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BIBLE ADVENTURES SCRIPT:

A2126 ~ Idolatry in Ephesus.

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

The city of Ephesus was well known in Bible times for having a massive marble temple for the Roman fertility goddess 'Diana.' Diana was also known as 'Artemis' in the pagan Greek myths. This was a huge temple and its expensive furnishings became known as one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. When a meteorite fell from the sky, it was carved into the statue of Diana and housed in the temple at Ephesus. During that time, many people in the city were also involved in witchcraft.

Sorcerers and magicians during New Testament times would recite various sacred sayings in the belief that by reading them from scrolls, they could gain great power. Some had heard Paul preach and they repented and turned to Christ. When they did so, they brought out their costly scrolls of sacred writings and they burnt them publicly.

Seven sons of a Jewish priest named Sceva saw Paul cast out demons in Jesus' name. They thought they'd be able to do the same. But when the sons tried to remove an evil spirit from a demon-possessed man, the evil spirit forcefully overpowered them and beat them severely. Christ's name and power are indeed great. But only those whom Christ appoints this power to have authority to use His name and exercise the benefits of His power. Sorcerers and magicians have no authority to use Christ's name. Only true and obedient servants of Christ have the authority to act on Jesus' behalf and in His name.

When the people of Ephesus saw that demons fled whenever Paul spoke in Christ's name, they were filled with amazement and fear. They realised that in opposing Christ, they'd actually been serving Satan. They saw that no magic or demon could protect them from the power of Christ's name. So many repented and believed in Christ as the victor over all evil spirits.

DRAMA - [The Bible In Living Sound](#).

Paul preached in Ephesus for 2½ years from 53 AD to 55 AD, as recorded in Acts, Chapter 19. As he preached, the word of the Lord kept spreading and growing stronger. Toward the end of Paul's stay in Ephesus, a great disturbance arose in connection with the feast of the goddess Diana. The cult of Diana was so powerful and widespread in 1st century AD that it created a very dangerous environment for those who preached the Gospel of Christ in some places.

The silversmiths made little idols of Diana and they sold them for a good profit at the time of the festival. But as increasing numbers of people stopped worshipping Diana and began turning to Christ, the silversmiths' trade suffered a sharp decline as less and less Diana idols were sold. Paul had been teaching the people that these idols weren't gods at all; they were in fact worthless.

The silversmiths became very angry with Paul for this teaching. One theatre in Ephesus could seat 25,000 people and was the place for public assemblies. A silversmith called Demetrius and some of his friends went searching for Paul but when they couldn't find him, they dragged two of Paul's Greek travelling companions, Gaius and Aristarchus, into the theatre instead of Paul.

When Paul heard of the situation, he wanted to go to the theatre straight away to make the most of this opportunity to preach about Christ. But his friends thought that Paul going there was too big of a risk in front of an unpredictable crowd - he might be killed by the angry people. Although Christians are called to lay down their lives for their Saviour, they're never called to throw them away.

The crowd at the theatre was mostly angry with Paul and the Christians, but they were also upset with the Jews too, as they didn't worship Diana either. When the Jews saw a riot forming, they began to get worried. They forced a Jew called Alexander to go forward and tell the crowd that the Jews had no connection with the Christians and therefore, the crowd needn't blame the Jews for what the Christians were doing. But as Alexander was a Jew, he was not considered supportive of Diana either, and the crowd wouldn't listen to him. The crowd then spent nearly two hours shouting out, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!"

At this time, Ephesus was a free city within the Roman Empire and had its own government. The chief official of the city was called the city clerk, and he quietened the crowd down. As the province surrounding Ephesus was under the control of the Roman Empire, the Roman governor of the province had chosen his home in Ephesus. If news of such a riot came to his ears, he would surely punish the people and possibly take away their freedom.

So the city clerk told the crowd to do nothing rashly. Gaius and Aristarchus weren't robbers or they hadn't spoken against their goddess. Demetrius and the other silversmiths were advised to take their case against anyone to the courts and have the matter dealt with there. The city clerk warned the people that he might have to give an answer for their unruly behaviour and that there was no good reason for it. And with that, he dismissed the crowd.

As soon as the uproar had ceased, Paul called the disciples together, embraced them and departed, crossing the sea for northern Greece. Paul's life as a Christian seemed to go on from one battleground to another.

However, during this period in Ephesus, Paul wrote a letter to the church in Corinth in Greece. He'd heard reports of problems in the Corinthian church. The letter dealt with divisions in the church, the absence of discipline and it provided answers to questions about marriage, the Lord's Supper, spiritual gifts and the resurrection of the dead. Most Greek people didn't believe in the resurrection of the body, but simply thought it was destroyed in the grave. They thought that only their spirits would go to heaven.

But Paul explained to them the bodily resurrection of the Lord Jesus and how if He hadn't been raised to life, their faith was useless. In 1st Corinthians Chapter 15 Verse 42 he said: "Our earthly bodies are planted in the ground when we die, but they will be raised to live forever. Our bodies are buried in brokenness, but they will be raised in glory. They are buried in weakness, but they will be raised in strength. They are buried as natural human bodies, but they will be raised as spiritual bodies. For just as there are natural bodies, there are also spiritual bodies."

The church at Corinth was also bringing dishonour on the name of the Lord Jesus by displaying disgraceful behaviour at their love feasts. They were combining a fellowship meal with the Lord's Supper, just as the Lord Jesus celebrated His last Passover meal with His disciples. These meals in Corinth showed divisions between the rich and poor, as well as the socially important believers and the ordinary believers in the church. Paul told the Corinth Christians that their meetings were doing more harm than good.

Among any group of Christians, there'll always be different ideas and points of view on many matters. This in itself isn't wrong. But when differences arise among Christians, it is important that all sides act with love and humility toward each other, despite their differing views. Only those who act in love and humility in Christ have God's approval of their conduct. Those, however, who are proud and want to create strife and division in the church don't have God's approval for their behaviour. No harm comes from the humble expression of different ideas concerning smaller matters. But harm does come when believers judge each other and oppose each other angrily.

When the Corinthian believers met together for the Lord's Supper, they showed that they'd forgotten its real meaning and purpose. Each person who attended the Lord's Supper was bringing their own food from home. The rich brought a lot of food but didn't share it with those who only had a little. Neither did the rich people wait for everyone to arrive before starting their meal. They were meeting together to have a good time, eat their fill and get drunk with wine. After they did these things, it was impossible for them to truly celebrate the Lord's Supper. Paul said to eat their normal meal at home first and then come to remember the Lord's Supper.

The first Lord's Supper took place on the night Jesus was betrayed. Seeing how much Jesus suffered for them, how could the Corinthian believers regard the Lord's Supper as a time for having fun and getting drunk? The Lord Jesus sacrificed His body for believers in Him across all generations, that through His death, we might receive eternal life. We must never forget that tremendous act of love or minimise its importance. We celebrate the Lord's Supper over and over so that we might keep remembering what Jesus did for us fresh in our minds.

If churches didn't keep the Lord's Supper, within a few years, some believers would begin to doubt that Jesus really died and was bodily resurrected. To prevent the dying off of Christianity, Jesus started the practice of breaking bread to symbolise His own broken body on the cross. He told His disciples to do this in remembrance of Him.

In a symbolic way, Jesus further took a cup filled with wine and said: "This cup is the new covenant in My blood." The contents of this cup were shared between the disciples. In many churches these days, the contents of the cup are now fruit juice and not wine, out of respect for those who are reformed alcoholics. Also the contents are often given in small individual glasses for health reasons.

Even though the Lord Jesus was still yet to die and to shed His blood, He proclaimed the New Covenant for the new church age was starting. Through His sacrificial death on the cross, Christ provided salvation and eternal life for all who would believe in Him. In Acts, Chapter 4, it says: "Salvation is to be found through Him alone." "There is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

The Corinthian church was celebrating the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner. Before taking part in it ourselves, we must carefully examine our hearts and conduct to see if there is any unconfessed sin in our lives. If there is, we must at once confess it and ask for forgiveness from God. If our sin affects another person or is between us and them, the Bible instructs us to stop, make peace with that person before continuing our remembrance of the Lord's Supper. We cannot be right in our relationship with God if we aren't right in our relationships with other people.

Furthermore, if we eat and drink without caring about the suffering of Jesus' sacrifice, we forget the Lord and we can expect God to discipline us. We do not take the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner as Christ is offended. Anyone who does so, "eats and drinks judgment to himself."

When we celebrate the Lord's Supper, we continue to proclaim the Lord's death until the time that He returns for us. By taking part in the Lord's Supper, we are a witness to all people that Christ died for our sin and that He arose again to grant us new life and fellowship with God His Father. May all glory for this be given to Christ alone!

The drama is from The Bible In Living Sound.

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