

A Manger, a Crown of Thorns and a Cross

(Luke 2:7; Matt 27:29; John 19: 16-18)

But you, Bethlehem Ephratah, you are little to be among the clans of Judah; [yet] of you shall One come forth for Me Who is to be Ruler in Israel, Whose goings forth have been from of old, from ancient days (Micah 5:2).

The Manger

Before his death, Jacob prophesied of the tribe of Judah: *The scepter of leadership shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until Shiloh [the Messiah, the Peaceful One] comes to Whom it belongs, and to Him shall be the obedience of the people* (Gen. 49:10). This prophecy was fulfilled many years later in the birth of our Savior, YAHSHUA. In those days it occurred that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that the whole Roman empire should be registered; all the people were going to be registered, each to his own town; Joseph also went up from Galilee from the town of Nazareth to Judea, to the town of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David (Luke 2:1-3). That happened close to the time for Mary's delivery. And while they were there, the time came for her delivery, and she gave birth to her Son, her Firstborn; and **she wrapped Him in swaddling clothes**, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room or place for them in the inn (Luke 2:6-7). Was YAHSHUA laid in a manger where all kinds of animals were feeding as tradition tells us? In Micah 4:8 the idea is refuted, for the prophet gives us the exact location where Messiah was to be born and the type of manger He would be laid on: And you, O **Tower of the Flock**, the hill and stronghold of the Daughter of Zion, unto you the former dominion shall come, the kingdom of the Daughter of Jerusalem. Messiah was to be born at the "Tower of the Flock". This was a watch tower used by the shepherds in ancient times for the protection of their flock from enemies and wild beasts. It was also the place where chosen ewes were brought to give birth to their young ones; after their babies were born, they were wrapped in swaddling clothes for their protection. These were special lambs, chosen for temple sacrifices. Only these lambs would be feeding in that place. It is without a doubt that God chose this place many years earlier for His Son to be born; a significant picture of what was to come in the person of His Son, the Lamb of God.

After His birth, the perfect Lamb of God was wrapped in swaddling clothes and was laid in a manger at the "Tower of the Flock." John the Baptist declared: There is the Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world! (John 1:29).

Isaiah prophesized of Him saying, He was oppressed, [yet when] He was afflicted, He was submissive and opened not His mouth; like a **lamb** that is led to the slaughter, and as a **sheep** before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth (Isaiah 53:7). In His birth, YAHSHUA joined those selected chosen lambs destined for temple sacrifice. He came to earth as the Lamb of God also destined to be sacrificed for the salvation of mankind once and for all, *because blood of animals is powerless to take sins away.*

The Crown of Thorns

And the soldiers having twisted together a crown of thorns, put it on His head, and threw a purple cloak around Him, and they kept coming to Him and saying, Hail, King of the Jews! And they struck Him with the palms of their hands (John 19:2-3).

The plant from where this crown was derived is not known for sure, but it is believed by some that it was the nabk plant for its flexibility and abundance in Jerusalem.

The crown of thorns the soldiers put on YAHSHUA'S head and the purple cloak they threw around Him were expressions of mockery of His kingship. The crown was from a thorny plant fashioned into a crown. This was an object of the curse placed on the One Who would deliver us from the curse. When Adam sinned, God removed His blessings from them and decreed them to be under the curse. He said to Adam, Because you have listened and given heed to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you... the ground is under a curse because of you; in sorrow and toil shall you eat of it all the days of your life, **thorns** and thistles shall it bring forth for you, and you shall eat the plants of the field in the sweat of your face shall you eat bread until you return to the ground (Gen. 3: 17-19a). The Roman soldiers delighted themselves in crowning YAHSHUA with scorn (the crown of thorns and the purple robe), not knowing they were in fact and in another words declaring Him to be King. His two roles were represented here: a suffering Servant, Isaiah 53 and King Revelation 19. As a Servant, He humbled Himself to the point of death. In Philippians chapter 2 the apostle Paul defines YAHSHUA'S humility as a Servant: And after He (YAHSHUA) had appeared in human form, He abased and humbled Himself and carried His

obedience to the extreme of death even death of the cross. Therefore God has highly exalted Him and has freely bestowed on Him the name that is above every name, that in (at) the name of YAHSHUA every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth and every tongue confess and acknowledge that YAHSHUA the Messiah is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Phil 2: 8-11); John declares Him King in Revelation 19:16: on His robe and thigh He has a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS (Rev. 19: 16) The crown of thorns is a reminder to all of us that is He is King of kings and will always be until eternity.

The Cross

Death by crucifixion had its origin with the ancient Persians by Alexander the Great. The Roman Empire adopted the practice and used it on slaves, rebels, enemies and criminals. But Emperor Constantine abolished the practice when Christianity became the state religion.

Death by crucifixion was the cruelest punishment applied to men; it was a painful and slow death. It could take hours or days for a person to die. Meanwhile the person was exposed to the elements of nature and to the eyes of the world. Death finally came through asphyxiation. The word of God defines death by cross a curse. "A hanged man is accursed by God" (Deut. 21:22b). Paul said, By His death on the cross, He became a curse for us, for it is written, Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree. (Gal. 3:13b). We wonder why the Savior chose such cruel death, only to realize that the severity of punishment He chose was because of the severity of our sin and its consequences. Not only did He pay our punishment in full, but also He became a curse for us. Crucifixion was done by nailing the victim's arms to the cross arm part, then the left foot pressed on to the right foot on the upright part; a nail was put through the arch of both feet. That enabled the victim to push down to release the weight of the hands. He remained struggling until death by asphyxiation. A sign was posted above the victim's head stating his crime. YAHSHUA'S crime according to the Jews was that He said to be their King. So Pilate wrote a title and put it on the cross. And the writing was: Jesus the Nazarene, the King of the Jews.

Oh the struggles one had to go through to fight for whatever was left of his life! One cannot imagine. But to suffer the rejection of God at the same time that was unbearable! That moment when YAHSHUA was under the Father's curse, He felt

His rejection and cried for all to hear: My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? Why are You so far from healing me, and from the words of my groaning? O My God, I cry in the daytime, but You answer not; and by night I am not silent or find no rest (Psalm 22: 1-2). YAHSHUA'S death fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies and the Law.

In the desert when Israel again murmured against God, He sent fiery serpents to bite them. To be healed from their bite, God told Moses to make a serpent of bronze and place it on a pole, and all who at looked at the serpent would be healed. That bronze serpent foreshadowed YAHSHUA when He was lifted up on a cross and healed all who looked at Him. He told Nicodemus that "Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of Man be lifted up in order that everyone who believes in Him may not perish, but have eternal life and live forever" (John 3:14-15). God made YAHSHUA Who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God (II Cor. 5:21). Today you can be free from the curse and condemnation of sin, if by faith you look at the One Who was made a curse for you on the cross. For God so loved you to the extent of making His Son a curse for you. That cross was not His; it was yours and mine!

A manger, a crown of thorns and a cross were given Him; in return He gave us His love, peace, and life eternal with Him in heaven. We are debtors to Him as long as we live. We can never pay Him back what He did for us, but we can love Him by obedience and service in complete submission.