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BIBLE ADVENTURES SCRIPT:

A1835 ~ Aaron's Staff Blossoms.

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

While the Israelites wandered around in the wilderness waiting to enter the Promised Land, Canaan, they frequently complained about their leaders Moses and Aaron. A further great sin they committed was then rebellion against their leaders and God Himself. After punishment for Korah's rebellion in the camp, which included Korah inciting 250 community leaders to do the work of God's appointed priests without any authorisation, God confirmed that all Israelite priests were to be chosen only from Aaron's descendants.

As Aaron was now an old man, God took away any doubt about who would take Aaron's place as high priest among the Israelites.

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In Numbers Chapter 17, God confirmed the priesthood led by Aaron. God told the heads of the tribes of Jacob to bring a rod with their name on it and give it to Moses. As there were only 12 rods and one of them represented Aaron of the tribe of Levi, the Scripture doesn't make clear who was considered the leader of the tribe of Joseph. But God wasn't about to reject Aaron or strip him from his intercessory role for the Israelites. As High Priest, Aaron was the one that represented people before God.

The 12 rods Moses collected from the 12 tribal leaders were old, dead pieces of wood; they weren't freshly cut shoots. If one of them sprouted, it would be an unexpected miracle and that's what God intended. Moses took the rods into the Most Holy Place in front of the Ark of Testimony. God Himself predicted that the rod belonging to God's chosen one would sprout leaves and blossom overnight. In this way, God wanted to settle for all time which people were going to be the priests of Israel. This was important, as Aaron was old and God didn't want any dispute over who would be his successor when he died.

The next day, the people gathered to see what the results were. Moses held up the rod of Aaron, which had sprouted overnight, so that the people knew that God had spoken. God said that Aaron's rod would be a sign that would end the Israelites' grumbling, and so they didn't die. They knew that if they came anywhere near the tent of meeting they would die. How then would they approach the Lord? Their high priest would be a mediator who could approach the Lord for them. They had needed a mediator in past times of trouble and Moses and Aaron had done that for them. God was setting a pattern for the eternal High Priest and mediator, Jesus Christ, who would open the way for each believer in Himself to approach the very throne of God.

Aaron's rod was kept in the Most Holy Place near the Ark of the Testimony. With it were a jar of manna and the stone tablets containing the 10 Commandments. Although the Bible was written over a 1,600-year period by 40 different writers from all walks of life, the texts are very integrated. This same record from Numbers, Chapter 17, is also written in Hebrews, Chapter 9. Did the writers believe that the Old Testament was God's truth? Of course they did!

Why did the Israelites at long last become afraid of God? They'd seen earthquakes, fire and plague and hadn't been afraid. But it required the silent sprouting of a dead stick to make them see the great but gracious power of Almighty God. Jesus was also raised from death to life so that we might not die eternally.

The priesthood was a gift to the Israelites and the priests themselves. They were given the great privilege of being allowed to draw close to God and be His mediators for the people. When the patriarch Jacob was on his deathbed, he gave prophecies of what would happen to his sons' tribes. When he spoke of Levi, Jacob said that 'The Lord was his inheritance'. This tribe wasn't to receive any allotment of land in Canaan when the people arrived there. Instead, the Levites were given the honoured position of representing the other tribes before the Lord, the right to bear the Ark of the Covenant as well as responsibility for caring for the holy articles of the Tabernacle. From within the tribe of Levi, God appointed Aaron's family to be the priests privileged to offer the sacrifices on behalf of the people. Both priests and Levites were to be financially supported by the tithes of the people, thus enabling them to give their full time to ministering before the Lord.

But along with the privileges of the Levites and priests, came a heavy responsibility of conducting worship and caring for the Tabernacle, with any failure or carelessness bringing a possible death sentence in God's presence.

In Numbers, chapters 18 and 19, God gave rules for the Israelites to follow so that they would do everything correctly before God through the priests. All the Israelites were to give a tenth of their income and produce to the Lord in support of the Levites. Then the Levites in turn were to give a tenth of these things in support of the priests. Just as the Levites had no land promised to them, neither do Christians have any earthly promised land. However, we do have a future inheritance with Christ in heaven.

Some church people today strongly resist giving a set amount of a tenth of their income to the Lord in response that everything that they own has ultimately come from Him. The principle of the tithe was known in Abraham's time but in Leviticus, Chapter 27, the law of the tithe was given. The tithe was the basic minimum amount that the Israelites had to contribute regularly to the Lord for the maintenance of the Tabernacle and support for the Levites. As well, they were required to offer to the Lord the first fruits of their animals and produce. Some gave more than was required to show their devotion to the Lord.

So, should Christians tithe? Certainly, at least a tenth by principle and as the Holy Spirit confirms to each individual! While Christian farmers don't bring animals and grain to the church, they often give such value in money. Some farmers who plough the fields have one area set aside as belonging to the Lord. The value of whatever is grown there during the year is given as a tithe to the Lord. However, for Christians, the giving of a tithe is not a matter of law but a matter of the heart. Because of what Christ has done for us and because the Holy Spirit lives within us, a higher level of consecration can be practiced by us than what was expected of the Israelites in Moses' time.

Christians need to regard everything they possess as already belonging to the Lord. Can we think of our possessions in this way? We tend to give a tenth to the Lord and think that we've done Him a favour! Rather, we need to live with the constant realisation that we, and everything we have, belongs to the Lord and is purified by the blood of Christ. If we maintain this attitude, then giving our tithes will be a joy and not a burden when done unwillingly. In 2 Corinthians, Chapter 9, it says: "So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver."

What can we learn about God and spiritual leadership from God's choice of Aaron? It's obvious that God isn't fickle. He isn't always changing His mind. Aaron had served God alongside Moses since they went to Egypt together almost 40 years earlier to see the Pharaoh or king to ask for the Israelite slaves to be allowed to go into the wilderness to sacrifice to Him. In Malachi, Chapter 3, the Lord of Hosts says: "For I am the Lord. I do not change."

What character traits does a spiritual leader need to have in their calling to serve the Lord? Such a person needs to be careful about abiding in Christ constantly so their lifestyle and character in turn reflect the Lord Himself. Our character reflects our inner thought and emotional life, whether it be a sinful nature influenced by the world or a divine nature influenced by the Holy Spirit. A person's character develops over time as the person goes through life's experiences and at times, during trials and troubles. When we're weak, we turn to God and He becomes our strength.

What can we expect as being good character? Integrity, self-discipline and a good example for others to follow; not stubborn or arrogant or quarrelsome; free from the love of money, daily confession of sins and pursuit of holiness, focusing on one's thoughts of heaven and faith in God. There's a saying that character isn't made in a crisis; it's only revealed. If you want to know how godly your church leaders are, just watch to see what they do when they're under pressure. Character shows godly principles in every situation and towards all people. The Christian worker must show the same respect for a non-believing boss at work. We need to understand that at times, the development of a believer's character may come at great financial, emotional or physical cost.

But more than good character, a spiritual leader needs a loving heart to serve and shepherd the people God has appointed under their spiritual care. To do this well, their working knowledge of the Bible is very important. So is their willingness to give of their time to help those hurting in some way.

The Lord Jesus came to this earth to be a servant and shepherd of God's people by protecting and guiding them. He had a heart full of love, not judgment, and we believers in Him must also love one another. It's a sign of a person's transformation from a selfish way of life as governed by the old sinful nature to the new spiritual birth given by the Holy Spirit. This new life is ours when we give over control of our lives to Jesus Christ because we need His forgiveness and trust Him to care for us forevermore.

In Mark, Chapter 13, the Lord Jesus told a parable about a master absent from home and his servants waiting for him to return so that they could open the door immediately when he knocked. Jesus went away into heaven and He left His church under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. He's given each of us a special task and the spiritual gifts to undertake them. As well we're to continually pray, watch and witness to others by His grace and power. Jesus told all his servants to watch for His return, because He would come at an unexpected time.

What will He find each of us doing? We mustn't say to ourselves that we can put off doing His work until later on. If Jesus comes and doesn't find us ready and doing His will, we'll suffer great loss. However, in Luke, Chapter 12, there's a little more to this parable. The master won't only commend those servants who are watching and waiting for Him, He'll serve them as if they were the master and He was the servant. If we watch and we're ready to open the door of our hearts to Christ, then He'll serve us with spiritual food and drink and every spiritual blessing we need to live a life of holiness, obedience, godliness and peace in the power of the Holy Spirit.

We need to test ourselves by asking ourselves the question: if an angel from heaven were to tell us today that Christ was coming next week or next month, would we live our lives any differently? If the answer is 'yes', then we aren't watching and we aren't ready. Ask the Lord to show you what needs to be changed in your life, then repent from this and claim His power and goodness to love Him.

The drama is from The Bible In Living Sound.

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