



REFLECTIONS

March 26, 2017

[John] bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in.

John 20:5

Walkin' in Jerusalem

As the words of the old spiritual song describe, we've been walkin' in Jerusalem just like John. It's a place like no other, not because John walked here; but because Jesus did. I'm talking about the old city, not the new part. And it's not a place that feels sacred because Jesus walked here. Instead, it feels much the way I think it felt before anyone understood who Jesus was.

There are some modern additions now—running water, electricity, and a few motor cars about. But the streets are still narrow, walking areas rough and unlevel, and merchants stationed along the walkways aggressively peddling their wares to shoppers. The atmosphere doesn't feel unsafe, still, there's a bit of tension between followers of Jesus Christ, those committed to follow God's law, believers in other gods, and those with no belief at all. That's the way I think Jesus found it to be when he went there to die.

We stood near the places he must have been after his arrest in Gethsemane's garden. We gazed upon a place where Pontius Pilot might have sentenced him, and a place where scourging whips tore his skin. And we traveled the path he walked with a heavy cross on his shoulders. We heard a rooster crow.

Other places on our tour were not like this one. The Sea of Galilee felt peaceful by comparison. And the walk down the trails of the Mount of Beatitudes triggered images of the crowd gathered to hear Jesus' sermon there. From the mountain, we could see Decapolis in the distance, the pagan land on the water's other side where demon possessed pigs stampeded into the water. And we must have been near a place in the middle of the lakewhere Jesus calmed stormy waters and where he had walked on the water to meet his disciples. But in none of those places did pain, suffering, and death pervade the scene like walkin' in Jerusalem just like John.

John witnessed it all. He watched Judas reveal Jesus to his captors with a kiss to his cheek. He could hear Pilot's appeal to the angry crowd saying he found no fault with him. John overheard Peter deny that he ever knew Jesus at all. He stared into Jesus' suffering eyes when He asked him care for his mother. He heard Jesus' forgiving words, "*Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.*" He heard his agonizing cry, "*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*" (Matthew 27:46) And John heard Jesus shout those final words, "*It is finished.*" (John 19:30)

He felt the pain as Jesus breathed his last. But there was still one more thing. John stared into the empty tomb.

Walkin' in Jerusalem, we saw that too. Just like John.

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