

Christmas Eve Service
"The Manger and the Cross"

Wednesday, December 24, 2008 Pastor Frank Mascaro

The manger points to the cross. The MISSION of the Cross is hidden in the MESSAGE of the Manger.

You see, the manger is the focus at Christmastime, but across that Bethlehem manger falls the shadow of the very reason that Christmas has come.

It is the shadow of the Cross that looms in Jesus' future...it is the shadow of that Cross that testifies to the MYSTERY of the Incarnation as well as to the RESURRECTION.

It gives expression to the truth that He is indeed IMMANUEL... God with us!, the One who by the suffering and death on the Cross will break the chains of sin and death and set us free.

Tonight, permit me to just **introduce some parallels between the MANGER and the CROSS.**

Due to our time tonight, I will really only present these parallels to you and I trust it will awaken your heart to think on and consider the wonder of Jesus and the significance not only of the manger, but that encased in the manger is the seed of the Cross.

Its shadow falls directly upon that little manger and the baby within.

In the Manger: Consider Jesus, in His mother's womb, arriving in Bethlehem **for His birth** on the back of a *donkey*.

At the Cross: Consider Jesus as He arrives in Jerusalem as **He prepares for His death**, riding on the back of a *donkey*. (Matt 21:1-11)

In the Manger: Mary spends the first hours of Jesus' birth gazing at Him in **wonder and amazement** (Luke 2:16-20; 33)

At the Cross: Mary spends the last hours of Jesus' earthly life gazing at Him in **sorrow and grief**. (John 19:25-27; Luke 2:34-35)

In the Manger: At His birth, Jesus is placed in a **wooden manger**, surrounded by animals, *ignored by the multitudes* and *worshipped by a few* (Luke 2:6-20; Matt 2:1-11)

At the Cross: At His death, Jesus is placed on a **wooden Cross**, *surrounded by scorners and mockers* and *worshipped by a few*. (Matt 27:32,35,39-44, 57-61; Luke 23:47-49)

In the Manger: At His birth, Jesus was *naked*, laying *aside His glory* and **bound up** in the wooden manger with *strips of linen* cloth. (Luke 2:7)

At the Cross: At His death, Jesus was *stripped naked* and *humiliated* and **bound to** the wooden Cross with *spikes* driven through His hands and feet (John 20:20, 26-27)

In the Manger: His identification as "the King of the Jews" caused some to **come to worship** Him (Matt 2:1-2,11; Luke 2:15-20)

At the Cross: His identification as "the King of the Jews" caused **many to despise and reject Him** (John 19:12-22; Matt 27:41-43)

In the Manger: Jesus was born in a *limestone cave/stable* **outside** of the village of Nazareth (Luke 2:1-7)

At the Cross: Jesus was crucified and died **outside** of the city of Jerusalem and buried in a borrowed limestone tomb. (Matt 27:57-61; John 19:16-18, 38-42; Heb 13:12-13)

In the Manger: When Jesus was presented in the Temple at His birth, He was **received and worshipped**. (Luke 2:21-38)

At the Cross: When Jesus presented Himself at the Temple on the way to the Cross, He was **despised and rejected**. (Mark 11:15-18; 12:12)

In the Manger: His birth was in **fulfillment of the Scriptures** as spoken by the prophets (Matt 1:22; 2:13; 17)

At the Cross: His death was in **fulfillment of the Scriptures** as spoken by the prophets (Matt 26:56; 5:17; John 19:23-24, 36)

There it is...sometimes in the rush of Christmas activity, we forget that the most wondrous part of Christmas is the fact that, in the Person of Jesus Christ, God became flesh in order to save us from our sins.

That is the crux of the Christian message...that is the answer to those who ask, "Why did God become human?"

It is because the **shadow of the Cross** is present at the Manger in Bethlehem.

They are intertwined...His human birth, His humanity is necessary for the purpose of the Cross. It is GOD WITH US – Immanuel!