

Choose Your Side!
March 17, 2013
by C. Benjamin Dill

Good morning, Lighthouse!

My, what an incredible month we have experienced with all the great things the Lord is doing both here and around the world.

To travel to Israel and to see firsthand what God has done and is doing in the very center of our World is amazing indeed.

Here in America we sit (or so we think) like spectators in one of the coliseums watching the news as we view the battle that rages on many fronts between the people of God and the rest of the World.

The Israel of today is still the very one you read of in your Bible. Civilizations have been built one upon another upon another going back to the very beginning of creation and with every archeological project that is completed, they find everything exactly where God said it was; over and over and over again.

Based on hard facts and evidence alone, the validity and the accuracy of your Bible is being proven again and again.

I laid my hand on the stone where Abraham offered Isaac;

I stood in the stables where Solomon housed his chariot horses in Megiddo;

I saw the very wall that Nehemiah built with a sword in one hand and a tool in the other.

I looked out over the valley of Armageddon where countless battles have raged and where the final battle of all battles will be fought and won by Jesus Himself;

I preached the Word of God out on the Sea of Galilee where Jesus and Peter walked upon the water;

I saw the place of a skull beneath which my Lord was crucified;

And I stood inside the grave, the tomb that could not hold Him;

I have returned to tell you that everything we have believed; everything we have staked our lives upon; everything we have loved and hold dear is exactly like God told us it was; your faith is not in vain!

In the 11th chapter of the book of John, we find the earthly ministry of our Lord Jesus winding down to a close.

About this time of year, a little over 2,000 years ago, a planned miracle was about to take place that would be big enough to settle the doubts

of anyone desiring to know for sure if Jesus really is The Promised One, the true and genuine hope of the World.

There in Bethany; a small village about a 25 minute walk outside the city wall of Jerusalem was the home of Mary and Martha and their brother Lazarus; dear and beloved friends of Jesus.

Jesus being away beyond Jordan, about a two or three day journey; received word from the sisters that Lazarus was sick. We pick up the story in

John 11:1-14

1 Now a certain *man* was sick, *named* Lazarus, of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha.

2 (It was *that* Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.)

3 Therefore his sisters sent unto him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick.

4 When Jesus heard *that*, he said, **This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby.**

5 Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus.

6 When he had heard therefore that he was sick, he abode two days still in the same place where he was.

7 Then after that saith he to *his* disciples, **Let us go into Judea again.**

8 His disciples say unto him, Master, the Jews of late sought to stone thee; and goest thou thither again?

9 Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world.

10 But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him.

11 These things said he: and after that he saith unto them, Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep.

12 Then said his disciples, Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well.

13 Howbeit Jesus spake of his death: but they thought that he had spoken of taking of rest in sleep.

14 Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead.

John 11:17 Then when Jesus came, he found that he had *lain* in the grave four days already.

John 11:32-44

32 Then when Mary was come where Jesus was, and saw him, she fell down at his feet, saying unto him, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.

33 When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled.

34 And said, Where have ye laid him? They said unto him, Lord, come and see.

35 Jesus wept.

36 Then said the Jews, Behold how he loved him!

37 And some of them said, Could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died?

38 Jesus therefore again groaning in himself cometh to the grave. It was a cave, and a stone lay upon it.

39 Jesus said, **Take ye away the stone.** Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto him, Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been *dead* four days.

40 Jesus saith unto her, **Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldst see the glory of God?**

41 Then they took away the stone *from the place* where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up *his* eyes, and said, **Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me.**

42 **And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said *it*, that they may believe that thou hast sent me.**

43 And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, **Lazarus, come forth.**

44 And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, **Loose him, and let him go.**

This incredible miracle which was done in the presence of many witnesses would for just a little while hold the world record as the greatest miracle of all time;

This miracle created such a stir and such a following of Jesus that the Chief Priests and the Pharisees moved immediately to hunt down and kill Jesus.

John 11:47-54

- 47 Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many miracles.
- 48 If we let him thus alone, all *men* will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation.
- 49 And one of them, *named* Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all,
- 50 Nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not.
- 51 And this spake he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation;
- 52 And not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad.
- 53 Then from that day forth they took counsel together for to put him to death.
- 54 Jesus therefore walked no more openly among the Jews; but went thence unto a country near to the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim, and there continued with his disciples.

In Israel today, even with her modern highways just like we have in the US, it is still easy to see

that everything was originally designed for foot traffic. The distances, even between cities, was short enough that walking was the most practical means of travel. Your two feet was your means of commuting, the donkey was your pick-up truck and the camel was your over-the-road hauler. For some; the nomads and many who live inside the old city, it is still this way today.

Ephraim is a full day's journey from Jericho and Jericho is a full day's journey from Jerusalem.

Six days before Passover, Jesus returns to Bethany, just outside Jerusalem.

He returned by way of Jericho where He healed two blind men and where; because of the fame of the miracle of raising Lazarus from the dead, thousands followed Him to Jerusalem.

Matthew 20:29-34

- 29 And as they departed from Jericho, a great multitude followed him.
- 30 And, behold, two blind men sitting by the way side, when they heard that Jesus passed by, cried out, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, *thou* son of David.
- 31 And the multitude rebuked them, because they should hold their peace: but they cried the more, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, *thou* son of David.

- 32 And Jesus stood still, and called them, and said, **What will ye that I shall do unto you?**
- 33 They say unto him, Lord, that our eyes may be opened.
- 34 So Jesus had compassion *on them*, and touched their eyes: and immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed him.

Today Jericho is under the territorial control of the Muslims; we could only see it in the distance. When they gained control of Jericho, they built a magnificent high rise building; the only one of its kind in all of Palestine. A Mosque, you ask; no, it's a casino. No hypocrisy there, right?

We pick up the story again in

John 12:1-19

- 1 Then Jesus six days before the passover came to Bethany, where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead.
- 2 There they made him a supper; and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him.
- 3 Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odor of the ointment.
- 4 Then saith one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's *son*, which should betray him,

- 5 Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?
- 6 This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein.
- 7 Then said Jesus, **Let her alone: against the day of my burying hath she kept this.**
- 8 **For the poor always ye have with you; but me ye have not always.**
- 9 Much people of the Jews therefore knew that he was there: and they came not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might see Lazarus also, whom he had raised from the dead.
- 10 But the chief priests consulted that they might put Lazarus also to death;
- 11 Because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus.
- 12 On the next day much people that were come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem,
- 13 Took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried, Hosanna: Blessed *is* the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord.
- 14 And Jesus, when he had found a young ass, sat thereon; as it is written,
- 15 Fear not, daughter of Zion; behold, thy King cometh, sitting on an ass's colt.
- 16 These things understood not his disciples at the first: but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of him, and *that* they had done these things unto him.

- 17 The people therefore that was with him when he called Lazarus out of his grave, and raised him from the dead, bare record.
- 18 For this cause the people also met him, for that they heard that he had done this miracle.
- 19 The Pharisees therefore said among themselves, Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing? behold, the world is gone after him.

I. Before the earthly ministry of Jesus was completed, there were basically three groups in which you might find yourself:

A. There was Jesus and His disciples.

1. There were those who witnessed His virgin birth; his physical family, the shepherds at the manger; the wise men who came later; all who knew there was something very different about this child.
2. There were those who grew up with Jesus in the small towns around the lake we know as the Sea of Galilee.
3. There were those who were called early on to follow Him like Peter, James and John and Andrew and Phillip.

B. A second group was the mortal enemies of Jesus and His disciples.

1. This group was headed up by the Chief Priests and the Pharisees.
2. They were the ones who stirred the crowd into frenzy to demand the crucifixion of our Lord.
3. These were the ones whose cries rang out "Crucify him, crucify him!"
4. This is Judas the betrayer.
5. These are they who stand in the camp of the enemies of our Lord.

C. The third group was the undecided.

1. These were the observers; men like Nicodemus, Joseph of Arimathaea, Gamaliel and others who simply could not explain away Jesus but had not yet embraced Him as believers.
2. Perhaps before all the evidence was in; even before the raising of Lazarus from the dead after four days in the grave; one might be genuinely undecided.
3. But not anymore!

II. Now, there are only two groups.

1. We pick up our story again in

Matthew 21:1-17

- 1 And when they drew nigh unto Jerusalem, and were come to Bethphage, unto the mount of Olives, then sent Jesus two disciples,
- 2 Saying unto them, Go into the village over against you, and straightway ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her: loose *them*, and bring *them* unto me.
- 3 And if any *man* say aught unto you, ye shall say, The Lord hath need of them; and straightway he will send them.
- 4 All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying,
- 5 Tell ye the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy king cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass.
- 6 And the disciples went, and did as Jesus commanded them,
- 7 And brought the ass, and the colt, and put on them their clothes, and they set *him* thereon.
- 8 And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way; others cut down branches from the trees, and strewed *them* in the way.
- 9 And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the son of David: Blessed *is* he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest.
- 10 And when he was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, Who is this?
- 11 And the multitude said, This is Jesus the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee.

- 12 And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves,
- 13 And said unto them, **It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves.**
- 14 And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple; and he healed them.
- 15 And when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the son of David; they were sore displeased,
- 16 And said unto him, Hearest thou what these say? And Jesus saith unto them, **Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?**
- 17 And he left them, and went out of the city into Bethany; and he lodged there.

2. The evidence has been presented; mountains of it! All of it says that Jesus is Lord.

3. The Holy Spirit has been given. He bears witness with your spirit that Jesus is Lord.

4. The validity of the Bible and the truths contained therein have been clearly established.

In Conclusion:

This all means one thing; either you have responded to all this truth and evidence and have placed your trust in Jesus to save you from your sins...

or...

you are standing in the camp of the enemies of God as one of them.

You are either shouting Hosanna, which means “we praise and adore You” with the people of God...

or...

you are rejecting Him with your silence.

The good news is that you can *repent!

You can change your mind about what you believe and who you are going to trust.