over the destiny of precious souls. The watchman must be alert to every opportunity and must not be afraid to sound the alarm. False watchmen are not faithful and will have much to answer for on God's Judgment Day of all people in this world. The Apostle Paul, for one, was a faithful watchman over the Gentiles. He was able to say, in Acts, Chapter 20, "I am innocent of the blood of all men, for I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God."

Ezekiel knew that he'd been called to a difficult task, at a difficult time and to a difficult people. Yet he obeyed the Lord in what he did. Little did he know the price that he would pay to be God's watchman, but he remained faithful in doing it.

In Chapter 4 of his book, Ezekiel began his public ministry with four acted-out sermons that declared God's judgment against Jerusalem. First, he acted as though he was at war to demonstrate a siege of the city. Then he lay bound for part of 390 days on his left side and then 40 days on his right side, to show how many years both Israel and Judah had sinned against God. How long-suffering God had been during those years and how the people's faithlessness to Him broke His heart.

During those 14 months and 10 days, Ezekiel had to ration his food and water just like the people of Jerusalem were doing. Although he wasn't serving as a priest, Ezekiel still obeyed the priestly code. No doubt the people watched him day after day and told others about his strange behaviour, which helped to spread Ezekiel's message. His 4th sign involved shaving his head and face, which was a real sacrifice for a Jew. The shaved hair represented the people in Jerusalem who faced three destinies: either death by famine, death by sword or dispersion among the pagan nations. But a believing remnant would be protected and saved by the LORD Himself.

Why was God so angry with His people? They'd rebelled against His law, defiled His temple and done more disgusting, vile things than the heathen nations had done around them. They didn't glorify the LORD but used all His blessings to promote their sin. They'd also given themselves over to the worship of idols. False prophets claimed that people like Ezekiel and Jeremiah were always predicting doom and gloom and that their predictions would never happen. But God's Word never fails and it's always fulfilled on time.

In Chapter 18 of *Ezekiel*, the Jewish people were accusing God of being unfair. If the fathers did the sinning, why should their children bear the suffering? Is not God unjust when He punishes the children for their fathers' sins? But God doesn't do that; nor does He take pleasure in sending judgment. He would gladly forgive sinners if they would only repent and turn to Him. God judges individuals, regardless of what their fathers have done. You cannot claim your father's righteousness as your own before God, nor can you be punished for your father's sin as though yours before God either. But you might be punished **by** your father's sin, and this is another matter.

Today, a person's supreme need is for a new heart and a new spirit of God that reconciles them to their Heavenly Father, and this can only come through having faith in Christ's death and resurrection on their behalf. 'Turn and live' is God's loving call to sinners today. It's a matter not of fairness, but one of grace. In Chapter 24, Ezekiel told the exiles in the morning that his wife would die, just as he'd told them for years that their beloved city Jerusalem would be destroyed, and that evening, his words continued to come true. The message was that if the people had wanted to mourn, they should have mourned over their sins and not over the loss of their city and temple. But now it was too late. They should have heeded the words from Isaiah, Chapter 55: "Seek the Lord while He may be found."

From chapters 25 to 40, Ezekiel was given prophecies of what would happen in the future for the nations of the region. God's Word says that God's people will have enemies until the very establishment of Christ's kingdom on earth. In chapters 38 and 39, there's a prophecy for later times on earth when a group of Gentile, or non-Jewish, nations will attack Israel while she's at peace in her land. God will defeat the invaders with an earthquake, a storm and the confusion of the enemy, so that the Gentiles will start to kill one another. God does this so that all nations will know that He alone is the Lord and that His name is holy. Israel will also know then that God is their one and only God.

From Chapter 40 onwards in his book, Ezekiel looks to the future. The exiles had to accept that Jerusalem and the Temple of God had been destroyed, and their land was now overrun by non-Jewish people. But Ezekiel did what God's people must always do in times of trial: he looked ahead to the glorious future that God has planned for His beloved redeemed people. One day, the scattered people of God's precious nation would be regathered and cleansed, with the land restored to beauty and fruitfulness.

For Christians, heaven isn't simply a destination; it's a motivation to do what's right, even when no one else is. Keeping your thoughts on heaven should make a difference in your life today, as you're continually reminded of the joy you will experience there, seeing your Saviour, Jesus Christ. In Revelation, Chapter 21, verses 6b and 7, God says: "To all who are thirsty I will give freely from the springs of the water of life. All who are victorious will inherit all these blessings and I will be their God and they will be my children."

The drama is from The Bible In Living Sound.

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