

## **Christmas 2006**

(Bearded and robed wild eyed Simeon comes from the back of the stage, slightly bent with age, but still with power in his voice. He's praying Psalm 42:1-3 and suddenly notices the congregation.)

Welcome Gentiles, to the court of the Gentiles! I'm so glad you've come to the House of Prayer for all nations! Good job sneaking past the Sadducees. Did you all come on the same caravan? Speechless huh? Yes, the Temple is beautiful. Herod did one good thing with all the taxes we pay. What's that? Drove your own chariots! You are a blessed lot. What distant cities are you from? (Tuscon) ah Tuscani. (Phoenix) ah yes, Phonecia. (Flagstaff) oh yes, Philistia. Flew here? Ha ha, you've been reading those Greek fables. (Minnesota) I've never been to the country of the Gauls, but glad to have you with us. (California) the Kalif of Ornea is here, welcome!

Let me introduce myself, my name is Simeon. I'm a Levite; that is the priestly clan of Israel. I serve our God in the temple and I have the privilege of studying His laws and the words of our prophets. I've spent my whole life here, and I think I'm ready to leave this world sometime soon. I know in your lands you admire youth and strength, but here in Judah we look up to the wise aged ones who have walked where we will walk. We honor those who know the Word of the Lord. I don't hesitate to tell you the Spirit of the Lord came upon me sometime ago. He has given me wonderful promises, and so some think I'm a bit strange. Can't tell you how many times the Sadducees have threatened to throw me out of here.

You'll notice, other than the merchants, not many of my fellow countrymen are glad you are here. That's because they don't understand the prophecies. Gotten a bit high and mighty if you ask me. But I'm glad you're here and I'll tell you why.

You see, many years ago our God, the Creator of the heavens and earth, descended on Mount Sinai in fire and spoke with Moses, the man of God. He gave us all the details for how He is to be worshipped. Later God gave our great King David the design for the temple. It included this outer court for you to come and seek the God of Israel. The prophet Isaiah told us of a day you would be able to go in and offer an acceptable sacrifice. (Isaiah 57:6,7) The Lord told them him this temple was to be a House of Prayer for all nations, and that certainly includes you!

Those gods of the countries you are from were created in the imaginations of men, but the God of the Hebrews didn't come from our thoughts. No! He revealed Himself to us. He gave us His laws and spoke through our prophets. He placed us in the center of the world's trade routes so that you could come to this His house and hear of the God that revealed Himself to man. That is why I

welcome you here in the name of Adonai, the living God, blessed be His holy name.

Uh, sorry you can't go into the Temple itself, at least not now. You've probably noticed the sign on the middle wall of partition (*soleq*). *Gowy bow halom kaab maveth!* "No Gentiles may enter here on punishment of death." It's there for your own good. One must know what is required to approach God. Some say we are, what's the word, intolerant. Last Gentile that tried to get in was stoned, and I don't mean he was hitting the wineskins. But I have good news for you! -... Oh no! The Spirit of the Lord is upon me. "Thus saith the Lord, (points to the sign) this sign will be found in the ruins in the day when I make my covenant with people from all nations. I desire all mankind to draw near to me. The mouth of the Lord has spoken it." That's going to get me killed if I don't die first.

As I was saying, I've got the best news for you. Everything is about to change. – Any Romans or Herodians here in the crowd? News has just arrived that there is someone preaching against Rome over by Pilate's residence – There they go. Works every time! Hee Hee They might misunderstand what I'm about to tell you. Now, as I was saying, this is an epic turning point in our history and yours as well. I've been studying the words of the prophet Isaiah and spent many years in prayer to the God of heaven. Some of you are aware that there is a great anticipation of the Messiah in the world. Some of your own prophets have told you to look to Israel for the emergence of a new world ruler. Every Jewish virgin is praying she'll be the mother of Messiah.

Let me tell you what I found in the writings of our prophets. You'll be glad you came to Jerusalem for such a time as this. Let me give you a little background to help you understand. I will first tell you of the words of God Almighty through our Lawgiver, Moses. You see, when the first man and woman didn't listen to God and disobeyed, they listened to the Deceiver instead. God told that 'ol Deceiver that a male descendent of the first woman would crush his head, and that he would bruise His heel. (Genesis 3:15) That was our first promise to cling to. It gave us hope that someday we could be acceptable to God, freed from our sins once and for all.

Later, Moses told us to look for a prophet like himself that the Lord would raise up from among the people of Israel. He told us that we MUST listen to him. (Deuteronomy 18:15) To be honest with you, we didn't do a very good job listening to Moses. Maybe that is why he was so insistent that we must listen to the One that was to come.

I've thought a lot about this one that is to be born. What power and authority He must possess to crush the head of that old serpent, the Devil! He must be like no other. Yet, Moses said He would be one of our brothers and in some way like Moses. Moses gave us the Law. He delivered us from slavery. I can't imagine it, but some of our rabbi predict that this One that is coming will break out of the

boundaries of the Law and take us to something even greater. Our prophets call this One that is to come the Messiah, the anointed One.

Isaiah was one of our greatest prophets. He gave us more about the Messiah than anyone. That is why I spent all I had to buy this Isaiah scroll. Would you like to hear what he wrote about the coming Messiah? <sup>13</sup> *Then Isaiah said, "Hear now, you house of David! Is it not enough to try the patience of men? Will you try the patience of my God also?"* <sup>14</sup> *Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.* Isaiah 7:13-14 (NIV) That sign was given to our King Ahaz, but the rabbis tell us that a greater fulfillment is coming. You see, the name Immanuel means, "God with us". I don't understand how this can be; yet, there it is in the prophecy.

Can God dwell with men? That is the question King Solomon asked. Then God's presence filled the Holy of Holies, over there in that building. But years later, because of many years of refusing to listen and obey, His glory went up out of the Temple and left us. But He will return as the Redeemer, the Deliverer, like Moses, and be a child, and yet be God among us!

Hear what else Isaiah said. This is where you come into the story. <sup>2</sup> *The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned.* <sup>6</sup> *For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.* <sup>7</sup> *Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.* Isaiah 9:2, 6-7 (NIV) Did you hear that? Have you been walking in darkness? You have come here seeking the light of truth. He is coming. The Mighty God will be born as a child. The Everlasting Father will be a son! What a wonderful mystery.

Now listen carefully to one more passage from Isaiah. <sup>1</sup> *"Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him and he will bring justice to the nations.* <sup>6</sup> *"I, the LORD, have called you in righteousness; I will take hold of your hand. I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles, <sup>7</sup> to open eyes that are blind, to free captives from prison and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness.* Isaiah 42:1,6-7 (NIV) Did you hear that? Justice to the nations! A light for the Gentiles! No more darkness for you, my Gentile friends. He is coming! He brings the new covenant, the one our prophet Jeremiah wrote about. Our stony hearts will be transformed and the Law will be written in our hearts of flesh, both yours, my friends, and mine.

Ah, here come the Romans again. Help me out now. On the count of 3 say, "They went that away!" 1,2,3, – Works every time! Now draw closer and let me tell you about the rumors that are flying around Jerusalem. Maybe you already heard them as you came to the Temple today. Some illustrious travelers from Persia were here. They must have had the writings of our prophet Daniel. They stopped at Herod's palace to ask where the new king was born. As paranoid as that ol' fox is, he must have had his knees a knocking. So Herod asked the rabbi and they told him about Micah's prophecy. <sup>2</sup> *"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times."* Micah 5:2 (NIV) Soon as they mounted their camels ol' Herod probably had to go change his robe, if you know what I mean.

These kings of the East were following a star. You've seen it, haven't you? That brings to mind the words of one of your own prophets. *"I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near. A star will come out of Jacob; a scepter will rise out of Israel."* Numbers 24:17 (NIV)

Earlier, there was a group of wild shepherd boys that were circulating stories about angels. Now, you know those boys spend a few too many nights out in the cold and come up with the craziest stories, but they said that a choir of angels sent them into the same city, Bethlehem. They sang about the birth of the Messiah and said it was good news for ALL people. The shepherds found a baby in a manger, just like the angels told them. This must be the child that Isaiah wrote about, Immanuel, God among us! Moshiach Israel!

May I share something personal with you? The Spirit of the Lord spoke to me and told me that I would see Him, HIM, the seed of the woman, the Wonderful Counselor, the One like Moses. Yes, He said I would see Him with my own eyes before I died, this One who will illuminate your darkness. And these bones of mine are getting awfully tired. I have a sense that it could happen at any time.

You look like a smart group of Gentiles (well most of you any way). Put it all together, a virgin has a child, God among us, the star guides the magi, the shepherds see the angels, all in the place where Micah predicted, and I've got one foot on Jacob's ladder and could start climbing any day now. It was 40 days ago the shepherds saw the baby in Bethlehem. That means the virgin mother will be coming any time now to offer a sacrifice for her purification. HmMMMM?

If I was you, I'd stay right here in Jerusalem for the most amazing thing the world has ever seen. I'd wait for that light to shine into your darkness and reveal God to you. You should be more excited than I am. That ol' warning sign that says you can't go into the Temple... is going to come down. (Point to sign and stomp and raise voice) You are going to have access to our God, Adonai Israel. Are you starting to under...(Stop mid-sentence, frozen, mouth gaping, eyes wide.)

Ah! Glory! Look! Look there! He has come! I've spent my life waiting for this very moment. Hallelujah! (Joseph and Mary come in with the baby and Simeon breaks out in a prophecy. As he takes the baby, real or imaginary...) <sup>29</sup> *"Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace. <sup>30</sup> For my eyes have seen your salvation, <sup>31</sup> which you have prepared in the sight of all people, <sup>32</sup> a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel."* Luke 2:29-32 (NIV) (Holds the baby transfixed until Joseph interrupts to take Him back. Simeon bows to the ground and from his knees says...)

Blessed are you that the Sovereign God of Israel should put this special child into your care. Tell me your names. Joseph and Mary, both descendents of David of course. And His name? Of course, Jesus, the salvation of God! All the words of the prophets are coming to pass. He will reign on the throne of David forever. Wonder of wonders! Gentile friends, do you see Him? He's the One.

(Looking mournfully at Mary) <sup>34</sup> *"This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, <sup>35</sup> so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too."* Luke 2:34-35 (NIV)

How I wish I were as young as some of you, to watch Him grow and hear Him teach. Everything will change in ways this old man can't imagine. The light is coming to you, my Gentile friends. When He begins to teach, treasure His words. Let them be a light to your path. He will open our blind eyes. He will set us free from prisons of sin. The light will go out into this dark world, and it will never be the same. Oh what a time for you to be here, to live in this age. Let go of your old life and follow the Messiah. He will bring you into the very presence of God.

Blessed art Thou O Lord, King of the universe, for you have answered my heart cry. I have seen Your glory, the child You promised. May every word the prophets uttered be fulfilled in power as this baby grows to be a man. Open the hearts of these Gentiles who have come into your House of Prayer that they may let the light this child brings shine into their darkness to set them free. We look forward to the day Your Messiah will lead them into the Holy of Holies, into Your presence. To You be all glory and honor and praise. Amen.

Good-bye my Gentile friends, I must go and tell others that He has come! I've got to tell Anna, my relatives, and the other Levites, oh and the Sanhedrin, and ... there is so much to be done for an old man. Follow Him! Treasure His words! Watch for the new covenant. You no longer need to walk in darkness. He will bring you into God's presence... Shalom