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BIBLE ADVENTURES SCRIPT:

A2278 ~ Saul Pursues David.

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

The land of Israel was in turmoil, as its king, Saul, spent much of his time chasing his own son-in-law, David, through the forests, caves and mountains of Israel, with plans to kill him. Although Saul knew that God had appointed David to be his successor, he wanted it to be his son Jonathan instead.

After following Gad the prophet's directions, David and his team of 600 fighters were back in the land of Judah, David's own tribe in Israel. Not far from where he'd stayed before in the cave of Adullam was a walled city called Keilah. Recorded in the book of 1st Samuel, Chapter 23, in the Bible, David heard that the Philistines were attacking Keilah and wondered if he should go to its defence.

David enquired of the Lord if he should go and God told him to do so. But David's men expressed their fear about undertaking such a risky battle. David again asked God what the right thing was to do, and God assured David that He would give the Philistines into David's hand. With this divine assurance, David's men agreed to fight. At the battle's end, God gave David and his men a great victory and enabled them to save the people of Keilah from the Philistines.

David's victory soon came to the ears of King Saul and Saul decided to trap David and his men inside Keilah, before destroying the Keilah people along with David. David consulted the Lord and asked if he should stay or go. God said not to stay in Keilah. Although the people of Keilah were no doubt grateful to David for their recent battle victory, they weren't grateful enough to protect him from Saul, as surely they'd heard what Saul had done to the priests of Nob for assisting David!

So David and his men left Keilah for the Desert of Ziph, which was southeast of Keilah and closer to the Dead Sea. In that forested yet wilderness area, there were many inaccessible places that provided natural protection for David and his men to hide in. When Saul heard that David had moved on, he called off his murderous plan of destruction for Keilah.

Sensing that David was getting discouraged by the repeated narrow escapes he'd had from King Saul, Jonathan visited David and helped him to remain strong in his trust of God. Jonathan assured David that David would be the next king and that he himself would take 2nd place. Although Biblical history shows that Jonathan never got to be a great leader, he was still a great God-fearing man: his greatness lay in his humility, loyalty and love. As these two friends parted for the last time, they renewed their covenant pledge that they'd made to each other earlier: they would look after each other's families and remain always loyal friends to each other. Then Jonathan went home and continued in his father's service while David remained in the wilderness of Ziph.

Before too long, a delegation of the local Ziph people visited King Saul at his palace and betrayed David's hiding places. They obviously feared Saul's vengeance on them much more than they did David's blessing and protection.

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At this time in David's life, David wrote Psalm 54. In this psalm, David pleads for God's deliverance from ruthless men before affirming that God is his helper and sustainer. God was leading David through difficult trials because God was preparing him for leadership; and this required God teaching David to put his trust in God, and not in men.

God intends that all His children experience trials and testings of various types in this life. Our times of trouble will be different from David's, but they'll be exactly what we need to prepare us for the work God has given us to do. God knows each of our weak points that need to be strengthened through Him, and through tough times, God trains and disciplines us for our good.

With the help of the people of Ziph, Saul began to close in on David and his men. Soon, David was on one side of a rocky mountain while Saul was on the other. It seemed that this time, David would surely be captured and killed. But no, God had another plan. Word came to Saul that some Philistines were attacking his territory. So he stopped chasing David and went off in a hurry after the Philistines instead. God has many ways to deliver His children in the times of trouble and we can trust that He will act on our behalf in the right way and at the right time; but we need to put our trust solely in Him.

Persecution has been a way of life for many devout believers in God and the Lord Jesus Christ through the centuries. These days, many believers still flee from place to place so that they can save their and their families' lives while continuing to spread the Gospel of Christ wherever they go. But is persecution getting worse? According to historians, more Christians were martyred in the 20th Century than in all the centuries since Christ's death put together. While that is an actual count, the proportion of believers killed in earlier times would have been larger than in recent times because the number of people living on earth was smaller. However, since the start of the 21st Century, there seems to be a considerable increase in the persecution and martyrdom again in the world and especially against those who proclaim Christ as their Lord and Saviour.

Media coverage on what's happening with different parts of the world often make it seem that the problem of persecuting Christians is growing. We in the West would like to see martyrdom stopped. But those enduring persecution in those places don't view it in the same way. Rather, they cry, "Purify us, Lord. Make us strong. Help us spread your Gospel." We need to share in their prayer because the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church. Persecution makes the church grow. When Christian missionaries working in China were expelled by the Communist Government in 1953, there were about 700,000 Chinese Christians in the country. But by the end of the same century only 50 years later, there was estimated to be 50 million Christians! The Christian churches that the missionaries left behind had become an ever-increasing homegrown movement.

Was David fearful for his life as he moved from one wilderness place to another to hide from Saul? At first he seemed to be. In Psalm 143, he wrote: "For the glory of your name, O LORD, preserve my life. Because of your faithfulness, bring me out of this distress." But when Jonathan visited David in the wilderness of Ziph to encourage him, Jonathan said: "Do not fear, for the hand of Saul my father shall not find you. You shall be king over Israel ... Even my father knows that." And David was strengthened in this time of suffering.

God doesn't always spare the lives of His faithful believers in the face of opposition but He calls them home to be with Him. A missionary named Wata was working with young people in southern Ethiopia when the Communists took over in 1974. Word came to him that the authorities had read Wata's report on his work with Christian youth and that they'd decided to execute Wata for what he had written about God. The commandant told Wata on his arrest that the only way that he could overturn his death sentence was to deny being a Christian believer.

Wata told him: "If they execute me, I will be immediately with the Lord." The commandant replied: "That's exactly what I expected you to say."

While Wata awaited execution in prison, the Lord Jesus gave him songs to sing that he'd never heard before. Along with his fellow prisoners, Wata sang praises to God. The guards tried to silence them, but with the threat of execution hanging over them, why should they keep quiet? Seven men came to Christ in that prison and they all sang songs of praise to God together.

One guard took delight in mocking the tunes they sang. One night, he patted his revolver and promised them, "Tomorrow morning you won't be in the land of the living." During the night, a huge hailstorm hit the town, stripping roofs off buildings and including the one where the mocking prison guard was sleeping. The next morning, the guard was pushed by the commandant into the cell where the believers were.

People in the background yelled: "We told this man to leave the believers alone, but he refused, and so God has sent this terrible punishment on our town and prison. He deserves to be given some of his own medicine!" After the guard was finally released, he told the believers: "I know that the Lord was with you. I know the way that I should have treated you, but Satan persuaded me otherwise. Please forgive me." The prisoners did and several more men in the prison came to Christ. Sometime later, Wata escaped death by being released from prison to work for the Lord again.

The Bible says that persecution of believers in Christ won't end until the Lord Jesus returns to earth and stands on the Mount of Olives. Then Jesus will defeat by His words alone, all Israel's enemies that will have lined up to war against and destroy all the Jews. But before this happens, and 7 years earlier at least, the Lord Jesus will come on the clouds to call out His faithful followers from the earth, both those who've been in their graves for thousands of years and those still living on the earth.

These faithful followers will be given glorified bodies and return with Jesus to heaven. The first event of raptured believers will be to participate in a judgment by God – the Judgment of the Just. This judgment of works is not to determine the believers' eternal destiny, but to determine the degrees of reward each believer is to receive.

The second event that will follow is the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. This feast celebrates the spiritual marriage of Christ's Bride, the Church, to her Saviour, as listed in Revelation, Chapter 19. Raptured believers will share this wonderful celebration, saying "Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear. [Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.] Then the angel said to me, 'Write: 'Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!' "

After this, the purified Church will prepare to follow Jesus, the King of Kings, into the Battle of Armageddon back on the earth, at the conclusion of a 7-year Tribulation period. This event is known as the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. The Church and angelic forces will follow the King of Kings for His second coming, but only Jesus Himself will engage in battle and with His Word of truth alone, will defeat all the nations in siege against Jerusalem, His chosen city.

The 7 years of Tribulation are part of God's wrath on an unbelieving world and not for those who are saved by the end of the Age of Grace through the shed blood of the risen Lord Jesus. With this hope, believers are called to be about the Lord's work until He comes. Colossians, Chapter 3, Verse 4, states, "When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory."

The drama is from The Bible In Living Sound.

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