

## God With Us

**Matthew 1:18 ESV (Pg. 471)** Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. **19** And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. **20** But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. **21** She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” **22** All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: **23** “Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel” (which means, God with us). **24** When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, **25** but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus.

- I. There is no event in human history that was predicted more frequently or accurately than the first coming of Jesus Christ.
  - A. Moses the lawgiver predicted that another prophet like himself would arise and that the people were to listen to him.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, the prophetic writings of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel, contain numerous predictions of Christ’s coming:
    1. Sometimes he is compared to a plant; or the branch, or root of a tree. The idea is that something that is hidden (like a root) grows into something obvious and unmistakable. As a branch, he symbolizes new life coming forth out of the seemingly dead trunk of Jewish law and tradition.
      - a) Isaiah called him the “root of Jesse”<sup>2</sup> (David’s father); indicating that he would perfectly fulfill the everlasting kingdom promises made to David<sup>3</sup>, though at the time, the nation was hurtling toward defeat and exile.
      - b) He was called “the branch” in Psalms, Isaiah, Jeremiah and Zechariah<sup>4</sup>. Ezekiel called him a “plant of renown”<sup>5</sup>. Out of the Old Covenant would sprout something that would flourish and bear fruit for all mankind.
    2. The prophets also identified him with images of light, or a star<sup>6</sup>. Malachi even referred to him as the “Sun of Righteousness”<sup>7</sup>. They meant that he would come like a blinding flash of glory and radiance into this dark, sinful world.
  - B. Under the guiding influence of the Holy Spirit, the prophets go on to describe him in dozens of other ways as well, using human language to describe something that would have cosmic repercussions.
    1. They would describe both a tender suffering Servant<sup>8</sup>, as well as a conquering King<sup>9</sup>; the Chief Cornerstone<sup>10</sup> of the magnificent new temple that God was building for himself, and an unassuming Shepherd<sup>11</sup> who would gently lead and guide his people.
    2. I could go on and on, but when you see all of these prophecies, you can only conclude that from the beginning, the God’s will has always been to reveal, and bring glory to his Son. When you see that, you’re well on your way to understanding the point of the entire Bible. It wasn’t ever about humans, or angels, or devils, or Jews, or Gentiles. It has always been about Jesus.

- C. So Matthew is introducing us to the climax of this amazing story! He is letting us know that everything that God has chosen to do to reveal and bring glory to the Son, and to redeem humanity is *imminent*. The promises will now be fulfilled!
- II. How does he do this? He looks back to another prophecy from Isaiah 7. At the time, Judah is about to go to war with the much stronger armies of Syria and Israel...and they are terrified! But God tells them (through Isaiah) that they are to be calm. Nothing their enemies had planned to do against them will succeed<sup>12</sup>.
- A. Next, God does something strange. He tells Ahaz, the King of Judah to ask him for a sign to verify this promise. It can be anything, “deep as Sheol (the grave), or as high as heaven”. But the king refuses under the guise of false humility<sup>13</sup>.
1. So God says that since the foolish King won’t take up God’s invitation to ask for an amazing, miraculous, confirming sign, the Lord will take the initiative! It is here we find the words quoted more than 600 years later by Matthew:
  2. **Isaiah 7:14 ESV** Therefore *the Lord himself* will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.
- B. Don’t miss the theological implication of this! When we, as fallen people, either don’t know what to do; or, worse yet, when we refuse to do what we know to do, God will always take the initiative. That is the very definition of Grace!
1. When you were lost; when you were rebelling against God; when you were pleased to cater to yourself, and establish yourself as the only enthroned sovereign, it was the Lord himself who gave you a sign. Jesus was that sign.
  2. **Luke 2:8 ESV** And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. **9** And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. **10** And the angel said to them, “Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. **11** For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. **12** *And this will be a sign for you:* you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.” **13** And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, **14** “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!”
- C. Some Bible scholars say that the prophecy in Isaiah 7 about the virgin conceiving had a double fulfillment; once in Isaiah’s time (in which virgin would be more properly translated “maiden”), and ultimately with the coming of Jesus.
1. Both camps make compelling arguments<sup>14</sup>, and there are many times in the Old Testament when things that actually happened in the time of the prophet had a much grander prophetic fulfillment in the long term. This is particularly true as it pertains to the first coming of Christ to dwell among us.
  2. But it is clear God was pointing us to Jesus in Isaiah 7 for several reasons:
    - a) He refers to a “son” being conceived, not just a boy. Jesus is *the* Son.
    - b) The announcement of the child’s birth and gender (even before conception) makes this a divine event, no matter when it happened.
    - c) Matthew says Jesus’ birth fulfilled this promise, giving divinely inspired credence to the fact that ultimately, Christ was the one referenced.

- III. But pay close attention to the title for Jesus given by God: **Immanuel**. The prophetic significance of that name is confirmed by Matthew. Matthew helps us with the interpretation of this Hebrew word, telling us that it means “**God with us**”.
- A. Previously in the text from Matthew, we are told that the young couple was instructed by the angel to name the child, miraculously conceived in Mary’s womb, Jesus, “for he will save his people from their sins.”
1. Jesus was a hellenized version of the Jewish name “Yeshua”; which in English, we pronounce as Joshua. Do you see why this is important?
  2. In the Old Testament, after the Law was given, the people wandered in the desert for 40 years, never able to pay off their sin debt. But after 40 years, and the death of Moses (who was unable to bring the people in to the promised land), God raised up Joshua, who would be Israel’s deliverer, leading them into to all that God had promised so many years earlier.
- B. Just as the children of Israel were unable to enter into God’s promise by the Law alone, we also are barred from the promise of the Kingdom by the Law. We need a champion, a deliverer to rise up and lead us in to what God has promised!
1. And that’s what Jesus did. He delivered us from what was keeping us from God’s promise, what made us incapable of keeping his law: our sin! Jesus would be a spiritual Joshua, “ for he will save his people from their sins.”
  2. But how could God, so holy, ever accomplish so great a salvation for us? He wouldn’t simply be enthroned above us, speaking from a thundering Sinai. He would take on the title “Immanuel”. He would be “God with us”, Eternal God, taking on humanity and walking among us.
- C. **Hebrews 2:14 ESV** Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, **15** and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.
1. He would be born into poverty, and work for a living. He would know hunger, thirst and anger, grief and laughter, tiredness and betrayal, temptation and wonder; everything that makes a human **human**, he would experience.
  2. He would also taste death like all of us. But his death, though physically the same, would not be the entirely the same as what we experience.
- D. When all of us die, we are receiving the just reward of a lifetime of cosmic treason, for God has decreed that the soul that sins shall die.<sup>15</sup> But the Bible says over and over that Christ never sinned, making his death different.
1. Jesus’ death wasn’t a final retribution for a life of rebellion towards His creator. On the contrary, being the uncreated, sinless one, His death was substitutionary. He was the only one able to die righteously in the place of others. The result of his death is that mankind’s sins can be forgiven, and that those who believe can be accepted by God, being one with him forever.
  2. More than that, three days after his death, Christ rose from the dead, by the will of the Father and the power of the Holy Spirit. In this he defeated death for us forever. He now tells us that even if we die, yet shall we live.<sup>16</sup>
- E. But his being “God with us” is more than a redemptive reality, it is also an experiential one; meaning that through the gift of the Holy Spirit, as believers we

are assured that we will never be without the constant presence of God. This has tremendous implications for our lives!

1. **Hebrews 13:5 ESV** Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, ***“I will never leave you nor forsake you.”*** **6** So we can confidently say, “The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?”
    - a) Because Jesus is ever present as “God with me”, I don’t have to fear what the culture fears, I don’t have to grasp for what the culture grasps, I don’t have to get angry about what the culture gets angry about.
    - b) Romans 8 tells us that nothing can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus. Right before his ascension, Jesus promised that he would be with us, even until the very end of the age.<sup>17</sup> “God with us”!
  2. Nowhere is this truth seen more clearly than at the Lord’s table in communion. We believe that through an act of the Holy Spirit, Christ is spiritually united with his people as we partake of the bread and the cup.
- IV. So as you come to the table this morning, remember that the exalted Son of heaven became flesh and blood like you. Though he was perfect and praised by angels day and night from all eternity, he took on a human body, and was physically born from the body of a brave and godly Jewish girl, late one Bethlehem night.
- A. Remember that he didn’t remain a cute, harmless baby, but he grew into a man who fearlessly and perfectly obeyed his Heavenly Father in all things.
    1. Remember that his human hands touched the sick, the lame, the blind, the deaf, the mute, and they were healed. Remember that his human voice commanded the very powers of hell to leave their victims and they obeyed.
    2. Remember that his human mind could not be thwarted by the top religious and political intellects of his day, though they often tried to entrap him.
  - B. But most of all, remember that his Body was stripped and beaten with the fists and whips of his accusers. His beard was pulled out. His hands and his feet were pierced by nails, his brow pierced by a crown of thorns, and he was raised on a cross between two guilty thieves for everyone to see, and to mock.
    1. In a final verification of his death, a Roman spear was pushed between his ribs and into his heart, and blood and water came gushing out. His corpse was removed from the cross and placed into a borrowed tomb.
    2. But he didn’t need it for very long! 3 days later he arose in that formerly battered body and appeared to more than 500 people. 40 days after his resurrection, he ascended to the right hand of the Father where he sits enthroned forever.
  - C. And in the words we read every Sunday before the Lord’s Supper, we are told that he said that all this happened for us. The coming to us and taking on of his body, the execution of it, the resurrection of it, and his ascension in it, was all for us. Let’s remember that as we come to the table this morning!
- V. **1 Corinthians 11:23 ESV** For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, **24** and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, “This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” **25** In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it,

in remembrance of me.” **26** For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

<sup>1</sup> Deuteronomy 18:15 (cf. Acts 3:22-23)

<sup>2</sup> Isaiah 11:10

<sup>3</sup> 2 Samuel 7:12-16

<sup>4</sup> Psalms 80:15; Isaiah 4:2, 11:1; Jeremiah 23:5, 33:15; Zechariah 6:12

<sup>5</sup> Ezekiel 34:29

<sup>6</sup> Isaiah 9:2; Numbers 24:17

<sup>7</sup> Malachi 4:2

<sup>8</sup> Isaiah 52:13-53:12

<sup>9</sup> Isaiah 55:4-5

<sup>10</sup> Isaiah 28:16

<sup>11</sup> Ezekiel 34:23

<sup>12</sup> Isaiah 7:1-11

<sup>13</sup> Isaiah 7:10-13

<sup>14</sup> ESV Large Print Study Bible; Notes on Isaiah 7:14 Pp. 1372-1373; © 2008 Crossway

<sup>15</sup> Ezekiel 18:20

<sup>16</sup> John 11:25

<sup>17</sup> Matthew 28:20