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BIBLE ADVENTURES SCRIPT:

A2224 ~ Darkness over Egypt.

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

Have you ever been in a place where the price of goods in the marketplace can be bargained for? The possible buyer offers a low price for an article while the stall holder asks for a high price. By the process of bartering which offers a little more and accepts a little less, an agreed price for the article is eventually reached. Then the buyer has to decide if they'll accept the final price or walk away from a possible deal.

Moses and Aaron were in a dispute with the Pharaoh of Egypt over letting the Israelite slaves go into the wilderness to worship their God, the only true God in all the world.

God had already sent plagues that turned the Egyptians' water into blood and He caused a great army of frogs to climb into everything. When Pharaoh had Moses pray to his God to take away the frogs, they all died and created a terrible stench. But Pharaoh then tried to negotiate a compromise: "Go to the wilderness but leave your women and children behind." But this compromise failed. Then he bargained: "Take your women and children but leave your animals." This also failed, as Moses and Aaron wouldn't compromise.

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In Exodus, Chapter 8, after Pharaoh had once again refused to honour his promise to let the Israelites go into the wilderness to worship their God, God told Moses and Aaron to turn the dust of the ground into lice, which are small biting insects. There was something different about this plague; the magicians couldn't reproduce it. And suddenly, the Egyptians realised that they were up against a greater power than their own. They themselves told Pharaoh that the insects were an act of God.

Although from this point onwards, Pharaoh's officials came to understand the power of the Israelite God, Pharaoh in his pride determined to continue to oppose God. Moses had already told him that there was no one like the Lord God. In the Scriptures, there's no mention of Moses getting rid of the lice. The next time Moses and Aaron saw Pharaoh, they warned him that if he wouldn't let the Israelites go, that there would be swarms of flies throughout the country, but not in the region of Goshen where all the Israelites lived.

This was important, because people in those times believed that gods occupied different territories and within a given area, the local god was pre-eminent. But the Egyptians were soon finding out that the Israelite God was preeminent throughout Egypt, sending flies on them but sparing the Israelites. God was demonstrating that He had the power to punish His enemies and at the same time, save His own people.

Pharaoh knew that the flies had come from Israel's God. And to appease God and encourage Him to remove the flies, Pharaoh said that the Israelites would be allowed to worship God but only in Egypt. Moses rejected this offer because the Egyptians detested the Israelites and they would interfere with their worship. Pharaoh tried to bargain further with Moses. He agreed to let the Israelites go outside Egypt if Moses would pray to have the flies removed.

Of course, as soon as Moses had prayed and not a single fly remained, Pharaoh broke his promise to let the Israelites leave. Notice how it's not possible to soften a person's heart by outside force or pressure. Force may break a person's heart but it won't soften it. External circumstances may cause a person to be remorseful, but not be truly repentant. Only God's revealed grace can soften a person's heart and bring about true repentance when the person willingly asks God to do so.

The 5th plague struck the Egyptians' livestock in the field, thus giving God-fearing Egyptians the chance to move their livestock into shelter. None of the animals of the Israelites died. Once again God was confronting the gods of Egypt as the Egyptian people worshipped their animals and held them in special regard.

The next plague was brought about by Moses throwing some soot in the air. The ashes were most likely taken from a brick-making furnace, which was a symbol of Israel's slavery. The Egyptian people were soon covered with boils and Pharaoh's magicians were finding it harder and harder to face God's terrifying plagues. Pharaoh himself was unmoved and after this 6th plague in Exodus, Chapter 9, the Word of God says that God now hardened Pharaoh's heart. When people descend more and more into sin and they grow further and further from God, God has no choice but to 'give them over' to their wickedness.

Before the next plague and at God's direction, Moses explained to Pharaoh that God could have easily killed him and all the Egyptians. But God didn't do so because He wanted to show His power over the different types of things in nature, and so His name would be known throughout the whole earth. God also wanted to make Pharaoh a permanent example to all people of the foolishness of resisting Israel's God.

Then Moses announced that in 24 hours' time, a very heavy hail storm would rain down on Egypt. Once again, God gave the God-fearing Egyptians time to bring their animals and slaves under shelter before the hail began to fall. These people were to leave Egypt with the Israelites when the time came to go. And once again, the land of Goshen where the Israelites lived was protected from the plague.

No hail had ever fallen on Egypt before during winter. The crops of flax and barley were most vulnerable. For the first time at the result of the devastation, Pharaoh admitted that he had sinned and that he and his people were receiving their just punishment from God. However, Pharaoh wasn't yet ready to turn from his sinful mistreatment of the Israelites or from breaking his promises. Moses knew that Pharaoh and his officials still didn't fear God. They were sorry but not repentant.

We all know that it's easy to say, "I'm sorry" and not mean it. True repentance is always followed by a change of lifestyle. Just as God had brought on the hail, so He stopped it in response to Moses' prayer to do so. It would be known that the earth and everything in it, including lightning and hail, belonged to God and were under His control. However, as soon as the hail stopped falling, Pharaoh's heart remained harder than ever.

Then the Lord revealed to Moses another purpose behind the plagues. They were to increase the faith of the Israelites; not only for the generation at present living in Egypt but for future generations as well. When the going became hard and there seemed to be too many obstacles, the Israelite leaders were to encourage them with the stories of the plagues and how God brought them through their trials. And He would do it for them again. This is for Christians as well. Remember the power and faithfulness of God.

Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh again and asked him how long would he refuse to humble himself before the Lord God. ‘How long?’ is the question God asks of all unrepentant sinners? God has great patience, but the time will come when God says time’s up for repentance and He’ll bring judgment on each unforgiven sinner, the evil spirits and the world itself. Only God knows when this time will be and for Pharaoh, it was coming soon.

The 8th plague was a swarm of locusts such as Egypt had never seen before. Again, God was going to use natural means to bring the locusts from their breeding grounds along the Red Sea via an east wind. Locust plagues were greatly feared in those days and they still are, because they are considered to be judgments from God.

When Pharaoh’s officials heard Moses’ warning about this plague, they spoke to Pharaoh and they tried to convince him to let Moses and the people go. Couldn’t Pharaoh see that Egypt was being destroyed? It was useless to oppose Moses’ God. But Pharaoh refused. He told Moses that the men of Israel could go and worship but the women and children were to stay behind in Egypt as hostages. Moses said that every Israelite, young and old, would be going. At this point, Moses and Aaron were driven from Pharaoh’s presence.

God then told Moses to stretch out his hand over Egypt that the locusts might come and eat everything left from the hail. Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron and confessed that he had sinned. Again Moses prayed for relief and God, who controls the weather, reversed the wind and He swept the locusts back into the Red Sea.

Without any advance warning, however, the Lord brought a plague of darkness on Egypt. The darkness was a rebuke to the chief god of the Egyptians, the sun-god Ra. Perhaps Pharaoh had begun to doubt the power of the Egyptian gods. In response, he once more offered a compromise with Moses: this time he would let the women and children go too but not their livestock. But Moses refused. Four times through these plagues, Pharaoh tried to persuade Moses to compromise. When we're tempted to compromise in moral and spiritual matters, we should take a stand and refuse to compromise with the world or conform to the world's ways. We can't please both God and the world, or an unbelieving 'Pharaoh'.

The darkness lasted for 3 days and it was so dark that it could be felt. No one could leave their house during those days except the Israelites. There was no darkness where they were in Goshen. Pharaoh grew angry with Moses and he told him to get out of his sight. Before Moses did so, however, he warned Pharaoh of the 10th and final plague that would befall Egypt.

Was Pharaoh being obstinate for the sake of his position? At first he hardened his heart. The word 'hardened' could be better translated 'strengthen' or 'stiffen', and that's what was happening in Pharaoh's case. He decided that he didn't want to believe, and his heart got harder and stronger in its unbelief. Pharaoh had more than enough evidence to be convinced of the truth. Pharaoh had seen big devastating miracles and he'd heard the word of God. And that knowledge brought responsibility. To turn from the truth is to become entrenched in darkness more completely than ever.

There are people who know God is real and powerful. And they know God changes lives. But their hearts are so hard, they won't believe in Him. Does that mean that Pharaoh had no choice in the matter? No. God gives each one of us freewill. He won't violate that freewill, but once we've made our choice, God may, in effect, strengthen us in that choice.

Of all the leaders and rulers who've governed countries throughout history, most have reached their position by their toughness. Only a few have inherited their leadership but then, they've often had to be tough and mean to their people to maintain their position.

Christians, however, rejoice with great gladness that we who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, have in Him a kind and compassionate leader who will one day rule this world. He said in John, Chapter 16, Verse 33b: "In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." Come, Lord Jesus, come! And may we be ready for You when You do.

The drama is from The Bible In Living Sound.

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