

House of Bread

*“ ‘But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;
for out of you will come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.’ ”*
Matthew 2:6 (NIV)

*“Then Jesus declared, ‘I am the bread of life.
Whoever comes to me will never go hungry,
and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.’”*
John 6:35 (NIV)

I recall being a guest at a Greek wedding. I found the pageantry exceptionally beautiful. The costumes worn by the happy couple were magnificent from the crowns they wore on their heads to the shoes on their feet.

What I had not realized — until the reception — was the fact that Greeks are known for their breads. The variety and amount of bread served at the wedding feast was spectacular. It was easy to fill yourself just on bread.

Bread was the main food of the Jews in our Lord’s time. In some countries, corn is the main dish of any meal. Some cultures eat it as a porridge for breakfast and then use it as a bread for the

other meals of the day. As we sing the carols of Christmas and mention in the songs the town of Bethlehem, it is interesting to know that the term “Bethlehem” means “House of bread”. So the One Who would be the bread of life for us was born in the town called “House of bread”.

When Jesus said that He was the bread of life, His audience would readily understand that He was saying — He was essential to life. Matthew Henry (1662-1714) said, “Our bodies could live better without food than our souls without Christ.”

As bread was a daily part of the listener’s menu, so Jesus was indicating that they must “feed” on Him daily

to sustain their spiritual life. We need to have regular systematic times with the Lord in order to find the wisdom and strength to pursue God’s will for us.

This metaphor of Jesus as bread also demonstrates the closeness and intimacy of our relationship with Him. We cannot live without Him and the greater our awareness of this fact, the closer we will draw to Him.

May you come close to Jesus this season of the year and find in the Bread of life all you need to prepare yourself for the year that is coming next week.

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