

The Three Shepherds

Ryan: So now we, possibly, have two babies on the way. Both of which have apparently been announced by an angel. Well, angels are part of the supernatural world, so perhaps that's a clue that something big really is going to happen. We know that Anna and Simeon are expecting God to act in a dramatic way sometime soon, but what's going on with ordinary people? What are they thinking about the whole Messiah thing? Well, here's some likely looking lads. Let's see what they are talking about.

Ezra: I am so bored! Watching sheep just eating and sleeping all day is so boring! Is it possible to actually die of boredom? I think I might. This job is just so boring!

Joab: You're always bored. What's the matter with you?

Ezra: I just want some excitement sometimes! Is that too much to ask for?

Joab: If you want excitement, get yourself a wife.

Ezra: I don't want to marry any of the women in Bethlehem.

Joab: And they probably feel the same way about you! No one wants to live with someone who's constantly moaning.

Ah. At last. Here comes Abe with the pack lunches and the coffee.

Abe: Hi guys.

Joab: Abe, Ezra is bored...and it's doing my head in. Can you tell us a funny story, or something, to cheer us up?

Abe: Well, I had a funny dream last night. I could tell you about that.

Ezra: A funny dream?

Joab: Anything's better than listening to Captain Boredom over here. Go on then!

Abe: Well, in my dream I saw the King walking around the streets of Jerusalem. And as he walked, he met a prophet carrying an enormous birthday cake, which he was taking to the King's palace.

Ezra: A cake? What was it like?

Abe: It was a huge chocolate cake. Chocolate sponge covered in chocolate icing.

Joab: Ah, chocolate. I love chocolate.

Ezra: How could you tell it was a birthday cake?

Abe: Well, it had lots of candles on it...and the words "happy birthday" written in big letters around the side of the cake.

Joab: The clue is in the words! So, what happened next?

Abe: Well, the King wanted to eat some of the cake, but the prophet wouldn't let him. He said the cake was...like...a message from God, and he had to deliver it to the palace for the poorest of the King's servants to eat.

Joab: But whose birthday was it?

Abe: I don't know. The prophet said the cake wasn't for this king. It was for the King of all kings.

Ezra: Never a good idea to tell one king that there is another king who is more of a king than he is!

Abe: I'll try to remember that.

Joab: But didn't the prophet say who the king was?

Abe: Nope.

Joab: Typical prophet... Keep the story vague. Then you end up with every Tom, Dick or Harry claiming to be the king. It always ends in tears!

Ezra: Wow, that was some weird dream!

Joab: It doesn't make much sense to me. But the way you describe the dream...I get the impression you think it should.

Abe: Yes. I do think it should.

Joab: So, do you think this is a dream about a real king who lives today, or some future king?

Abe: I really don't know. But since I've only just had the dream, it would suggest to me that the king is either already here, or he's just about to arrive.

Ezra: Ooh, maybe it's a dream about the Messiah we are still supposed to be waiting for. I mean, what's that all about? Why are we still waiting for a Messiah who hasn't shown up after hundreds of years? If there's one thing I can't stand it's having to wait for something! Like having to wait for these sheep to grow up. I just don't have the patience for this job. I don't know how I was ever talked in to becoming a shepherd.

Joab: Here we go again! Ezra, will you stop your moaning and let's have a think about this. Ok, let's assume the dream IS about the long-awaited Messiah. My second question is...why was the birthday cake in Abe's dream for the King's servants to eat and not for the King?

Ezra: Good question!

Joab: And I have a third question! Why was the cake a birthday cake, and not just a cake you might eat on any other day?

Abe: None of it makes sense... And I don't have the answer to your questions Joab. But when I woke up, it just felt like I had been watching something significant happen.

Ezra: Well, I don't believe it has any significance. As Joab said, there have been lots of so-called Messiahs over the centuries...and they've all been a bad lot! They don't care about the poorest in society unless they can recruit them as servants or soldiers, and for the smallest amount of pay. They certainly don't give the poorest people cake!

Joab: No, I don't really believe in the Messiah idea either. How could you even tell if someone WAS the true Messiah...before getting yourself into a whole heap of trouble with the authorities.

Abe: So, Joab, what would be a convincing sign to you that the Messiah had come...and...like...here he is!

Joab: I don't think anybody could convince me that they are the Messiah.

Ezra: Me neither. The whole Messiah thing is just a way of controlling people by giving them a false hope. Don't rebel against those in charge now because soon the Messiah will come, and he will fix every problem. All you have to do is wait...and meanwhile keep on suffering.

Abe: So, there's no way, Joab, anyone could convince you they were the Messiah?

Joab: Well, the Messiah is meant to come from God, right? So, I'll tell you what...I can be reasonable. So, if...let me see...I'd need more than a weird dream. I don't know. Say if one night I was to look up and see the whole sky lit up with angels telling me the Messiah has come...then, maybe, I'd believe.

Ezra: Angels? Well that's never going to happen is it!?