

The Triumphant Entrance Through the Eyes of Shepherd Benjamin

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Date: 09 April 2017

[0:00] Anytime you begin a service like we did with baptism, it makes it a special day. But today is special, not just for our church, but throughout the Christian church, throughout the world.

Today is Palm Sunday. Today is the Sunday when we celebrate, think about Jesus making what has become known as His triumphal entry into Jerusalem.

Could I help you there, sir? Sir, I know these things of which you speak, the triumphal entry. May I share them?

Yes. Come on, share with us. Thank you. Good morning.

Shalom. May the peace of God rest upon you this morning. Rejoice, O daughter of Zion.

[1:06] Shout for joy, O daughter of Jerusalem. For your king comes to you, riding upon a donkey, upon the foal of a donkey.

Those were the words that the prophet Zechariah wrote 500 years before I saw those things that day.

Today, I want to tell you what I saw with these eyes. The things that I heard with these ears.

And now, what I know in my heart. You see, my name is Benjamin.

In your language, you would say Benjamin. I am a shepherd. I tend the flocks like my ancestors before me.

[2:09] I live in a small village about six miles south of Jerusalem near Bethlehem. I was bringing sheep to Jerusalem.

For it was the time of the Passover. Many people came from far away. And could not bring the sacrifice that was required.

So we sold sheep that would be for sacrifice. They were the sheep as prescribed in the law of Moses.

They were without spot, without blemish. And I came that day with sheep to be sold. You see, they were normally, for a man like me, from a small village.

There were many people in Jerusalem, always. There were about 50,000 people that lived in the city. But now, at Passover, there were...

[3:24] Who could count? Because Moses, our great lawgiver, had said 1,400 years earlier, He wrote that every male of Israel was to come before the Lord three times each year.

The Feast of Unleavened Bread, like now at Passover. And then again, at the Feast of Weeks. And the Feast of Booths. And then he said, and he must not come empty-handed.

So the shepherds would live nearby, would bring sheep for to sell. That's why I was there that day. As I walked from my town up toward Jerusalem. It was a glorious morning. For the sun came up over the Mount of Olives.

And its rays shone down on the city. And it gleamed like a jewel. The walls, those huge rock walls, almost appeared to be golden in color.

[4:41] But above all, was the temple. The center of worship for all Israel. And I thought as I walked that way, what a glorious sight.

What our God has done. When I arrived at Jerusalem, I thought, things are very different today. People were stirring. People going about their business. And as I walked up those streets that wound through the city, toward the temple where I would sell the sheep, I noticed the Roman soldiers.

They seemed to just be everywhere. But they were different this time. They seemed to be very watchful.

Very alert. And you never saw just one. There were always two, three, four, maybe more.

[5:57] And one of the things that was very obvious. They all carried the gladius. The gladius was that short sword that they used for fighting very close by.

And I thought, What? What are they watching? They just stood.

And their eyes moved back and forth as they watched. And I thought, What are they watching for? Are they expecting an uprising?

What? What? I did not know. But I thought, I must be careful. For they must know something I do not.

I moved on toward the temple. And I saw small groups of rabbis as they talked.

[7:10] Rabbis do not smile very much on a good day. But today, no one smiled.

They were talking about something that was obviously of great importance. because their faces were hard. Their eyes were narrow.

And they spoke quickly. And their hands moved fast as they talked. And I thought, What is this they talk about? What is this?

First, there was the soldiers. And now, the rabbis. What is happening here?

I did not know. Even the common people spoke in low and quiet tones.

[8:16] And if a stranger approached, they stopped talking. As if they were being very careful with their words.

I thought, this is not a normal day at Passover. It was then that I saw a friend who was talking to a man that I did not know.

as I approached, I heard my friend say, Do you think he will come? The man with which he spoke saw me and stopped talking.

And he just looked at me. Never moved his head. Just turned his eyes toward me. And then back to my friend as if to say, Stop talking.

My friend turned. And saw me. He smiled. And said to his friend, It's alright. It's just Benjamin.

[9:37] It's alright. And he asked again, Do you think he will come? And the man said, I do not know.

But the entire city is looking for him. For the rulers of the people said, If anyone knew where he was, they should tell them.

For they wanted to kill him. I thought, What? Kill him? For what?

What had he done? my friend, my friend, I said, Why would they kill him?

I said, I hear he has opened the eyes of the blind that he had caused the deaf to hear.

[10:40] He had loosed the tongue of the dumb and caused cripples to walk. Why would they kill him? Would they kill him for these things?

I didn't understand. My friend said to me, Yes, all of these things are true.

And just a few days ago, in Bethany, just beyond the Mount of Olives, he raised a man from the dead who had been dead for four days.

and they want to kill him too. I thought, What? Kill him too?

Why? As I thought about these things, there was a tension in the air that was very much like, I thought, like, the string on King David's harp that you, bing!

[12:01] That seemed to be the atmosphere in Jerusalem. It was then, all of a sudden, there was movement.

And it was like the wave on the great sea as the people moved toward the gate that led to the Mount of Olives.

I wanted to see what this was. So I too went when I could see, I could see a people coming across the top of the hill and down that road that wound down the Mount of Olives toward the Brook Kidron. and there were people from Jerusalem going up to meet them. And as I looked, I could hear the words, I could see some carried palm branches and they laid them in the road.

I thought, what is this? they do that for kings, for people of great power. What do they do?

[13:35] Some even took off their garment and laid it in the roadway. I thought, what?

God, that you did only, it was a symbol of submission to the authority of the one coming.

I thought, what is this? And then I heard their voices as they said, Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest. I thought, Hosanna! Save us now! What did they say? Do they believe that this is the Messiah?

And I watched as they came down, down, down the Mount of Olives. And at one point they stopped and it appeared that the prophet, riding on the donkey, was weeping.

[14:49] I watched. I did not know then why he wept. I would learn later. The events of that week in Jerusalem moved very rapidly.

I did not understand it all. But later that week I heard that this prophet had been arrested by the temple guard.

He had been taken before the Sanhedrin, the ruling body of our people. men and because of the witness of men that had been paid money, he was condemned.

But he was taken to the Roman governor, Pilate, where he was cruelly treated and again falsely accused. and there he was condemned to die by crucifixion.

He was crucified between two thieves and died. when he died, it was noontime and the sky became as black as midnight and the earth shook as if something happened that had never happened before and would never happen again.

[16:37] there was a rumor that three days later he rose from the dead.

I did not know these things and I returned to my village and I thought about what I had seen, what I had heard and I wondered what is God doing in Jerusalem?

A few weeks passed and I was back in Jerusalem for the feast of Pentecost. There was another crowd and this time in the temple there was a crowd gathered and one of the prophet's disciples the one they call Cephas Peter was addressing the crowd and he was explaining to them they had questions they said they had heard the sound of a great wind but there was no wind they said the disciples of this prophet were drunk and all kinds of things and Peter was explaining no this was simply the fulfillment of another ancient prophecy and with many words Peter explained that this prophet from

Nazareth this Jesus was indeed the Christ the hope of Israel as I listened to those words my heart was stirred and I knew that what he said was true it was that day that I Benjamin the shepherd became a follower of this man Jesus who is the Messiah but it was also a sad day for me a great day but I thought about Israel God you see one few weeks earlier when the prophet rode on the donkey and came to Jerusalem our great

God was presenting the Messiah to his people but he was just as Isaiah had said despised and rejected what a sad day for Israel some years later the apostle John wrote these words referring to Jesus the Messiah he said he came to his own creation think of that when God became man and left the glory that was his in heaven and came to earth he came unto his own creation and his own people my people the nation of

[20:52] Israel did not receive him they rejected him what sad words but John also wrote but as many as received him to them he gave the right the authority to become the sons of God even to them that believe on his name you know my friends our great God still today makes that same offer to you and all heaven awaits your choice God awaits your choice what will you do with

Messiah will you receive him as I and now adopted into the family of God and am known of God ah what the relationship will you receive him or will you reject him God still offers today would you pray let's pray together father we have heard this message of good news about why

Jesus came into this world why he went to Jerusalem on that Sunday father make it clear to everyone in this room that you sent your son into this world to save sinners people who recognize that they have sinned that they have failed you that they do not have a relationship with you lord if there's anyone in this room right now that that is where they are away from you so work in them to give them the desire to trust Jesus help them to understand that when he died on the cross he actually took their punishment the punishment that their sin deserves help them to know that if they will call upon

Jesus to save them that he will that you will forgive them you will make them your child father we thank you for that promise from your word that we just heard for as many has received him he gave the right to become children of God even to them that believe upon his name so father right now we pray so work to compel that man or woman or young person who does not know Christ to call upon him to save them Lord for many of us in this room right now we are believers we do trust Jesus but father help us to think right now do other people see him in my life and am

I taking the opportunity that I have to share this good news with family members or friends or classmates or people I work with or live near help us father who have experienced the life changing work that you do when you save us help us father to share that good news of how that change can

happen in other people's lives lives let's just be still and quiet in an attitude of prayer heads bowed and eyes closed and you listen to the Lord and you respond as he speaks to you right now I'd be happy to pray with you here at the front right now you'll come down during these next few minutes as our instrumentalists play and we pray