

The Stable

As the Christmas season again draws near, our hearts and minds reflect once more upon that unusual, but wondrous night in tiny Bethlehem where God joined Himself to the stream of a struggling humanity. He had come on a solemn mission: to lay a pathway of life and freedom for the fallen ones whom He called His brothers. And on that humble bed of straw a tiny heart beat strong and sure in the breast of a perfect human being: *Yeshua the Messiah*.

All recorded about this Incarnation event has symbolic or prophetic meaning. Consider the straw filled manger itself. A crude, but appropriate cradle for this baby King of Kings. In John 6:58 Jesus said, "This is the **Bread** which came down out of heaven—he who eats this bread shall live forever."

The *stable* was a **place of life**; a source of nourishment for hungry ones. And so it is with our Lord. No matter how long we have been Christians, nor how much we know about the Bible, we are still continually dependent upon Christ alone who can fill the hungry, thirsty places in our lives. He said, "Let him **keep on coming** and let him **keep on drinking** (John 7:37)."

The *swaddling cloth* wrapped around our tiny Lord suggests the stable was also a **place of death**. Jesus' battered corpse would one day be wrapped again in cloth like this and placed in a rich man's tomb. And thus the shadow of the Cross was always there, even at the beginning of His life in the midst of this humble and happy scene. One day the death, only here suggested, would come with agonizing force upon this man who took our place and became the Author and Protector of our faith. He is the one "who for the joy that was set before Him, endured the Cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God (Heb. 12:2)."

This brings us to the visits of the *shepherds* and the *wise men*. These were men of extremely different lifestyles, representing all humanity—from simple, country folk to sophisticated knowledge seekers. They all came and bowed down, because the stable was also a **place of worship**. The affluent and able wise men laid their lavish gifts before the Holy Babe. The poor shepherds could place only themselves before Him. But God received them all, for *all* were *truly* wise. Anyone who kneels to honor, worship, and serve this unique Person demonstrates true wisdom.

As we enjoy this Christmas Season with family and friends, let us remember that the **Gift** on the Tree is what gives significant to the gifts *under* the tree.

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