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BIBLE ADVENTURES SCRIPT:

A1680 ~ The Grecians Meet Jesus.

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

A much admired businessman in the first half of the 20th Century was an American named Robert LeTourneau. He left school at the age of 14 and learnt a number of trades. He then began to invent big machinery for land clearing and earth-moving equipment for making roads. At first, things didn't go well but in time, he invented many useful types of machinery and held hundreds of patents for making them. His manufacturing business started a worldwide revolution in public works.

LeTourneau was a Christian and he gave generously to many causes. As his business developed, he increased his giving to the Lord from the normal 10% to 90% at the height of his financial success. People marvelled at his generosity.

It was after Jesus denounced the Jewish rulers as being blind guides that Jesus drew His disciples' attention to the people coming into the Temple and how they were putting their gifts in the treasury box.

Today's *Bible Adventure* begins with a poor widow dropping two small coins into the treasury box. She thought she'd done so unnoticed. But Jesus not only saw her, and knowing her background, told His disciples that she had put in more than all the rest. Jesus was looking at her capacity to give.

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

When we give a gift to God, we think about how much we give. But God thinks about how much we have remaining. In God's eyes, the poor widow had given more than all the rich people put together, for after she'd put the two coins into the box, she had nothing left. She had given it all to God.

The principle of giving is to bless someone else, and this can involve making a sacrifice. When we give to God, our hearts should be cheerful and willing, even if we end up giving something we need and want for ourselves. We shouldn't be content to give only what we can afford. Like the God who did not spare His Son for us or the poor widow who gave her last coins away, we too need to give with a generous spirit that is free from harbouring worry. If we do so wholeheartedly, our giving will be a blessing to others and God will reward us. In Proverbs, Chapter 11, it says: "Be generous, and you will be prosperous. Help others, and you will be helped."

The poor widow gave all she had and since that day she did so, she has been honoured in the Scriptures as being faithful and true to God in all her dealings. Her story is found in Mark, Chapter 12 and also Luke, Chapter 21.

The second section of today's drama comes from the book of John, Chapter 12. At the time of the Passover, some Greek men had come to Jerusalem to worship the one true God. They came to Philip, one of Jesus' 12 disciples and asked to see Jesus. They'd heard about Jesus and probably knew some of the prophecies concerning Him; now they wanted to meet Him. When Jesus heard that some Greek men were looking for Him, He knew that this was a sign the hour had come for Him to be glorified through His death on the cross and resurrection. Jesus brought great glory to God through His victory over Satan on the cross.

What does that word 'glorify' mean? It is to be honoured and highly praised, elevated in rank or increased in fame in recognition of services done. In John, Chapter 17, Jesus prayed for Himself. Jesus said, "Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You ... I have glorified you on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do. And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was (made)."

When the Greek men travelled from their country to Israel, it showed Jesus that the Gentile people were turning to Him. Soon His witness would spread outside Israel by the preaching of His disciples. This non-Jew interest in Jesus showed that He was more than the Saviour of the Jews but for the whole world. Now His own work on earth had come to an end and the time for His death had come. After Jesus had died and returned to Heaven, it was God's plan to send the Holy Spirit to live within His disciples throughout the world.

Jesus gave an agricultural illustration to show why His death was necessary. Any seed planted in the ground must in a way 'die' before it can 'come to life' again. By dying, Jesus would produce many more disciples than if He didn't. Similarly, this process is still going on today. By dying to self, we too produce the most fruit for Christ. This self-dying may be physical for some Christians, as martyrs for the Gospel, or it may be spiritual and emotional within us, as a transformation of our hearts from darkness to light.

Jesus furthermore said, "He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life." Jesus was saying here that our love for Him must be so great by comparison, our love for ourselves will seem like hate. We cannot love our old sinful self and Christ in the same way at the same time.

Many believers in Jesus face opposition from their non-believing family members. In Matthew, Chapter 10, Jesus said that we must love Him more than our father and mother. If we don't, we're not worthy to be His disciple. To follow Jesus, we must often give up our worldly advantages. We may suffer loss of our property, our inheritance, our job, and such disadvantages will fall upon our children too. But we must put love for Jesus above our love for anything that we hold dear, and even our children too.

A disciple of Christ may lose their life in this world. They may also lose their possessions and honour in other people's eyes. But in exchange, they will receive eternal life with Jesus in heaven forever. They'll also receive honour from God. God honours those who honour Jesus because those who honour Jesus also honour God Himself. Jesus also said: "Whoever wants to serve me must follow me, so that my servant will be with me where I am. And my Father will honour anyone who serves me." What a precious promise that is!

Yet Jesus then became sorrowful. He said: "Now My soul is troubled and what shall I say? Father, save Me from this hour? But for this purpose I came to this hour. Father, glorify Your name." Jesus was a man and people didn't ordinarily like to die. God has built survival instincts into all living creatures. Jesus had to fight his natural instincts before surrendering His will perfectly to His Father's, even when knowing what terrible things were ahead.

Did God the Father in heaven hear His Son's desperate cry? Yes He did! Immediately, His Heavenly Father responded to Jesus' prayer by saying, "I have both glorified it and will glorify it again." When the people around Jesus heard this voice, some said it thundered while others said an angel had spoken to Him. This voice from heaven was for the people's sake and not for Jesus. He said: "Now is the time for this world to be judged; now the ruler of this world will be overthrown." Satan's hold over the world was broken when Jesus died and was raised to life again. Satan hadn't expected Jesus to be victorious in returning to life. Satan lost his battle with Jesus and now his days are numbered. He is already a defeated foe to all those who put their trust in Jesus.

Since the time of Christ, it's been estimated that about 50 million people have given up their lives for what they have believed in. Sometimes it's been a powerful political dictator who has demanded people with certain beliefs about Christ to give them up. Other times, it was religious leaders who tried by persuasion to get people to change their views, often by pressuring them with some threats of a dreadful beating, time in jail or death.

Over the years, many Christians have been burnt alive at the stake. The person condemned to die for their beliefs was tied to a stake in the open fields. Wood was piled around their feet and lit. For some, a bag of gunpowder was placed around their neck to hasten death. People so treated in this way, during their last hours, often prayed and sang. They held their faith until the end, not showing anger or bitterness that the authorities had wronged them. They lived in the reality of eternal life and how much better life will be when they go to be with Jesus.

After the early church was established, a slave woman in Smyrna, on the west coast of present-day Turkey, had a baby boy in AD 69. When he reached a certain age, the slave woman's master said that he had to be sold in the slave market. It was a very sorry parting between mother and child, whose name was Polycarp. The boy was bought by a well-off woman and she raised him as a son. Polycarp learnt to read and write and after a while, came to realise that other slaves were looking after his needs.

He treated them all kindly. Some time in his growing years, he became a Christian and when his adopted 'mother' died, she left everything she owned to Polycarp. Polycarp used the money he'd received to spread the good news about Jesus Christ. It's thought that Polycarp was personally disciplined by the aging Apostle John and was appointed the bishop of Smyrna by the original apostles of Jesus. This happened at the time when the church was making a critical transition to become a second generation of believers.

Many years later, the persecution of Christians became the sport of the day. Those who trusted in Jesus had been persecuted to a greater or lesser degree ever since the Lord rose from the dead. But as time passed, persecution had been developed into a fine art. Polycarp watched as one member after another of his church was targeted and he knew that his day would probably come before long.

Polycarp was then well into his 80's. He had a dream that he would be burnt alive at the stake for being a Christian. When he told his friends, they took him away to the countryside to hide him from the Roman soldiers looking for him. But in time, the soldiers did find and arrest him. The kinder soldiers counselled Polycarp to agree that Caesar is god and offer a sacrifice to him. They said: "There's no harm in that, and if you do, they'll release you and that will be the end of it." But Polycarp refused to do such a thing. When he appeared before the judges, one told him in an effort to help him: "Just say you're sorry and deny that you believe in Jesus."

Polycarp gave his famous defence: "Eighty and six years I have now served Christ and he has never done me the least wrong. How then can I blaspheme my King and my Saviour?" Again, the judges tried to make him change his mind but the old man's mind wasn't about to change. So the sentence was passed. The old man was led away to be burned.

When the soldiers prepared to secure him to the stake before lighting the fire, he told them not to bother. He said that God would give him the courage to stay in the fire and not move away. After that Polycarp looked up to heaven and prayed out aloud.

He thanked his heavenly Father for the privilege of being a martyr for Jesus Christ. And when he'd finished praying, the executioner lit the fire.

Polycarp is still the first recorded martyrdom in post-New Testament church history and the account was written down within a year of his death. It's said that his death was remembered by everyone, including heathen people in every place.

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/ch/131christians/martyrs/polycarp.html>

In Revelation, Chapter 2, Verse 10, the Apostle John wrote down the words given to him by God to the church in Smyrna: "Be faithful until death and I will give you the crown of life."

The drama is from The Bible In Living Sound.

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